Title      The Role and Significance of Street Capital in the Social Field of the Violent Youth Gang in Lambeth
Name       S.K.Harding
THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STREET CAPITAL IN THE SOCIAL FIELD OF THE VIOLENT YOUTH GANG IN LAMBETH

by

Simon Harding

A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Professional Doctorate in Youth Justice

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Abstract

The Role and Significance of Street Capital in the Social Field of the Violent Youth Gang in Lambeth

Much recent UK gang research has failed to adequately answer: do gangs exist and if so, are they organised? Internal gang dynamics, criminal behaviours and motivations for joining remain largely unexplored; as does the upsurge in violent crime in gang-affected areas of south London. This research set out to answer these questions by investigating gangs in Lambeth, their activities and the daily experiences of those affiliated to them. The study begins by profiling the case study area, currently prevalent street gangs and links to violent crime. The investigation then examines in detail inter-gang and intra-gang dynamics and community relationships. A further objective is to establish whether, and if so to what extent, gangs were expanding and becoming more deeply embedded in the neighbourhood.

This work situates contemporary UK gang research within the literary arc of classic and contemporary US gang research, from Chicago School to Hagedorn. Current UK studies are categorised into three distinct arguments, then critiqued from a Left Realist perspective.

Addressing the question, how do we explain an increase in gang related violence?, the work establishes the gang as a social arena (field) of competition where actors struggle for distinction. But what are the characteristics and boundaries of this social field? What motivates young people to enter it, and how do you succeed within it? How significant are personal relationships and networks? What is the role of social capital and how do you become a competent actor in this field?

These issues are explored using the theoretical perspectives of social field analysis and habitus from Bourdieu alongside various elements of social capital theory. An inductive ethnomethodology was adopted. The paper presents findings from 30 qualitative interviews of residents, professionals and gang-affiliated young people in Lambeth. The ethical challenges of gang research, such as access and anonymity are addressed.
The findings support the proposition that gangs in south London exist, are active and internally organised into three structural tiers. Success within the field is determined by building and maintaining Street Capital—a tradable asset. To acquire this, members strategise by employing tested techniques from the Gang Repertoire, derived from the habitus. Youngers and Olders employ different Repertoires. All actors within the social field are subject to sanctions with new arrivals at increased risk. The field is highly gendered and girls are central to the gang strategising using information and the gang Network.

Importantly the findings support the argument that gangs in Lambeth are evolving and becoming more embedded. Increased gang related violence is an outcome of new dynamics in social field, including the imperative to acquire Street Capital and the role of new technology. Increased tensions and violence have cumulative stressful impacts for young people. To address this, they increasingly risk manage their lives through self exclusion or a fatalistic immersion in the social field.
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Professional Doctorate at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of Candidate: Simon Harding

Signature:

Date: 8th June 2012
In memory of Dr. A. W. Harding
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INTRODUCTION

The social field of the gang in London SW9 is a dangerous arena of social conflict and competition.

Whilst gang researchers struggle to articulate this field, (or to even acknowledge it), the young men and women within it live a daily reality which remains largely unexplored in the UK. This world is becoming increasingly distanced and remote and for many adults, inexplicable and inpenetrable. It is a world where social norms are inverted; where rumour and gossip lead to death and injury; where personal slights become ‘beefs, then feuds; where family members are fair game for reprisals; where boys are ‘soljas’ and dead at age 15.

In the London SW9 postcode (see Figure 1) there are many residents without contact with gangs, none however remain oblivious and all remain affected. For young people in the social field of the gang, daily life is governed by fear and an all pervasive anxiety. This daily reality of fear and stress lead some to deal with the world as if it is unreal; a place unaccountable to adults and societal norms; a self-biographical world of hyperactivity, excitement and drama with opportunities for distinction; a place to personally transcend and transform. For others, this reality generates a blank staring fatalism. This in turn fosters harsh and rapid violence predicated on a belief this is all ordained and it will all end soon.

For those of us who live outside the social field of the gang such an appraisal is bleak and disturbing: our first response is to reject it as alarmist and inflated. It is however an accurate summation of many young people’s views on gang life in London SW9.

Worryingly however, the indications are that in recent years this social field has become even more violent. In the last few years a range of gang related incidents, including several murders have occurred in Lambeth, with several occurring in SW9. Some of these are illustrated in Table 1 below.

In addition, as shown in Table 2 below, the borough has experienced an 18% rise in serious youth violence (1st April – 21st November 2010): the highest rise in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) grouping of boroughs with a similar profile. Youth victims have increased by 65% and weapons are increasingly used in violent offences, including a 16% increase in knife offences (April – November 2010). The most serious violence (GBH, attempted murder & murder, wounding) has also increased by 26% (21st November 2009 – 21st November 2010). Local partnership reports identify gang-related activity as responsible for half of Lambeth’s shootings, one in five stabbings and one in five incidents of violence against the person. Moreover, these figures only relate to reported incidents. They further indicates that areas of the borough are experiencing a significant rise in violence and gang related activity and that they are increasingly dangerous for young people who are increased risk of victimisation. The question then must be asked: how do we explain this increase in gang-related violence in SW9?
Table 1  Some recent events attributed to gang activity in Lambeth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</table>
| 2006 | 15 yr old stabbed to death in rival gang fight involving 30 people  
Gunman shoots two 17 yr olds in crowded McDonalds restaurant |
| 2007 | 17 yr old shot dead at crowded Streatham Ice Rink  
15 yr old shot dead inside his Clapham home  
Local partners begin Gang Commission into gun and gang crime |
| 2008 | 19 yr old member of OC gang shot dead in Myatts Fields  
18 yr old stabbed to death by six youths on bikes  
Local partners hold ‘Enough is Enough’ Gang Summit |
| 2009 | 16 yr old chased and savaged by pitbulls then stabbed to death by rival gang  
24 yr old man shot dead through a window with a Mac 10  
19 yr old DJ knifed to death following confrontation over a rumour  
Local community alarmed as armed police CO19 patrol Brixton estates |
| 2010 | 22 yr old gunned down in Gypsy Hill. Six convicted of murder.  
15 yr old stabbed to death by rival gang at school entrance in W. Norwood |
| 2011 | 25 yr old gunned down in motorcycle drive by shooting in Stockwell  
5 yr old girl paralysed as gunman sprays Stockwell shop with bullets to attack rival  
18 yr old shot dead near his home in Tulse Hill  
14 yr old schoolgirl lures armed gang to home of ‘friend’  
Lambeth police declare ‘high state of tension and conflict’ between known gang–related groups, launching an unprecedented borough-wide Section 60 Search Order  
Lambeth experiences six fatal stabbings or shootings between April – May, prompting Emergency Violent Crime Summit, Community Leaders Forum and bid to GLA for extra cash to tackle gun and knife crime |

Ref: BBC News; Lambeth Police Community Consultative Group Police Reports and Minutes; South London Press.
Table 2 Lambeth Key crime types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most Serious Violent (MSV)</td>
<td>GBH, attempted murder &amp; murder, wounding) increased by 26% from 21/11/09 – 21/11/10 (source MPS) - the largest rise, the highest volume and highest rate of MSV in London. Contributory factors include DV and drink related violence alongside gang activity (which accounts for about 7% of offences).</td>
<td>Where at least one suspect charged, 59% were GBH with Intent; 38% for GBH/Serious Wounding; 83% of accused were male.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knife Crime</td>
<td>offences increased by 16.4% (68 offences) for Apr-Nov 2010 compared to the same period in 2009. Of the total 482 knife crime offences, 274 offences (56.8%) were personal robbery and 102 (21.2%) GBH with Intent. Level of weapon use increased as did number of firearms and knife seizures.</td>
<td>79% of all victims were male and 68.8% aged under 30. Suspects were 82.7% male; 71.1% aged under 30.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Crime</td>
<td>has reduced by 24%, but Lambeth still has the second highest level of its most similar borough group after Southwark.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Youth Violence (SYV)</td>
<td>— (any offence of most serious violence or weapon enabled crime, where the victim is aged 1-19 i.e. murder, manslaughter, rape, wounding with intent and causing grievous bodily harm) has risen by 18% (01/04/10 – 21/11/10 - source MPS). This is the highest rise in the MPS grouping of most similar boroughs and second highest in overall volume of SYV in London after Southwark. Youth victims increased from 96 to 158 (65%) on previous year: including 2 youth murders and 4 attempted murders, all featuring black victims and black suspects.</td>
<td>50% of all SYV offences are weapon enabled personal robberies; 38% are GBH related offences; 68% of offences involved a knife or bladed article and 6% involved a firearm fired; 28% of victims received an injury that was moderate to fatal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearly 85% of SYV victims were male with young black victims significantly over-represented as victims of stabbings and shootings; 67% of offenders were male, the oldest category for suspects was 18 years (12%) followed by those aged 16 years (10%); 54% of suspects were black, 9% were white. Intelligence indicates a large proportion of suspects were known gang members and associates.</td>
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Gangs and Group Violent Offending

A high proportion of youth violence is attributable to gang tensions or is committed by individuals with gang links; 17% of Lambeth’s stabbings and over 50% of shootings are gang related. Sampling suggests that members of gangs are responsible for around 22% of Lambeth’s violence against the person.

- Victims of gang related offences had median age of 20
- main age range of victims was 15-20 years (65% or 20 victims), followed by 21-29 years (35% or 11 victims); 19 victims under 19 years, (youngest 15 years); 87% of victims were of black ethnicity. Majority of suspects were black and under age 30.

The report concludes that ‘there is widespread but sporadic gang and group violent activity in Lambeth, centred in areas of social housing, and producing the high risks of serious youth violence and associated offending (eg. related to drugs markets’).

Source: Published with kind permission from Lambeth Strategic Assessment 2011 (Reviewed and published 30/06/2011), Lambeth First, Lambeth council.

In this thesis, I attempt to understand this social field by offering an ethnographic analysis of an area in which I have lived and or worked for 25 years. Prior to an in-depth exploration of my research, it is useful to contextualise the situation for young people in SW9 and the pertinent macro issues which impact upon their lives, namely:
• Limited opportunities
Young people in SW9 experience both spatial and social exclusion. For many, this exclusion is most noticeable through the lack of access to legitimate opportunities for older adolescents, (Durkheim 1964; Merton, 1938 and Cloward and Ohlin 1960). Limited opportunities and limited desire to pursue what many believe is beyond their reach (Evans, et al 2001), effectively dictates that young people remain sealed into their lifeworld, (Berger and Luckman (1966) or the social field (Bourdieu 1990) of the gang. These opportunities are further diminished by the processes of globalisation, (Sibley 1995; Jones 2002 and Macdonald and Marsh 2005). Importantly the ‘global processes of change’ impact upon place and significantly recast(s) youth opportunities’, (Macdonald and Marsh, 2005: 206).

• Dwindling recreational alternatives
The repositioning of youth services (Jeffs and Smith 2008) and a reduction in provision has impacted largely upon young people in deprived communities and most especially upon those who may potentially be younger gang affiliates. Recent budget cuts have decimated both youth services and government projects. In 2011 Unison calculated that cuts to youth services in England and Wales were in the region of £137 million pounds between April 2011/12; a figure on top of the £61.6 million worth of cuts made from 2010 – 2011, (Unison 2011). The lack of youth provision, specially ‘a lack of legitimate things to do and places to go’ was identified by Morrell et al (2011) as a trigger for the August Riots of 2011. The majority of socially excluded young people believe there is ‘a lack of things for them to do’ in their communities, (The Princes Trust 2004:2).

• Convulsive and dynamic communities
The borough of Lambeth, with its population of almost 300,000, is characterised by high levels of rented and social housing and also by high levels of residential mobility or population churn. In 2008-9, 34,400 people moved into Lambeth, and 35,700 moved out. This total churn of 70,100 equates to 24% of the 2008 population. This process also impacts upon Lambeth schools with significant levels of pupil mobility, (Lambeth First 2011). The council claims that ‘high population turnover is not an inherently negative phenomenon’, (Lambeth First 2011: 7). Such volume turnover in the borough will nevertheless impact upon community sustainability: 35% of the borough population has been resident for less than five years, (Lambeth First 2011:7). These figures echo the theory of urban succession posited by Burgess (1925) and Shaw and MacKay (1942) of the Chicago School, notably the social ecology identified from invasion, conflict, accommodation and assimilation of populations into the inner city.

It is perhaps noteworthy that of the 36% of Lambeth residents from traditional ethnic minority groups, 11.5% are black African and 9.8% are black Caribbean. This represents a change in the ethnic make-up of the borough as black Caribbean residents were until recently the second largest ethnic group in Lambeth. In addition, from 2002 to 2010, 73,500 people from 119 countries outside the UK were registered in Lambeth with new National Insurance numbers, with 11,000 in the period 2008-09, (Lambeth First 2011:15).
• Discredited neighbourhoods

These macro issues impact directly upon young people but also profoundly upon the
neighbourhoods in which they reside. Table 9 illustrates the levels of deprivation experienced in
the wards which make up London SW9. Where poverty and disadvantage is concentrated (Dean
1997; Pitts 2008) communities become discredited (Baum 1996). This stigma further
extinguishes legitimate opportunity for young people. Increasingly these excluded areas in the
UK are racialised (Pitts 2007a). Moreover as areas of acute deprivation they will experience
increased crime and youth victimisation (Hope 1994, 2003).

It is from this world of ‘distressed and disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities
characterised by structural neglect, poverty, poor housing and severely circumscribed labour market
opportunities’ (Goldson 2011: 11) that gangs emerge.

It is often a world of depressing limitations and alarming normative violence. In this social field
young men quickly understand hegemonic masculinity in the form of paid work will pass them by, or
merely offer the low grade manual grind accepted by parents but scorned by offspring. The gang
offers a chance to ‘do masculinity’ and construct a new Street persona, a new personal brand, a new
hero. It offers a ‘field of opportunities and struggle’, a ‘social arena of competition’. A place where
‘crude bodily capital’ and the Street Code are as important as wearing the right togs. A place where
distinction will come to those who survive.

To those young people, I suggest we owe a responsibility to understand this world, to explore this
social field; to seek answers rather than to deny its reality.

The theoretical perspective used in my research is social field analysis, derived from Pierre Bourdieu,
(1969; 1984; 1991). I contend that this perspective, with his central concept of habitus, has been
overlooked by most gang researchers. It offers a fresh opportunity to move away from traditional
theoretical standpoints and binaries. Viewing the gang through social field analysis permits holistic
assessments of relationships and explorations of boundaries. I have also developed the concept of
Street Capital which I argue acts as a tradable asset within the social field; one which actors seek to
exchange for economic returns.

To manage their shared experience and daily existence young people strategise to survive. They sift
and surf information, making and breaking relationships, as all young people do – only in this social
field it has endless repercussions. Here information technology has fundamentally altered social
spaces creating new dimensions for building reputations and new opportunities for disrespecting
rivals. Often to deadly effect.

Seldom given voice by young people, this overwhelming fear of violence and retribution is
compounded by the constant imperative to risk manage their social field; to peremptorily assess and
challenge all young people within it as potentially networked to the gang; to exclude others; to talk
and act in ways understood only by peers; to at all times focus on survival by building Street Capital
and maintain a reputation. Only by doing this, can they access what they all strive for – economic
capital - which facilitates what they all want but seldom achieve – OUT.
I begin the thesis by situating the work within the context of recent gang research, taking as I do a Left Realist position. The Literature Review reviews both classic and contemporary work from the USA and the UK. I conclude by noting that contemporary research leaves several key questions regarding UK gangs unanswered and that a left realist perceptive is required to better illuminate the variety of inter-relationships, networks and behavioural dynamics crucial to an understanding of a complex situation which has until now too often been either denied or simply labelled ‘messy’.

Chapter Two considers violence within the social field of the gang, offering a detailed exposition of my theoretical perspective for this work, underpinned by the work of Pierre Bourdieu. I also develop here my concept of street capital and how this plays a crucial part in the social field of the gang. I reveal how actors in the social field strategise to advance by employing the Gang Repertoire. This is a menu of tested actions, inspired by the habitus of the social field, and employed in different ways by the gang. I develop the concept of three separate Repertoires, an Expressive Repertoire, an Instrumental Repertoire and a Sanction Repertoire.

Chapter Three details the qualitative and inductive methods used to analyse this social field.

Chapter Four considers how the inequitable distribution of capital in the social field leads young people to strategise in ‘The Game’ to accumulate street capital: a process governed by the habitus of the social field. I then consider how street capital is manufactured through reputations for both individuals and gangs and how it must be maintained and maximised. I expand the concept of gang reputations and street names/brands with concepts of marketing and testing reputations. The chapter concludes with an in-depth example of ‘the Game’ in action and how habitus street capital accumulation and the Gang Repertoire inter-relate through the postcode beef and territorial incursions. Using the lens of social field analysis and the concept of street capital I develop the concept of territory as a metaphor where incursions are strategically employed as a form of personal violation to discredit rivals and diminish street capital. I dispel the concept of postcode Beefs and drugs markets, so favoured by the media, as originators of violence.

Chapter Five establishes the social field as a landscape of risk for young people, illustrating how young people navigate this landscape and seek to reduce and mitigate chances of victimisation. I consider the imperative of young people to risk manage their lives, self-restrict movements to avoid victimisation, to challenge and confront. I develop the concept of the centrality of information technology and social networking sites which has fundamentally changed gang dynamics and operations. I explore how young people get involved, acknowledging the contested terms of ‘recruitment’ before exploring mechanisms for involvement. I examine strategies for survival again using examples of territoriality. Finally I detail how the social field is gendered and examine the centrality of young women to the field and how they strategise to build capital and survive.

Chapter Six details how social order is maintained within the social field through detailed examination of gang organisation and structure – which not only exists but is both clear and evident
in this social field. I argue that structures have evolved over the last few years and gangs now present with three clear age banded tiers, Elementary, Mature and Advanced. Each tier is detailed showing transitioning between tiers and gang fracturing. Characteristics of what it takes to be a competent actor is also addressed. Functional roles, ethnicity, and how members are increasingly embedded in the gang are detailed. This chapter develops the concept of the Sanctions Repertoire – used within the social field as a as a method of social control – involving rumour and gossip, violence and intimidation.

I conclude by detailing the evolution of this social field and how it now presents something quite different from research studies of only a few years previous. I outline the key changes to the social field summarising the key answers to the question; why is there an increase in gang related violence? I comment upon the impact of all this upon young people. Finally I identify the policy implications of this work identifying the impact of this social field upon young people.

Figure 1 The SW9 Postcode
1. LITERATURE REVIEW

‘My Life Hurts’

Male Younger (15)

During the last ten or fifteen years the UK has witnessed an increase in gang culture and the emergence of violent urban street gangs. This phenomenon includes recent changes in gang composition, (increased organisation with ever younger affiliates staying in the gang longer), presentation (links to the drug economy and ‘postcode beefs’) and a concurrent upswing of serious and seemingly chaotic gang related violence (Centre for Social Justice 2009). This phenomenon has brought sensationalist media headlines and dissensus amongst academics as to gang organisation, membership, behaviours and even existence.

This situation is similarly reported in the USA where a ‘major escalation’ of youth gang problems was experienced from 1970 to 2000 (Miller 2001). A striking feature of this growth being the emergence of gangs in smaller towns and cities; from 1970 when fewer than 300 cities reported youth gang problems to 1998 when more than 2,500 US towns and cities reported youth gang problems.

John Hagedorn gives life to Miller’s dramatic quantification by narrating the gang renaissance in the 1980s (Hagedorn 1998) followed by its ‘institutionalisation’ and ‘globalisation’ (Hagedorn 2007; 2008). Located in ‘abstract spaces’, and emanating from ‘local histories of economic restructuring and community defeat’, Hagedorn situates the modern global gang as ‘organisations of the socially excluded simultaneously occupying the spaces of both prison and ghetto’ (Hagedorn 2007:25).

The identification of this phenomenon precipitated recent academic studies on both sides of the Atlantic highlighting divergent perspectives between contemporary gang research in the UK and the US; whilst questioning the applicability of US work to the UK. Though informative, and largely contextual, this growing body of work illuminates the limitations of current research indicating many unanswered questions. Much contemporary research focuses on singular aspects of gangs: definitions (Klein 1971; 2006); Chicano gangs (Moore 1978); gang formation and causality (Spergel 1995); risk factors (Thornberry 1998); quantification (Miller 2001); levels of organisation (Decker et al 2008); increasing levels of membership (Decker et al 1998); globalisation and institutionalisation (Hagedorn 1998).

Though often a crowded discipline, gang research has yet to fully embrace sociological concepts of habitus, social field analysis (Bourdieu 1990) or social and cultural capital. I will add to this academic landscape by using these sociological approaches as the theoretical underpinning of my own research. Before detailing my methodology and findings I shall contextualise my work, establishing key concepts which inform this work, clarify my assumptions, and determine a starting point for my research.
UK gang research

Youth gangs are not new to the UK, (Patrick 1973, Pearson 1983; Davies 2008). As in the US, the UK has traditionalist gang researchers alongside contemporary studies. Traditional studies have often undertaken an ethnographic case study approach (Patrick 1973) focusing on inter-generational territorially based traditions; sub-cultures (Downes 1966; Parker 1974) or links to music and fashion.

Whilst youth sub-cultural expression dominated thinking on youth group offending for the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, Willmott (1966) argued more serious offending was related to excitement and group identity. Such work pre-empted the current vogue of cultural criminology, Katz (1988), Presdee (2000), Hayward (2006).

Whereas American subcultural theorists focussed on gangs and delinquent behaviours, UK subcultural studies questioned their extent and sought to locate the debate within UK class based structures. This discourse is complicated by lack of a universal definition of gangs and a paucity of UK research resulting in over-reliance on US concepts.

In the mid 1990s increased UK media discussion and academic focus generated highly politicised and contentious debate as to gang existence and the applicability of US terminology. The arrival of armed youth gangs in the UK around the Millennium, led to a flurry of activity and reports from government agencies; the Home Office (2006) which offered a controversial and largely discredited definition; the Youth Justice Board (2007) which articulated a labelling theory position warning of the danger of ‘talking up’ gangs, (preferring the term ‘peer group offending’); the Communities that Care (2005) quantitative schools survey which found unfeasibly low gang affiliation levels whilst offering no clarity re age bands; the government’s flagship, Tackling Knives and Serious Youth Violence Action Programme (TKAP), which is unable to attribute falls in serious youth violence over four years to its extensive activities, (Home Office 2011).

It can be argued that the UK conceptualising of gangs derives from either a ‘risk factor paradigm’, which posits that gangs are the end result of ‘defective attitudes, beliefs and behaviours’; or from a ‘youth governance thesis’, which posits youth crime has changed little from before and any concerns regarding rising violence are elevated by interested groups, e.g. the police, media and government, (Pitts 2008). Whilst the former paradigm leads to a correctionalist and managerialist response, the second underplays the realities of socio-economic and historical influences.

Contemporary UK developments

In addition to the theoretical paradigms influencing research, the contemporary UK landscape regarding gang research falls broadly into three perspectives:
Governance through Crime/ Left Idealists

Hallsworth and Young are major contributors to gang research in the UK, not least via their typology of urban collectives (Hallsworth and Young 2006) which for a while, gained currency in the UK. Despite compelling evidence of the existence of UK gangs, for them it remains a contested issue. Echoing the critique of Simon (2007) and Garland (2001) who caution that increased fear of crime provides opportunities for increased executive control, Hallsworth and Young caution against ‘agents of control’ who might benefit from increasing public anxieties about gangs. Critical of the ‘series of conjectures’ they believe sits behind the thesis of gangland Britain, they mount a sharp attack on the evidential base and academics who, they contend, ‘misattribute’ the gang label. Simultaneously describing gang violence in the UK as serious, (Hallsworth and Duffy 2010) they profess gangs to be the new ‘folk devil’ of UK society. Critically assessing the role of the ‘gang obsessed media’ through ‘gang talk’, they argue the coverage retains ‘many of the hallmarks of a moral panic’ and is central to the ‘construction of what we would term the gang myth’, (2008). Rejecting positivist US traditions/ definitions, whilst calling for UK practitioners to be sceptical of administrative surveys or empiricist approaches that mis-reads the evidence, he cautions researchers not to concede any importance to the gang it does not have.

This perspective is dominated by the argument that gangs, if they exist, are defined by social disorganisation; that ‘control agents’ talk up gangs and mythologise street life.

Latter Day ‘Labelling Theorists/ Left Idealists’

A different perspective is that of Aldridge et al (2007: 2008: 2010) based in Manchester. Linked to the views of Malcolm Klein and leaning heavily on labelling theory (Becker 1963: Tannenbaum 1938) and social reaction theories of stigma (Goffman 1963), this perspective acknowledges the UK has a gang problem, and that UK gangs differ from those in the US. They argue the ‘so-called emergence of youth gangs in the UK over the past few decades...represents a change at the discursive level: a new label to designate the – not radically changed – experiences of marginalised urban youth’ ((2009:4).

Following extensive investigation of youth gangs in ‘Research city' they contend most gang violence comes from inter-personal disputes and intra-gang issues rather than turf issues; that some gangs have no street presence; that territoriality issues are often individual rather than group; that desistance is a gradual maturation process and that young people in gangs operate ‘cafeteria-style earnings’, i.e. both licit and illicit, (2009: 2010).

Many practitioners agree and indeed some findings from this perspective do resonate with recent research in London, notably that: gangs are largely ethnically mixed and reflect the ethnic composition of their neighbourhood; gang members often retain strong family links; having criminally active family members indicates future gang involvement; the term ‘gang member’ may be misleading for the gang involved, (Aldridge, J. et al 2007).
Their perspective supports the Klein contention however that can be summarised as: gangs exist, but they are less well organised (Aldridge et al 2007) or indeed as criminally sophisticated (Mares 2001) as people think.

In a retrospective glance at Research city, Aldridge et al (2009) refer to the emergence in the late 1980s of a ‘new informal economy’ of drugs operated by specialist gangs. Since broken down, drug dealing is now undertaken by ‘individuals trading as free agents’. They note gangs in ‘Research city’ have become entrenched over the last 20 years due to ‘intergenerational transmission of gang identities’, development of a ‘gang culture’ and the ‘fragmentation of existing gangs into amorphous unpredictable networks and less organised little factions’. This finding seems more in line with the views of John Hagedorn and seems a curious fit with a theoretical position suggesting it’s a change at the discursive level. The link between drugs and gangs in Manchester was researched in depth by Bullock and Tilley (2002) who pinpointed gangs as responsible for escalating firearm violence. For them, drugs was only one element of a wider pattern of offending and gang ‘conflict was endemic and easily triggered’ and spatially concentrated, (Bullock and Tilley 2008). Given such findings, notably links to drug related violence, it is surprising that Aldridge et al fail to reconcile Bullock and Tilley’s position re drug related gang violence with their own position that drugs are not controlled by the gang. Similarly, Bullock and Tilley (2002) found that gangs in Manchester have differences in make-up, origin, activities, organisation and include recruits. For Aldridge et al these differences remain unexplored. Aldridge and Medino (2008) maintain a clearer position re joining gangs. Here they align with the US literature citing ‘self-protection, labelling and taking advantage of illegal opportunities’ as key motivations. In this perspective, gangs are ‘informal friendship networks’, which are ‘fluid, loose, messy’; gang rivalry is ‘more complex and interwoven’ than it appears; and violence is often symbolic or rhetorical. Given such wide-ranging generalisation, there is considerable scope for greater clarity and precision in the gangs debate.

The Left Realist Perspective

The contemporary Left Realist perspective can be summarised thus: ‘violent youth gangs exist and pose a real threat to local communities: specifically to young people’ (Bullock and Tilley 2002; Youth Justice Board 2006; Palmer and Pitts 2006; Mathews and Pitts 2007; Pitts 2008; Toy 2008; Palmer 2009; Centre for Social Justice 2009; Pitts 2010). This view is arrived at via extensive field research in gang affected communities in London, which identified hierarchies and levels of gang organisation (Pitts 2008; Toy 2008); increased embeddedness (Hagedorn 2008: Hagan 1993); networked links to older career criminals,(Toy 2008) and significant levels of violence (Pitts 2007; 2008).

A recent practitioner's perspective supports the evidence of organisation in London gangs; Toy (2008), notes the recent emergence of ‘Organisational gangs (which) are well structured, profit led businesses,... led by entrepreneurial, dynamic individuals’.

Common to this perspective is a belief that violent youth gangs have evolved to fill the vacuums in deprived and contested communities left by executive authorities who increasingly disengage (Hagedorn 2008; Pitts 2010) from residualised and vulnerable communities. Acknowledging that youth gangs are not a new phenomena in the UK, this perspective argues that the type of violent
youth gangs now operating in the UK is indeed a new phenomena and it is one that continues to rapidly evolve.

Pitts (2010) argues that restrictive methodologies and ‘correctional’ (Matza 1969) ideologies have narrowly prescribed gang research and in particular inhibited any examination of the social field of the gang (Bourdieu 1999). Such an analysis is deemed important primarily to give clarity and precision to the rationalised generalisations but also to fully understand the concept of Gangland (Thrasher 1929). Moreover, analysing gangs by studying the social field will more likely illuminate the correspondence between organised criminal networks and the gang-affiliated young people who share the same social field (Gordon 2000; Pitts 2008).

One point of consensus amongst UK gang researchers is that US contextualisation and framing of debates on gangs sets up unhelpful preconceptions as to what a gang is, and thus a UK specific framework of reference is required.

Before joining this conversation, I sought to further review both US and UK academic literature to identify areas of consensus and of disagreement, which hopefully would illuminate gaps in research and understanding. I shall approach this review under several headings:

**Joining a gang**

The motivations for entering the gang becomes a good place to start. The US literature is situated within the enduring theoretical paradigm of the Chicago School. Frederik Thrasher (1927) observed gangs thrived in ‘interstitial areas’ in inner city deprived constituencies with transient populations. He found gangs to be fluid and dynamic, under constant change. He identified an evolutionary process from early diffusion, through ‘solidification’ to ‘conventionalisation’ (the adoption by members of legitimate societal roles). Thrasher noted the isolation of gangs and the effects of intragroup bonding and cohesiveness. This cohesion, allowed for internal social control through gang rules (sanctions) and the emergence of ‘collective representations’ such as symbols, signs and language, which enhanced a separate identity. I shall return later to consider the concept of sanctions and gang rules from a social capital perspective. Despite criticism of Thrasher for failing to highlight issues of racial segregation and political corruption, nonetheless, many of these issues notably: territory, evolutionary processes, symbols and ‘integration through conflict’ remain highly relevant in contemporary studies of gang development.

Gang development, for Shaw and McKay (1937), arose from delinquency and normalised behaviours. For them criminal behaviour is learnt from other offenders, and members graduate from initial stages (where fun is the primal motivation) to more serious crimes. This concept of graduation or movement through the gang remains a strong element of all gang research.
A handful of researchers have tried to identify the latent functions (Parsons 1937) of gang affiliation and Zorbaugh (1929) from the Chicago School was an early advocate of the theory that gangs were the labour pool for the Mob. Such propositions have been recently taken up by Chin (1990) who notes that Chinese gangs are used as ‘entry-level employees’ in illegal businesses, and Hagedorn (2008) who suggests the testing of members in criminal activity equates to a latent function of auditioning and apprenticeship for higher level more serious crime.

Tannenbaum (1939) reported gangs become ‘street-corner families’ bonded through loyalty and in conflict with the local community. For him, societal responses to the gang push young people to affiliate and criminal associations help young people to move up the criminal hierarchy. David Sutherland furthered these ideas through his concept of Differential Association (1947).

Gang cohesion identified by Thrasher (1927) continues to be a central focus of gang research in the US and UK. In terms of gang genesis, Moore and Vigil (1989) identified gangs as developing, ‘oppositional cultures’, where social rejection bonds members through greater cohesiveness. This introspective dimension can lead gangs to develop what Moore and Vigil term a ‘victim status’. In her work, Homeboys, Moore (1978) noted that where there are few opportunities for young people to engage and connect with wider society, gangs can take on an important role.

Societal estrangement was later developed by Hagan and McCarthy (1997) who suggest young people become extenuated from wider society and socially embedded in relationships that transfer criminal knowledge and skills via ‘criminal capital’. This echoes Sutherland (1947) and social learning theories but also Hagedorn’s arguments that gangs have the potential to become embedded.

Looking at Chicago gang cultures, Hagedorn (2007) locates their genesis within a local history of ethnic segregation, political corruption, mass incarceration and economic segmentation. Such pervading conditions represent a localised expression of similar macro socio-economic and structural problems, which in the USA is leading to an expansion of street gangs and increased ‘embeddedness’ in large cities, (Sampson and Laub 1993). Hagedorn warns of the potential for such environments to endure, to be increasingly violent, to create informal spatial monopolies and in places, become ‘institutionalised’.

Entering the gang could however include members ‘drafted’ into the gang through coercion, threats of violence (Yablonsky 1962). Such themes are echoed in contemporary UK research (Pitts 2007). Once in the gang, new arrivals face unique challenges, (Taylor cited in Huff 1990) and have to learn gang attributes quickly and demonstrate cohesion.

Meanwhile in the UK these concepts of inter-generational traditions and social learning theory are also cited by academics who argue that parental involvement in gangs pre-disposes some young people to gang affiliation, (Shropshire and McFarquhar 2002).
Dobson’s research findings (2007) mirror Thrasher’s, i.e. people join gangs through intimidation and need for protection. Protection from rival gangs is a recognised dynamic across all UK gang research though is best expressed by Pitts in Reluctant Gangsters (2007) acknowledging a legitimate fear of sanctions by those seeking to disaffiliate.

For Labelling Theorists/Left Idealists, joining the gang involves factors of ‘self-protection, labelling and taking advantage of illegal opportunities’, (Aldridge and Medina 2008:16). Leaving school is viewed as a critical moment for gang involvement (Aldridge et al 2007). The Left Realist perspective argues schools and colleges are part of the social field - arenas where gang related violence is reproduced with internal peer conflicts then replicated outside school boundaries. Conflicts are exacerbated by phone-texting of rumours ensuring tensions are introduced constantly into the learning environment, (Pitts 2008). Recognising that gang behaviours may impact schools, attempts were made to address such issues by the Home Office (2008) and NASUWT (2009).

Motivations for entering a gang have also been subject of consideration by sociologists. Social capital theorist Robert Puttnam (2000) added to the debates noting, that ‘where constructive social capital and institutions are allowed to wither, gangs emerge to fill the void, (Puttnam 2000:316). He notes that in disadvantaged communities there are limited opportunities for people to obtain economic or human capital and therefore acquiring ‘social capital is disproportionately important to their welfare’ (Puttnam 2000:318). This suggests that gangs are forged through the absence of social capital as people join gangs to build social capital.

Ruth Horowitz (1983) in her work on Latino gangs in Chicago similarly noted the importance of social capital to gang members through the development of reciprocity: the exchange of gifts and information. Puttnam (2000:315) notes that such reciprocal obligations, ‘such as being obligated to the hood’, are indeed a form of social capital, and in a reference to his key academic work, suggests they serve members interests in the same way as social capital in a bowling club.

Gangs, it seem, embrace a form of bonding social capital to ‘mobilise solidarity’ and build strong bonds of reciprocity. As Puttnam (2000:22) found, ‘social capital can be directed towards malevolent, anti-social purposes, e.g. sectarianism. Whilst building strong ‘in-group loyalty, may also create strong out-group antagonism’ (Puttnam 2000:23). He refers to this as the dark side of social capital.

Puttnam and social capital theorists such as Bourdieu and Coleman have a contribution to make to gang research which is often overlooked or underplayed in terms of gang formulation and organisation but also in terms of excavating the underlying social interactions and dynamics of gangs. This concept forms the central influential paradigm of my research
The concept of bonding, grouping and gang cohesion remains a theme worthy of study. Hagan, (1990) writing on the social isolation of gangs, notes that where schools families and legal institutions are weak, gangs have a ‘near monopoly on status-conferring activities’. They thus exert their own forms of social control and alternative economies. He calls for more research into ‘the social processes that sustain groupness’, gang affiliation and the micro-social interactions within peer groups’. This observation fits with gaps identified in current UK gang research which I identify below and again tilts towards concepts of social capital.

Marrying gang research with social capital theories (notably dark side/negative social capital (Lin 2001) which views gang membership as pejorative) may rely on ‘post-hoc’ judgements of what is negative: many young people in gangs do not necessarily view membership as negative (Halpern 2005:119).

Merging social capital perspectives to gang research raises numerous questions: Not least: why do people join gangs? What benefits do they receive from affiliation? What is the role of social capital within the domain of the gang? How important is bonding and cohesion? What are the gang rules and sanctions identified by Thrasher and how relevant are they now? Are they all equally involved in criminal activities? What are the roles of girls and young women?

Gang organisation

Levels of gang organisation is hotly debated on both sides of the Atlantic. Yablonsky (1962) drawing upon Thrasher, identified three gang types: delinquent gangs, social gangs and violent gangs. The violent gangs forms in response to threats to safety, offering protection to members; a ‘collective structure’ situated on a spectrum between totally disorganised groups (such as mobs) and well organised groups (such as delinquent or social gangs).

A different view emerged from Walter Miller in the late 1950s. Following this up in a later work (1980) he also identified three types of gang: territory based, fighting gangs and gain-oriented gangs. Taylor (1990) argues gangs evolve from less to more organised unit’s overtime. Both these findings appear closer to the UK research findings in terms of broad groupings.

A key contributor to US gang studies, Malcolm Klein argued that gangs are disorganised (1971: 109 – 123). Writing again in 2006, Klein argued little has changed from his classical description in 1971. Decker and Curry (2002) concur that street gangs are not well organised. In a recently updated work, Decker et al (2008) reiterates this finding whilst noting that even marginal increases in gang organisation lead to increased offending and victimisation. Somewhat contrarily, he further notes that recent research showing gang organisation to be weak (Klein 1995) failed to consider ‘the influence of different levels of gang organisation or the influence of gang organisation on behaviour’ (Decker et al 2008:169).
Klein identifies street gangs as 'more a loose collection of cliques or networks than a single coherent whole' with individual membership lasting one about a year (2006:164). Thornberry et al (2003) argue such high levels of turnover challenge suggestions of any stable structures. Whilst this finding differs considerably from my own, I did find agreement with Klein's view that transformation from one gang form to another was more common than dissolution. What Thornberry and Klein crucially fail to acknowledge is that in a structured social field, the structure persists and is enduring, even though the personnel may change. In many ways the social field is analogous to a football squad – the players may change but the roles, rules and pitch are pre-established.

In addition to his contribution to the US literature, Klein offers us a mid Atlantic perspective via the Eurogang Network,(2006). Here Klein uses a quantitative framework arguing that European cities are in denial of their gang problems. In his US based research Klein argues that US debates are often distorted by a dominant academic argument which says gangs have a tightly bound organised structure. Arguing they are more often leaderless and disorganised, (Klein 2006) he has developed a five point typology relating to this variable structure. This typology is the basis for his recent gang research in the US and Europe focusing largely on gang intervention programmes.

Hagedorn (2007) however rejects Klein's Eurogang definition as over reliant upon narrowly defined US research commenting that it fails to account for individual city dynamics and issues arising from globalisation.

In the UK, gang organisation is also hotly debated. The Labelling Theorist/ Left Idealist perspective echoes Klein, suggesting gangs are typically fluid with 'messy structures', porous boundaries, have 'far less organisation than expected' and young people are largely engaged in low level criminal and anti-social behaviours, (Aldridge et al, 2007). One might argue that 'messiness' is an untidy sociological phrasing which suggests the interlacing lattice of networks, age bands and functions have not been separated out and tested.

Research by the Jill Dando Institute similarly found membership to be 'fluid' but found the concept of 'membership' to be highly contentious.

Concepts of Elders, Youngers and now Tinnies are recognised terms (Toy 2009) and daily realities for practitioners in addressing gang related issues for young people. Hallsworth and Duffy (2010) conclude however that such terms are generic to young people in London and warn against 'gang obsessed individuals' using them to 'construct the fantasy of a criminal gang' where these terms represent a corporate structure.

Hallsworth and Duffy (2010) refute any sense of organisation as a division of labour referring instead to organisation characterised by 'relations of domination and competition between members'...and that 'the gang typically exhibits more pack-like behaviours'. Again such a view suggests gangs only
act in concert and never alone, which itself denies agency to its component parts. They argue gangs are dangerous because they lack structure and coherence and it is the volatility of members that leads to lethal outcomes. What motivates this alleged volatility remains unexplored. They do however offer the notion of a violent street world consisting of a core of older organised criminals surrounded by a ‘street periphery’ of volatile young people, which is where, they argue, gangs are to be found.

Medina et al (2009), found the gang has a ‘strong territorial identity (which) is a key factor in explaining the persistence of group identity despite individual ‘members’ turnover’. In the football team analogy, whilst the home turf has its dedicated fans, for others it is the performance of the squad that matters, whether it plays at home or away. In the social field of the gang, players, coaches, officials and spectators change over time, what endures is the structured social field, a belief in ‘The Game’ and a belief that ‘The Game’ is worth playing, (Bourdieu 1991:22-25).

Conducting gang research by analysis of the social field provides a fresh opportunity to break free from the ‘organised/disorganised’ binary pre-occupying much of the UK gang research. It offers the prospect of considering the field in its entirety, of identifying obscured correlations or foregrounding elements previously considered incidental. As a methodology it forces the researcher to unravel ‘messy’ structures, explain complex rivalries and bring into focus clouded generalisations. It demands a confrontation with the contemporary realities of the field as it presents, rather than an approach which selects low-hanging fruits and squeezes them into ideological boxes.

Gang characteristics and boundaries

Moving on from the thorny issue of gang organisation we arrive at the thorny issue of gang behaviours, characteristics and boundaries. What are the characteristics of the gang and how do they behave/offend? To whom is territory important and why? How do gangs define their boundaries? What help does US research offer to these questions?

Klein, notes recent US studies are either behavioural or structural (Klein 2006). Sub-cultural theorists such as Albert Cohen maintained people are socialised into criminal subcultures, whereas strain theorists and structural functionalists argued offences such as robbery were committed by ‘utilitarian innovators’. Cohen (1966) believed young men robbed for fun as they rejected dominant middle class value systems: to address their ‘status frustration’, they adjust their structural position in society by undertaking non-utilitarian, deviant, negativistic behaviours.

Behavioural studies then largely focus on predominant non-conformist behaviours and cultural adaptations, e.g. Cloward and Ohlin (1960), whilst structural studies tend to focus on race, ethnicity, gang size and role differentiation. I suggest that this methodological divide potentially excludes or complicates attempts to consider the interplay of both elements, inhibiting any holistic approach. Only recently have US gang researchers, e.g. Huff (1990) called for more gang research into the ‘context of social and economic milieu’, or for more research on measures of social capital and collective efficacy (Short and Hughes 2010). This call for different approaches to gang research was
echoed by Dwight Conquergood (1994) who cautioned researchers not to consider gang members as ‘others’ but as spatially transformative, active ‘cultural agents’ functioning within their own social field.

Recent UK research has focussed on the spatiality of opportunity for young people, (Ball et al 2002), how these are often restricted and mediated by place, and develop into differentiated social horizons leading to ‘geographies of exclusion, (Sibley 1995). Recent research has also identified parameters and boundaries of gang activities, (Bullock and Tilley 2003). However there has been little attempt to explore how such boundaries are established, governed, crossed, sanctioned or revered. Widely publicised ‘postcode wars’ made territoriality a recent subject of UK gang research. In an exploratory study of six UK cities (Kintrea et al 2008) acknowledged that territoriality leaves many young people unable to move freely across cities and that most violent UK gangs have territorial origins. As these findings are arrived at from spatial geography rather than sociological theory, their application may orient us towards different answers. The research hints at but does not develop the explicit relationships between urban street gangs and how they view/use territory. In a useful pointer for my own analysis, the authors call for further research to consider links ‘between low-level territorial behaviour and the formation of criminal gangs’, (Kintrea et al 2008:7)

Aldridge et al (2010) found no fatal shooting incident in ‘Research City’ related to territorial disputes and whilst members were fearful of ‘straying’ into rival territory, found this linked to previous individual conflicts rather than gang rivalry. Vendettas linked to previous unsolved murders from 20 years ago were also identified as a key source of violent conflict.

Hallsworth and Duffy (2010) locate gang violence in four spatial arenas: territorialism; the street drugs trade; visiting leisure centres; perceived disrespect. Whilst failing to qualify the role of the gang in violence, how violence is enacted or why these localities are significant, they argue that peer groups and individuals equally engage in violence in these locations. Such views discount or misrecognise the role of independent operators or gang affiliates acting through their own individual agency.

Gang behaviours and offending

Almost all gang research reports criminal offending within gangs to be versatile rather than exclusive, (whilst acknowledging that some speciality gangs do exist). This broad range of versatile criminal offending is referred to as ‘cafeteria style offending’, (Klein 1995a:68). However this broad self selection grouping fails to take into account differences between expressive and instrumental crime, age ranges, favoured specialisms, motivations or manifest and latent functions. This suggestion of a ‘self selection menu’ requires further scrutiny.

Within this broad range of versatile criminal offending gangs engage in violence. However both Klein (2006) and Thornberry et al (2003) argue it is inaccurate to describe a gang as a ‘a violent gang’. What remains unexplored however is why violence is used in some situations and not in
others. Furthermore, in this ‘cafeteria of offences’, are violent offences being selected more frequently and if so why?

In the UK academics argue gang affiliation increases offending behaviour for some young people, escalating the level of offending behaviour for others (Bennett and Holloway 2004; Smith and Bradshaw 2005). For US gang researcher, Terence Thornberry (1998) the gang acts like an escalator, slowly elevating young people to more serious forms of offending.

The link between gangs and violence in the UK is disputed by Hallsworth (2008) and Hallsworth and Young (2008). They further question whether UK violence has increased in any meaningful way.

Aldridge et al (2010) whilst offering no clear insight into the detail of offending behaviours of the gangs in ‘Research city’ identify that ‘violent conflict rarely derived from disputes over territorial drugs markets and for protection rackets’. Rather they arose from ‘jealousies and rivalries over illegal acquisitive opportunities (which) tended to occur within rather than between gangs’.

Toy, offering a London practitioner’s perspective, says crime data ‘supports the theory that there is a growing chaotic nature to serious youth violence caused by personal conflict and territory based feuds, fuelled by illegal drugs markets and robbery’, (Toy 2008:20); and the current spiralling of street based violence is due to ‘fear and glamour’, young people seeking protection by joining gangs which are glamourised by the media. He supports Bullock and Tilley (2002) acknowledging the increasing role of illegal drugs markets on gangs.

Whilst some view gang members increasingly use violence from a younger age, (Schneider et al 2004), Hallsworth and Young reject notions of ‘gang culture’ and ‘gun culture’ as theoretically weak with little explanatory value, arguing that ‘gun use on-road’ is much less instrumental and planned and far more erratic and situational’ (2009:366). They paint a bleak picture of ‘outlaw’ young people manipulated by Elders into carrying weapons, using guns to wield power in a self-destructive manner. This view however denies agency and strategy to young people and fails to accurately account for how firearms are accessed within the gang.

For Hallsworth it is the ‘volatile, febrile nature of the violent street world that gangs inhabit’ (Hallsworth and Duffy 2010) which generate the violence and leads gangs to endure. This suggests an overarching social field in which the gang is only an actor and inhibits potential exploration of the internal dynamics of the gang which may itself generate such behaviours.

The UK research agenda regarding gangs in the UK is therefore still developing and lags somewhat behind that of the US, with some important gaps in our knowledge.
What of issues of respect and reputation?

Delinquency for sociological theorist Albert Cohen (1966) arises from ‘status frustration’ by working class young men repudiating middle class values. For Cloward and Ohlin (1960), these common societal values lead to blocked opportunities. However a deeper reading of older gang texts, e.g. Street Corner Society, (Whyte 1943) suggests building social capital is a key function. Suttles (1968) similarly identified the importance of a network of community relationships used to support the gang. More recently, Vigil (1988) noted gangs can develop a ‘group esteem’ instead of self esteem. This observation again tilts towards notions of bonding social capital. The concept of the gang as a vehicle for building social capital appears to have been overlooked by US gang researchers.

Discussions re social capital, social disorganisation and safety in urban contexts were first raised by Jane Jacobs (1961) and more recently explored successfully by Puttnam in Bowling Alone (2000). Whilst social capital is seldom addressed in gang research, the absence or evaporation of social capital within communities has been documented by Sampson (1992), and most notably by Elijah Anderson in his highly informative work, Code of the Streets, (1999). As the social capital of the wider community frays and disintegrates, what function then does the gang have as an arena where social capital can be acquired or re-built?

For Hallworth and Duffy, (2010) UK gangs are highly volatile because ‘reputation and honour can never be presumed’ and because gangs operate within a street life which itself is often chaotic and unpredictable. This over-simplified account of street justice adds nothing to our understanding of how a gang functions and creates its own codified social norms. To address issues of violence based on respect and reputation, we need to know why are these issues so crucial within the context of the gang and how do they compel violent action?

Social commentators such as Sanders (2005) and Winlow (2001) have added depth to UK understandings of community norms and masculinities and Palmer (2009) has articulated the black experience of youth culture with the emergence of youth gangs. The clearest exposition of ‘Life on the Road’ is Elijah Anderson and Code of the Street (1999). Whilst located in US street life the street codes are also clearly resonant in UK street life. Anderson’s ethnographic study explains how cultural street codes lead to violence offering categories of street/decent. For Hallsworth and Silverstone (2009) street codes are shaped by the demands of the informal economy, e.g. the drug trade. They argue that young people who hold to these conduct norms ‘remain locked within (a) mythic order’ (2009: 371). Whilst acknowledging the ‘hothouse world where rumours abound’ and rules of violence which apply, they offer no explanation of why ‘imagined injustices’ impact so heavily within this social domain, or why retribution is deemed necessary or how oral histories are woven into gang identities. This perspective dilutes both experience and reality of daily gang life for whom perceived injustices are not ‘imagined’, but real.

Referring to UK gangs, Hallsworth and Young (2008) argue that ‘in a disorganised street world the networks into which people enter are typically messy and rhizomatic, very rarely organised and
hierarchical' (Hallsworth and Silverstone 2009:368-9). This observation suggests the fundamental role and importance of the gang Network and its interface with street gangs remains unexplored, its roots unearthed. Indeed the networks, as they relate to the wider community, play a distinct role within the gang. The networks that link top tier families and criminal organisations to lower level street activity, e.g. drug dealing are seldom fully explored. Pitts (2008) argues that only through triangulating street level accounts with higher level career criminals will the full picture emerge. A methodological approach which analyses the social field of the gang provides for just such an approach.

So what does it take to be a competent actor in the gang?

The role of actors is addressed by several behavioural studies in the US. Though expressed in a different narrative style, the older works of W. F. Whyte (1943) and Yablonsky (1962) can still offer insight into what it takes to be a competent actor in a gang. For Whyte, young men are attracted to gangs as they realise group strategies can achieve more than individual strategies. Finding gangs more cohesive, enduring and organised, he acknowledges the centrality of leadership and the importance of networking, and information.

In a later echo of Thrasher’s work, Miller (1958) identifies two key concepts for young men in street corner gangs: belonging and status. The former is achieved by conforming to group norms, the second by demonstrating qualities and characteristics which resonate and fit the social milieu of the gang. He further identified a range of focal concerns and values for working class youth, e.g. trouble, toughness, fate, autonomy, excitement and smartness. These values, he argues, led to increased delinquent behaviour and gang involvement.

Miller also usefully suggested an early focus on masculinity and character traits of street cunning and shrewdness for those seeking to achieve status. This theme of agency for personal advancement will be taken forward in my research. Miller also provided a useful definition of a gang which retains much contemporary currency.

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) believed violence is a currency used by young men to rise above their peers. Anti social behaviour, they argue arises from young men seeking to exhibit their ability to commit crime and thus over-conform to the delinquent group values.

Yablonksy, in The Violent Gang (1962) takes forward the concept of character traits and how they relate to specific behaviours which generate status. He identifies personality types and socialisation as pertinent factors. Whilst criticised by Klein as offering a narrow depiction of gangs, this ethnographic work offers early insight into the very contemporary themes of spontaneous emergence, core and marginal membership, individual status, ‘Rep’ making, sexual exploitation of girls, personality and the individualistic sociopath. Such issues still have contemporary resonance and are further advanced in my own research.
The UK view on gang actors and leadership is again mixed. Whilst decrying any suggestion of the ‘American stereotype’ gang in London (with a command structure, leaders and lieutenants), Hallsworth and Duffy (2010) then defer to such a stereotype by arguing that gang leaders have achieved dominance because they are ‘ruthless’ and ‘hard’. Such a view fails to understand the complex internal dynamics within gangs, the role of individual agency, and what is required to be a competent actor.

Talk of being a competent actor is usually highly gendered. Research into female roles is emerging in the US but remains nascent in the UK. In terms of gang involvement, Klein (1971); Moore, (1991) and Jody Miller (2001) estimate US female gang involvement is almost one quarter of all members. Campbell (1984) found girls could act as members of female gangs. J. Miller (2001) found girls gang membership to be more integrated than previously thought and Klein (1971) reported girls carry out auxiliary functions. J. Miller however reported strong gendered hierarchies clearly biased towards males. More recently Miller progressed this work (Cobbina et al 2010) considering the different gendered narratives. She finds that men interpret male violence in gangs as necessary, instrumental to protect themselves from victimisation, essential and dangerous, whilst that of women is interpreted by men as trivial, emotional and ineffective. They also note that young women use violence more commonly than previously believed and that similar to men, this relates to issues of status and respect, whilst the overall situational context differs.

In the UK, research into female gang roles is limited (Home Office TGAP 2008). Although girls and young women rarely report their victimisation there is evidence of sexual violence, social control and exploitation within gangs (Firmen 2010). Batchelor implores us to look beyond dichotomous portrayals of male/female behaviour, noting that relationships between girls violent offending and gangs is often obscured (Batchelor 2009:3). In taking forward the gender discourse it is important to view girls and young women as enacting their own agency and strategies within gangs.

As with gender, ethnicity in relation to UK gangs is often assumed or overlooked, though recent research by Pitts (2008), Palmer and Pitts (2006), Palmer (2009) and Alexander (2008) have attempted to keep this issue foregrounded. Issues of gender and ethnicity still have a larger role to play in UK gang research although some new works are emerging.

An emergent research agenda?

So what research agenda emerges from a review of these scholarly contributions? Despite differences between US and UK approaches, reviewing the literature identifies shared themes and specific omissions pertinent to developing UK research. The current US debates identify research gaps in the social processes of grouping and affiliations, micro-social interactions between members, the neighbourhood and social contexts of gangs and the role of networking and social capital.
Marshall et al (2005:31) anticipates my contribution to gang research by calling for research to address ‘group dynamics, how groups develop, evolve and break down’ alongside why some offending is disproportionately high amongst some groups but not others and why this should be the case.

Pitts notes (2010) UK researchers overly focus on the easily accessible, mutable lower levels of street groups, thus presenting only partial landscapes and distorted views which in turn produces findings that gangs are disorganised with only slender linkages to drugs, e.g. Youth Justice Board. But as Pitts (2011) observes ‘the absence of evidence gained through such restrictive research methodologies does not add up to evidence of absence’.

The UK gang research debate has identified numerous gaps regarding: ‘messy structures’, fluidity, gang organisation and hierarchy; the role of territory; types of affiliation; the social field and its boundaries; the importance of social and cultural capital; respect issues; member characteristics; the dynamics and criminal behaviours; issues of age, ethnicity and gender? It is these questions I wish to now consider.

In addressing these questions I acknowledge the influence of Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant. Though not ‘gang researchers’ their sociological theories offer a valuable, but hitherto under-developed, perspective. Concepts of social field, habitus and cultural capital present exciting opportunities for approaching this debate. Gang research might benefit by focusing on the broader issues of the social field of the gang; exploring its characteristics, its impact upon young people; motivations for joining; what lies behind the violent struggle for reputation and respect?; why age groups favour certain actions?; the influence of social networking and IT; and most importantly, why are gangs in south London increasingly violent?

Joining the conversation demands a starting point. Choosing a starting point allows me to sidestep the tricky debates about definition and re-focus on other aspects. For this study I use Miller’s revised definition (1992):

‘a self-formed association of peers, united by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership and internal organisation, who act collectively or as individuals to achieve specific purposes, including the conduct of illegal activity and control of a particular territory, facility, or enterprise’, (Miller 1992).

I also believe the history of gangs in south London is linked to the cultural, social, political dynamics of London and that this a function of wider macro and micro level socio-economic factors namely, globalisation, educational polarisation, de-industrialisation, structural youth unemployment, income polarisation (Pitts 2008); alongside concentration of crime, (Hope 2003), inequality (Hagedorn 2008), disadvantage (Pitts 2003), a retreat of the state (Castells 1998); the emergence of discredited communities (Baum 1996) and of social and economic marginality leading to ‘hyper-ghettoisation (Wacquant 2004).
Having identified gaps and neglected areas in the UK research base, I began to formulate these gaps into a series of research questions and to develop an inductive methodology through which I seek to answer those questions, (see chapter Three).

In the following chapter I expand upon the field analysis approach devised by Bourdieu (Swartz 1997) drawing upon the key sociological constructs of social field, habitus and agency as defined by Bourdieu, (2008), (Field 2008); (Swartz 1997) and concepts of social capital, in particular the ‘negative social capital’, Fukuyama (2001) and Putnam (2000). I explain how violence is generated in the social field of the gang and develop my concepts of street capital.
2 Understanding violence within the social field of the Gang

'The magnet may cause the field, but it is the field that has the effects on the iron filings' (Martin 2003:23)

All research requires a starting point. In this work, the starting point is the rise in serious youth violence and the need to explain why it is happening. In this chapter I present my formal theory underpinning my study. I identify the factors influencing my approach and the valuable insight gained from using tools developed for domestic violence training and counselling. I continue by illustrating how this insight then led me to consider the gang agenda through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu and the concept of space and social field. I then move on to a formal exposition of Bourdieu's theory as applied to the youth gang and in particular the valuable contribution of his concept of Gaming Theory. I conclude this chapter by applying his theory to the social field of the gang, establishing my key concepts of street capital and its acquisition through the Gang Repertoire.

From my professional work in London SW9, it was evident that the violence perpetrated in the name of ‘gang activity’ had several noticeable but contradictory features: It was not random – but appeared to be; it was often targeted – but appeared chaotic; it was increasingly violent – but arose from seemingly minor issues of respect; it impacted heavily upon key groups – leaving others relatively untouched; it involved only certain young people – yet others often knew what was going to happen; it occurred in specific locations – yet many denied it was geographically based; individuals concerned changed overtime – yet the same issues persisted; girls were reportedly peripheral to activity– yet were clearly central to it; gangs were rivals – yet some members were linked to both; some gangs existed for several years – while others dissolved; academic studies claimed an absence of hierarchical gang structures – yet gang affiliates claimed structures existed; local tensions could rise or fall quickly. There was a need to make sense of this confusing and paradoxical picture where violence occurs in different spaces, seemingly random, yet often predictable.

These ‘random/predictable’ patterns of violence evoked scenarios of domestic abuse where violence is a constant threat and women adopt survival techniques for each day and each environment. It appeared that by considering violence in a domestic setting, parallels and similarities with violence in gangland setting might be elucidated. This led me to re-engage with an illustrative tool I had often used previously whilst providing domestic violence (DV) training: The Domestic Violence Power and Control Wheel. The Duluth Model, (as it is commonly known) was pioneered by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, USA (1984), (see Figure 2 below), as a useful conceptual model for counselling and education. It lists the most common abusive behaviours or tactics used against women experiencing DV. The model is characterised by patterns of action used to intentionally control and dominate both the individual and the situation. The Wheel schematic demonstrates the connectivity between actions, patterns and intent. Importantly it illustrates that
intentional control and domination over women in a domestic violence scenario is ascribed to several different spaces or environments: Home; Public spaces; Social spaces; Physiological space; Economic space; Physical space; Reputational space, including cyberspace.

The model offers several possible examples and a mixture of techniques ranging from intimidation to physical and sexual violence. It further illustrates a range of tactical choices available to the abuser, from authoritative power to direct personal control. These tactics include active use of sanctions. In each scenario the DV abuser selects one of a range of possible techniques, previously tried and found to be effective. Intriguingly different forms of violence are used in different social situations to different effect, with the abuser selecting from a personal menu or repertoire of favoured tactics. I shall return to this concept later.

The Duluth Model also offers a suggestive concept of differentiated spaces providing a template for considering how gangs might actively control a neighbourhood – the unifying theme of male violence being recognised. To take this further I required a better understanding of how violence can occur in different situations and spaces and frequently only to those associated or affiliated to the gang. To address this question I turned to the work of Social Field Theory and in particular the theoretical perspectives of advancing field theory by Pierre Bourdieu.

Field theory

From its origins in physics, electro-magnetism, Weber's 'spheres of value' (Weber, 1915, 1946) and the psychology of perception (Lewin 1936:14), field theory has now been usefully embraced by the social sciences. The field, or social domain, exists as 'an ensemble of relationships between actors antagonistically oriented to the same prizes or values' (Turner 1974:135). In his examination of social climbing, Furstenberg identifies social fields as locales for possible social ascension determinant upon 'interrelationships between the ascending individual and the current social environment', (Furstenberg 1969:52). He further stresses the issues of aspirations and social trajectory within fields, concepts furthered by Bourdieu. Modern perspectives of field theory proposed by Furstenberg and Bourdieu emphasise the social field as 'fields of organised striving', (Martin 2003:20).

Within each field there exists a variety of different domains each interconnected and each possessing autonomy whilst remaining inter-connected, (Bourdieu 1969:161-162). For Bourdieu, this creates a social landscape or topology which lends itself to analysis of actors and inter-relationships. It is this conceptual framework that was developed by Bourdieu into his theory of practice centring on relationships between individuals and society, notably advanced in his studies of the clique-ish domains of French Art or Literature.

Importantly each social field operates its own internal logic (Swartz 1997:128). Within the field any actions, decision and behaviours generated by actors assume a logic and importance (pertinent to the field) which is amplified by and reverberates within the field. These actions or behaviours however may be of little significance to those outside the field – for example the issue of Respect for young people. Events generated outside the social field operate outwith the logic of the field. As such its significance may be overlooked, downplayed or unrealised until its purpose is translated into the internal logic of the field – 'what does it mean for us', (Swartz 1997:128:215). As noted by
Martin (2003:23), ‘this is akin to the principle that the magnet may cause the field, but it is the field that has the effects on the iron filings’.

The field provides goals for the actors within it but importantly it operates as a ‘structured arena of conflict’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). For Bourdieu, social groupings develop their identity through opposition to other groups. He argues that sociological character evolves from the internal struggle for scarce resources that occurs within each social group or field. Each field is however also located in a wider landscape dominated by class and power. Bourdieu’s theory of the social field contends that actors are in conflict and convulsive struggle towards mutually agreed goals and are guided by the rules of the Game and the habitus.

The Game

In addition to being governed by the habitus, social action within a field is guided by rules. In Life’s Game, distinction is the ultimate prize. Restated, for many this will read as celebrity. A number of points should be made about viewing the social field as a Game. Firstly, in social fields the key issue is much more than who achieves success or who wins the prize, but what type of player dominates and what kind of game is now to be played in the future. This knowledge is key to those still struggling to rise to the top as it may mean rule changes. However, ‘the better established the rule (in the Game), the more advantage there may be in breaking it’, (Martin 2003:30-34). Therefore within the social field, ‘the struggle is both over and within the rules’, (Martin 2003:31). By viewing the field as one of convulsive struggle, it is possible to view ‘regularity’ within the field as assumptions which can be overturned. Importantly however, ‘the Game metaphor for understanding the field as a field of contestation may give us a better understanding of the regularity and irregularity in social life’, (Martin 2003:34). It also suggests a vertical social differentiation of winners and losers.

For Bourdieu, the structure of a field is comparable to the game of life as a game of poker, where varying piles of game chips represent the unequal levels of the player’s capital. This in turn illustrates his winnings from previous struggles and determines his future game playing strategy, (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 98-99). Bourdieu’s concepts of gaming theory is a useful metaphor for illuminating gang organisation and development and I shall return to this later when considering the accumulation of social capital. Advancement within the social field is achieved by maximising the number of chips available to the player. The more chips available to the player the greater power they have within the social field. Referring to the social field as a casino, he identifies economic capital, cultural capital and social capital with black, blue and red gambling chips, (Field 2008:16). Actors take position in the social field depending upon the quality and weight of their chips.

The internal structure of a field is based upon hierarchical positions, but also upon shared principles, i.e. that all actors are competing for scarce resources and they all share the same doxa (the value of the game). Bourdieu further argues that fields produce an ‘illusio’ — a belief or acceptance of the worth of the game, (Bourdieu 1991:22-25).

In any social field, those with subordinate status have yet to master the rules of the game or in the case of new arrivals demonstrate they appreciate the value of the game and how it is played.
These rules of subordination reinforce the hierarchy and ensure those of lower rank will play the same with fewer ‘chips’. Their struggle for distinction and dominance is thus greater.

**The Habitus**

For Bourdieu striving within fields is coordinated by the habitus. In the social field, actors are strategists linked to social structures through internal ‘blue prints’ which he terms the ‘habitus’. Habitus is early socialization of social conditions which overtime have been internalised into a series of mental and bodily dispositions which then govern our actions. Habitus leads actors to assess what actions are possible or not possible within their social conditions, or field.

Those sharing similar social conditions and opportunities in life will share the same habitus, thus giving them similar outlooks on life and on occasion the same life trajectory or social fate. For many this presupposes a general acceptance of social conditions and their perceptions of how they might advance in life. The habitus acts as an internal compass orienting people’s actions and behaviours which, based on previous experience, is most likely to help them succeed (Swartz 1997: 104-106) in their social field.

Bourdieu believes that action is generated by social opportunities/constraints interfacing with the dispositions of the actor, i.e. learned past experience, history, habit and tradition. This perspective differs however from straightforward rational-action theory, as he believes these internalised dispositions led actors to be ‘strategic improvisers’ working to a set of ‘deeply internalised master dispositions that generate action’, (Swartz 1997:101).

Habitus allows for actors to employ actions or behaviours which serve to elevate or distinguish themselves from their peers, (Bourdieu 1984:166). This dynamic potential of the habitus confirms Bourdieu’s’ actors as strategists who employ actions, not through conscious choice, but ‘as a tacit calculation of interest and pursuit of distinction’, (Swartz 1997:290). The predisposed actions of the habitus relate to what is a credible or possible course of action within any given field.

**Investment strategies**

The type of interactions evident amongst the actors in the field are determined by their ‘relative location in the hierarchy of positions’, (Swartz 1997:120). Thus struggle within any field occurs between those in dominant positions and those occupying subordinate positions. Bourdieu stresses that one’s position in the hierarchy of a field is determinant upon the unequal distribution of relevant capitals rather than by the personal attributes of their occupants. In this way class background and habitus will be mediated through the structure of fields, (Swartz 1997: 117-123).

The other defining feature of the field is the internal struggle for power and dominance, between these different hierarchical positions and between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Thus to advance within the social field, actors employ ‘investment strategies’ to achieve goals. Bourdieu illustrates three types of field strategies, (Swartz 1997:124):

- Conservation – mostly pursued by those in dominant positions of seniority
- Succession – generally pursued by new entrants seeking to reach dominant positions

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• Subversion — pursued by those who expect to gain little from dominant groups.

Bourdieu devised these subsets to explain the dynamics of power struggles within any field, e.g. academia, sports or education. Crucially, all positions within the hierarchy are inter-related - thus a major shift or change in one position will alter the boundaries of all other players.

**Capital within the social field**

Actors take position in the social field depending upon the quality and weight of their capital (game chips). Thus capital is unevenly distributed within any field and this is reflected in hierarchical power relations amongst those competing to accumulate it. In this contested spatial domain, actors develop exchange relations between those with capital and those without. Capital in social fields is not merely allocated but can be generated, earned, won, swapped or traded. In elucidating Bourdieu’s central theory, Swartz notes that fields are ‘arenas of production, circulation and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge or status and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolise these different kinds of capital’, (Swartz 1997:117).

In a social field access to income and employment (economic capital) is dependent upon educational attainment (cultural capital) and networks (social capital). Bourdieu contends that ‘economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital’, (Bourdieu 1986a:252). He argues that groups and individuals employ strategies of capital accumulation in order to maintain or enhance their position within their social field. This includes strategies for acquiring, investing and converting various kinds of capital in order to achieve this. Bourdieu argues that the various capitals interconvert, (though he acknowledges some conversions are easier than others), (Swartz 1997:80).

Within any field, struggle may also occur over symbolic capital as well as material resources. For Bourdieu, ‘symbolic capital is a form of power that is not perceived as power but as legitimate demands for recognition, deference, obedience, or the services of others’ (Swartz 1997:90). Thus symbolic capital can be acquired and accumulated in much the same way as material capital. Although distinct from economic capital, it is also exchangeable or inter-convertible under the right circumstances.

Regarding social capital, Bourdieu believes it links more explicitly to power, (Field 2008:46). He also argues that social capital is a product or asset which has to be worked on and built up and maintained (Field 2008:18). Moreover the type of social capital arising from introverted ‘club-type’ networks (such as gangs), tends to support a struggle for increasing status. Bourdieu’s concept of social capital largely relates to privileged individuals maintaining their privileged positions by using their connections with other similarly privileged individuals.

**The Social field of the gang**

Having established the theoretical perspectives of Social Field Theory and the insights provided by Pierre Bourdieu, I shall now formally apply this theory to my own research. It is my contention that social field theory has a unique explanatory value for researching and analysing the internal mechanisms of the urban street gang. In the following section I begin this process by establishing the concept of the urban street gang as a social field, illustrating the aspects of Gaming theory,
strategising and capital acquisition within the social field of the gang. Then having established this theoretical landscape I introduce my central theory of Street Capital arguing it is the premium capital operating within the field. In the subsequent chapters I explore in more detail the characteristics of this social field.

In line with Bourdieu’s conceptual framework I propose that the urban street gang in SW9 constitutes a ‘structured arena of conflict’ or social ‘field’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The key concepts of field and habitus by Bourdieu are central to this proposition. Whilst essentially explanatory terms for social functions, they facilitate focus on conflict and competition within the urban street gang. Furthermore, in terms of gang research, they facilitate consideration of the key, but often elusive, elements of hierarchy and power relations which in the domain of the gang relate to organisational structures, rank, status and strategies for advancement. As such, social field and habitus form the theoretical backdrop to this work.

I propose that the socially deprived neighbourhoods of SW9 in Lambeth fit the framework of social field as ‘an arena of struggle’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) where residents (actors) struggle to accumulate economic capital (money) and where opportunities for employment and advancement are also limited (Lambeth First, 2009). Moreover, within SW9, the urban street gang represents its own social field – a structured space with actors (gang-affiliated young people) competing to accumulate scarce resources, i.e. money, respect, reputation, status. Bourdieu refers to such contested resources as forms of capital. Within this space, actors struggle, often violently, to achieve distinction, (Bourdieu 1984:166). With distinction comes exciting opportunities for accessing a greater share of the contested resources, especially economic capital.

Within this highly contested social field the actors, (young people) strategise, both collectively and individually, to generate and maintain their levels of capital. Any strategies employed are undertaken within the rules of ‘the Game’ and acknowledged by the shared principles of the doxa (Bourdieu 1991:22-25), (the field’s deep structure which dictates the forms of struggle), and the illusio. This means that for gang affiliates there is a ‘tacit, fundamental agreement on the stakes of struggle between the ‘dominant establishment’ and the ‘subordinate challengers.’ This shared principle or imprint, (specific to the field itself), is recognisable as a general acceptance that the ‘field of struggle is worth pursing in the first place’, (Swartz 1997: 125). In this way, those within the social field of the gang all accept the rules of ‘the Game’; however these rules, principles and this logic only pertain in full effect to those within the social field of the gang. The boundaries of the social field only relate to actors within the gang and its peripheries, it is here that the doxa and the ‘illusio’ operate to maximum effect. Thus any social field is bounded by the points at which its influence ceases. Whilst those outside the field operate to different rules and different logic, within the social field of the gang, rules, logic and principles are everything.

In line with field theory the internal structure of the social field of the gang is based upon hierarchical positions. I propose that the hierarchal structure of a social field is clearly mirrored in the structure of the urban street gang in SW9. This is evident in the three separate tiers: Elementary
tier, (Youngers) (ages 13 – 16); Mature tier (Olders) (ages 16- 21); and Advanced tier (Elders) (ages 21 plus).

In the social field of the gang it is the longer established Elders who dominate and it is they who determine what type of game will be played. Those at the top of the hierarchy are accorded respect and status for having reached the top. Subordinates however, especially new arrivals, must strategise carefully as they struggle up the ranks. It may be in the interest of others to prevent them from ascending within the hierarchy. The top-ranking gang Elders largely control access to opportunities for conversion of capital. They do this by maintaining the hierarchy of the social field and setting the rules of ‘the Game’. This codifies the conditions of access and ascendancy within the gang, and also the rules for converting social and cultural capital into economic capital.

Importantly for this discussion, habitus has a number of characteristics which appear highly pertinent to any study of gangs. In the context of the gang, young people have internalised behaviours and ‘ways of being’ from their environment. The experience of a young person in their environment determines actions which they know are likely to bring benefits or advancement. This is well understood by all in the social field as all participants in the hierarchy share the same habitus. This is addressed in more detail in the following chapter.

In line with the concepts of Bourdieu, strategists work within the gang (a club-type network) to raise their status and seek distinction. This is achieved by building status and reputation, expanding networks, rising through the hierarchy and increasing their social capital. One they have achieved this they then fight to maintain their position in the hierarchy and protect their accumulated capital.

The social field of the gang, whilst limited in economic capital, remains relatively well stocked in terms of interpersonal and family connections and community relationships. This community resource offers potential for capital accumulation. The key goal or objective for actors is thus to transform ordinary neighbourhood relationships into more useful ‘social relationships’, (Field 2008:19).

For young people in SW9 with limited or absent educational opportunities, the street gang perhaps offers the most effective and productive way to obtain the scarce commodity - economic capital, (Pitts 2010). As with all fields, capital, in the social field of the gang, is distributed unequally.

Those at the elementary tiers have not had sufficient time or life experience to accumulate capital. Despite this it is already evident to them they must accumulate to speculate and to be entered into ‘the Game’. The Elementary tier, (Youngers), want economic capital but cannot access it. To access these opportunities they must first demonstrate their investment to the ethos of the gang by gaining the trust of the next rank, the Mature tier (Olders). Trust is a valuable form of cultural capital in a neighbourhood where trust is in short supply. They must also build up their own unique individual stock of both social capital (connections, relationships and networks) and also cultural capital (knowledge of ‘the Game’ and trust) which can be later converted into the economic capital (money) they all desire, (Putnam 2000; Coleman 1993). Under certain conditions symbolic capital may also be acquired through longevity and high status of leadership, or through conversion, e.g. the symbolic power of displaying gun-shot wounds. It is worth acknowledging that young people are members of several different social fields and the urban street gang represents only one of those. Also the type and the value of any social, symbolic or cultural capital is determined by the type of social field.
the urban street gang having certain friendships, access to certain information and specific skills or knowledge is valued, possibly prized, differently to similar attributes in a university campus.

In the social field of the gang, traditional views of social, symbolic and cultural capital may be inverted, e.g. knowledge of how to use a weapon or handle yourself in a fight (Street knowledge) is considerably more important to daily survival or advancement in this social field than having several ‘A’ levels. Practical knowledge of how to survive and get by is generally elevated above educational achievement by working class families (Winslow 2001; Bourdieu, 1986).

Surviving street life within the social field of the gang presents similar necessities: street knowledge and skill regarding the Code of the Street (Anderson 1999), the golden rules of not grassing, (Yates 2006), not helping the police and keeping your mouth shut, (Evans et al 1996) are established social norms. Having this knowledge and experience greatly increases cultural capital, and survival.

**Gang periphery**

Surrounding the Gang Repertoire and the social field is the gang periphery. This acts as ‘magnetic field’ for some and ‘miasma’ for others. The gang periphery allows young people to interface with the gang through the blurred relationship boundaries of the social field, e.g. school or social networking sites. Adults too may engage with the gang periphery largely through economic activity or as professionals. In this sense the ‘magnetic field’ metaphor is perhaps a useful one, with the gang periphery acting as both attractor and repellant and ‘push and pull’ factors leading to differing degrees of involvement. The visual metaphor of iron filings surrounding a magnet suggests some filings move closer to the magnet whilst others circulate in the wider field. Those furthest from the magnet may never come any closer and may eventually enter the magnetic field of another magnet. Similar actions may be recognisable within the social field of the gang.

Within this periphery, the gang may share economic capital with the wider neighbourhood. This helps to build and retain social capital at higher levels than operated previously. It also maintains access to wider community social fields for whom the receipt of stolen goods is permissible within their habitus. To achieve this and maintain maximum economic potential, the gang must maximise its brand name to facilitate this function.

**Social Capital**

In applying social field theory to the urban street gang I intend to draw heavily upon aspects of social capital as it operates within the social field of the gang. Essentially this is what operates as the ‘dark side of social capital’ (Putnam, 2000:350) or ‘perverse social capital’ (Field 2008: 94). Before looking at the acquisition of capital in order to achieve distinction in the field, it is important to contexualise such discussion within a wider understanding of social capital and its definitions.

The academic landscape in relation to social capital has recently become crowded however three principle proponents are pertinent to this work and I shall borrow something from each of them. Social capital as described by Putnam refers to ‘connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them’, (Putnam 2000:19).
In his acclaimed study ‘Bowling Alone’ (2000) Putnam notes social capital theory ‘is that social networks have value...social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups’ (Putnam 2000:18-19).

Importantly for any discussion regarding social organisation and gangs in particular, Putnam focuses heavily on the value of social networks, reciprocity and the importance of information flow. He echoes Bourdieu’s comments regarding individuals seeking distinction in their social fields by noting the value of individuals maintaining their reputations in any ‘dense networks of social exchange’, (Putnam 2000: 136).

Critical to discussions of social capital are Putnam’s concepts of ‘bridging’ social capital, (essentially inclusive, bringing diverse people together and helping them to get on in society), and ‘bonding’ social capital (essentially exclusive, integrative and clannish, acting as ‘superglue’ to bind together groups; also clubs ensuring reciprocity and solidarity). Whilst both concepts operate within the social field of the gang the bonding networks typical of gang loyalties, may generate, ‘strong in-group loyalty...and out-group antagonism’ (Putnam 2000:23). These observations are key to identifying the role of social capital within the social field of the gang and in developing my theory of street capital. Before considering the applicability of these elements of social field theory to the urban street gang, it is useful to briefly move beyond Bourdieu and consider other contributions to the concept of social capital.

James Coleman adds to the discussion offering a broad concept of social capital in which he believes individuals act rationally in pursuit of their own interests (Field 2008:15). This differs from Bourdieu and is influenced by rational choice theory and Gary Becker (1968). For Coleman, social capital is generated by actors as they go along rather than setting out to create it and it is a means by which they cooperate (Field 2008:29). It is this concept of mutuality which is useful in the context of the gang. Coleman argues cooperation is in the best interests of actors, who otherwise operate independently. This suggests group or gang strategising rather than independent strategising. He argues relationships build obligations, expectations and trust, opening up information networks and establishing social norms of communally agreed behaviours. Acting outside these norms will bring sanctions. (Field 2008:28). Again within the social field of the gang, the norms of reciprocity and trust are key whilst the social norms are constructed within the social field by gang members and are derived from their habitus. Bourdieu’s contribution was to view social capital as an opportunity for people to manipulate their connections and thus employ investment strategies out of self interest. For him, “Social capital is the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:119).

In social capital theory, the mutual obligations implied by the concept of reciprocity are, according to Coleman, best achieved through mutually supportive and integrative relationships between different actors, which he termed ‘closure’. (Coleman 1994:104-8). These closed networks are a key feature of street gangs. However Bourdieu observes the giving of gifts within the social field is ultimately done for strategic benefit and investment.
Following on from the work of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam, David Halpern (2005:10) notes three basic components to social capital:-

- A network – which in the social field of the gang will be high density with high ‘closure’
- Social Norms – the rules, values and expectancies that characterise the community (network) members
- Sanctions – a range of mostly informal punishments used to maintain social norms.

I shall later illustrate the centrality of these components to the social field of the gang in SW9.

The Dark side of social capital

It is important to acknowledge that social capital theorists identified that social capital, its accumulation and components, may have perverse effects or may be used for malevolent purposes (Putnam 2000:21-2). As explained by Hagan and McCarthy in their study of youth crime and homelessness in Canadian cities, ‘because individuals vary in their access to social capital, they must adapt themselves to existing, continuing and changing accumulations of social capital in the circumstances that they inherit and inhabit’, (Hagan and McCarthy, 1997).

In areas of multiple deprivation ‘where constructive social capital and institutions are allowed to wither, gangs emerge to fill the void’, (Putnam 2000:316). Continuing this perspective, Putnam commented that the ‘gangs represent a form of social capital, providing networks of reciprocity, charity, organising and social control – albeit on their own often destructive terms’.

Within the context of the gang, Putnam’s concept of bridging social capital, which normally means access to legitimate opportunity, has come to mean access to illegitimate opportunity. Talking specifically of the dense social networks of gangs, he notes, ‘these networks and norms of reciprocity serve the interests of the members in much the same way that social capital embodied in bowling teams helps their members. The purposes to which gang solidarity are directed are, however, typically more harmful to bystanders’ (Putnam 2000:315-6). The density of these relationships and the existence of a ‘durable network’ becomes key. Crucially the value of an individual’s network (or ‘volume of social capital possessed by a given agent’) is a function of his network breadth and reach, his ability to mobilise its support and the amount of cultural and economic capital (casino chips) held by his connections. (Bourdieu 1980:2). In the social field of the urban street gang the network component is critical as it operates as the principal mechanism for establishing status and connections.

In disadvantaged neighbourhoods, bonding social capital may be in ‘surfeit’ which may lead to an inward-looking orientation for local people, (Kintrea et al 2011:55) and in the social field of the gang, the commodities of social and cultural capital are also inverted, providing illegal opportunities.

Street Capital

The measurement of these commodities – both qualitatively and quantitatively, poses a difficulty. How are actors within the social field able to recognise or acknowledge other actors as viable players in ‘the Game’? How do they become competent actors in the field and if they do, how is this then recognised and accredited by others? How does an individual know if he is ‘coming up’ or ‘falling’ within the hierarchy? There is no formal mechanism by which to do this. The closest mechanism is
that of building a reputation, by which all in the field are bound. However, as a measure of available resources, either individual or group, it is insufficient.

The absence of any such measurement, albeit one that is informal, creates potential difficulties in the field. I am reminded at this point of Bourdieu’s concept of the casino where economic, cultural and social capital represents gambling chips. This metaphor works for academic explanations of capital in contested fields but is limited if we seek to use it as a mechanism for informal measurement. Moreover it relates to three different forms of capital rather than one.

To address the necessity of how actors measure, accredit and then exchange such capitals in the social field of the gang, there is a need to establish a concept of Street Capital. Street capital is an aggregate of cultural capital (street knowledge and street skills), habitus, local history, family connections, networks (social capital), relationships, reputation, status and symbolic capital (available assets of recognition, honour and prestige) which form a resource of high value within the social field of ‘the Street’, i.e. the contested social arena of urban environments that function through informal but widely recognised rules and codes. Bourdieu notes that in western societies economic capital has first ranking, but acknowledges that this is not always necessarily the case. I would argue that in Street Life, whilst economic capital remains the goal, it is street capital which operates effectively as the premium capital. It operates as a functional mechanism within the specific internal logic of the social field of the gang, (Swart 1997:128). Outside this social field it is of little significance.

As a concept, street capital represents more than simply Street Credibility, (defined by the Urban Dictionary as ‘Commanding a level of respect in an urban environment due to experience in or knowledge of issues affecting those environments’). It is a commodity easily recognised by those operating within Street Life. Crucially the ability to recognise street capital in others becomes an important aspect of acquiring street capital. Street capital allows for more successful navigation and survival in a street environment. It is the equivalent of a Road Ranking – the totality of accumulated capitals and experience embodied by the individual operating within Street Life.

As a resource, Street Capital can be acquired and traded. Each individual and each group (or gang) hold and operate their own assets of street capital, which fluctuates over time. Their acquired stock of street capital will rise or fall hourly or daily depending upon fluctuations in the variables. As street capital is a tradable commodity, others can allocate street capital to you directly by boosting your reputation or giving you respect. Your accumulated street capital will count towards your overall rank within Street Life, but also your overall rank or level of distinction within the gang. Levels of street capital (or more accurately the elements or variables) are openly discussed amongst other traders.

In seeking to allocate a total value, other traders will share views on all the variables of street capital pertaining to that individual before making a judgement on the level of street capital to be allocated to you. Thus levels and value of Street Capital in this social field are often allocated by others through informal networks. Modal scores are generally accepted.
Strategising and the Gang Repertoire

To build their market share of social, symbolic and cultural capital, and therefore street capital, Youngers need to establish themselves in the social field as a player, ('Playa'). This is done by acquiring or building a Reputation (or Rep), (Anderson 1999) and demonstrating 'street socialisation' (Vigil 2002:2). A reputation is enhanced and expedited through the creation of a brand name and possibly a 'signature' (e.g. for violence). Establishing a reputation in the social field permits entry into 'the Game'.

The overall aim is to acquire increased street capital within their social field which they will then seek to convert into economic capital.

The Youngers then begin their quest to raise their personal stock of street capital by employing individual strategies via their own Agency. These strategies have three crucial goals:-

• to maximise their personal market share of street capital
• to maintain their personal market share of street capital by whatever means necessary
• to monitor closely any movements of their personal market share of street capital

These strategies relate largely to social competition in deprived areas and are not unique to the social field of the gang, (Winlow, 2001). However within the social field of the gang, these strategies are of paramount importance and are seen by some as strategies for survival. Strategies are about personal advancement, trying to succeed at all costs and not allowing others to take advantage of you or your situation. They are in fact common to us all. However the strategies chosen by those individuals operating within the social field of the gang are determined by the habitus and the social field itself, i.e. what is permissible, allowable, expected, normalised behaviours.

To achieve advancement, those affiliated to the gang employ one or more techniques from a range of tried and tested strategies utilised over time by the gang. I have called this the 'Gang Repertoire'. The Gang Repertoire is a series of possible strategies/actions for use by the gang, collectively or as individuals, to achieve the goals of:

• manufacturing Street Capital
• maximising Street Capital
• maintaining Street Capital
• monitoring Street Capital

These strategies include:- bullying and intimidation, robbery, burglary, physical violence, controlling public space, visual controls, revenge, abductions, controlling accommodation, etc. Strategising therefore operates as a series of mechanisms by which to acquire street capital and then maintain it. It is done hourly and daily by all in the social field.

How this menu of tested strategies or Gang Repertoire is constituted is determined by the habitus of the gang, i.e. what is permissible from past experience, (e.g. using dogs as weapons) and social norm, (e.g. enhanced physicality, levels of violence) and also by the wider habitus of the social class.
and community which hosts the social field of the gang. Thus there is variation from gang to gang and from one area or neighbourhood to another. Repertoire content is further determined by the characteristics of the social field. This menu of possible actions are acknowledged and sanctioned by the gang (or by gangland) and then used by the gang with some aspects oriented to individuals and others impacting more upon the wider community. The deployment of a particular Repertoire component is determined by estimates of its appropriateness and its effectiveness in achieving a desired outcome, i.e. testing. Some elements will be used at different times depending upon the objectives, i.e. to manufacture or to maintain street capital. For example, physical violence may be used to initially manufacture street capital, but threats of violence may be used to maintain street capital.

Repertoire use is thus determined by both situation and by the tier operating the mechanism, for example some activities and behaviours favoured by Youngers, e.g. tagging, are not tolerated by Olders who seek to exploit more economic opportunities, e.g. armed robbery. Activities which favour the gang as collective habitus are used by Olders. Those suggestive of a more individual strategy may be employed by Youngers or newcomers. Both groups and individuals pursue their strategies simultaneously. Gang members may operate an individual strategy and subscribe to the gang strategy at the same time. They may at some point clash, however for the most part, the gang strategy always trumps the individual strategy.

As some Gang Repertoire actions are more clearly favoured by those at different stages of their gang involvement, this suggests a move from expressive to instrumental crime. It is therefore possible within the Gang Repertoire to distinguish between those elements favoured and actively employed by the Youngers as the Expressive Repertoire, from those favoured and actively employed by Olders as the Instrumental Repertoire. A third grouping of activities relates to sanctions which are used within the social field of the gang.

Through the Repertoire the gang effectively provides opportunities for individuals to collectively improve their chances of accessing street capital to achieve distinction. In this way the Gang Repertoire is constructed through three distinctive grouping:-

- Expressive elements
- Instrumental elements
- Sanctions elements

Each grouping constitutes a range of actions regularly employed by the gang to a) increase and maintain street capital, e.g. building reputation and maintaining respect: b) access and engage economic capital, e.g. drug dealing, cash in transit robberies. Many activities are criminal undertakings ranging from anti-social behaviour to more serious offences. Others provide a platform for offences to take place. Each element represents a strategy – employed collectively or individually - to achieve agreed goals, which benefit either the individual or the group. Elements can be employed selectively and used singularly, individually, in parallel or multiply, sparingly or frequently. In this way they become the modus operandii of the gang or the signature brand of the individual. The elements themselves are determined by the social field and the habitus. The Gang Repertoire is best illustrated in Table 3 below.
Table 3 The Gang Repertoire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressive</th>
<th>Sanctions &amp; controls</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Control of public space</td>
<td>• Bullying &amp; intimidation</td>
<td>• Burglary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Control of access</td>
<td>• Threats to family</td>
<td>• Robbery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visible presence</td>
<td>• Religion</td>
<td>• Handling stolen Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visual controls</td>
<td>• Physical Violence</td>
<td>• Cash in transit robbery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Criminal damage</td>
<td>• Revenge</td>
<td>• Business take-overs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intimidation of professionals</td>
<td>• Fear of retribution</td>
<td>• Prostitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Guns</td>
<td>• Drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Favours</td>
<td>• Controlling accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physical violence</td>
<td>• Money lending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rumour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Abductions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Being outcast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 illustrates how the individual elements of the Gang Repertoire are formed into three groups:

The Expressive Repertoire - represents forms of Expressive crime. These activities, largely undertaken by the Elementary tier (Tinnies aged 8-12) and Youngers, provide routes for building reputation and branding to increase their street capital. Actions are often aimed at the wider community, illustrating how the neighbourhood becomes the arena for building social capital. Activities include: controlling public space using aggressive dogs; grouping en masse; graffiti; criminal damage; controlling access to/from the estate - all highly visible and disruptive to local residents. As their individual street capital stock grows, low level economic activity is permitted or gradually accessed, (e.g. robbery, dealing weed). Youngers may seek ‘fast access’ to street capital by adopting the brand name of an established Older, (e.g. Killa) with recognised stock market share. For Youngers, part of their strategising includes controlling their postcode and territory, an activity which operates to maintain and grow their street capital (through protecting friends and families from incursions) but also to develop their small economic base for selling weed (later graduating to selling Class A drugs). By building their Reputation (Rep) through violence (sanctioned by the Habitus) and drugs (sanctioned by the gang), they will increase their Rep and thus acquire street capital. In addition, an Elementary tier gang may operate an abbreviated Gang Repertoire which may overtime be expanded.

The Instrumental Repertoire - represents those actions or strategies favouring the acquisition of economic capital. This echoes findings by Venkatesh (2011) in his study of US street gangs where he refers to older members of gangs engaging in ‘gang-gang’ antagonisms which are overwhelmingly ‘economically related’ as opposed to ‘gang-residents’ antagonisms. Largely employed by Olders or by individuals acting with individual agency, activities include Burglary, Cash in Transit robberies and taking control of accommodation or businesses. Some police officers may consider this as moving into organised crime. Robbery, and aspects of the drug trade, represent broad criminal spectrums and as such can provide entry points for Youngers beginning to engage in instrumental crime. Here Youngers enter at the lower end of seriousness doing drug running or street robbery, before progressing to the higher-tariff end of the spectrum: cash in transit robberies or large scale drug dealing.
The Sanctions Repertoire – permits informal social controls to operate within the social field. Elements therefore include a range of informal punishments and controls utilised by the gang, or by individuals, to control social norms (Halpern, 2005:p10). Sanctions are either indirect or subtle, e.g. rumour; but they can be physical, interpersonal and dangerous, e.g. revenge, attacks, rape, abductions. They may be targeted towards partners and family members. Some sanctions are used more by Youngers or to specifically sanction expressive crime. The proximity of the young person to the characteristics of the social field and the importance placed upon them determines your frequency of use of sanctions, i.e. if respect or reputational issues are paramount, you will by default need to employ the sanctions more frequently to maintain your Rep. Again this explains why so many Youngers are involved in fighting and ‘random’ violence.

These sanctions/control mechanisms operate outside the social field of the gang in other communities, however within this social field they are highly effective and meaningful, acknowledged as integral and relevant by all. The Sanction Repertoire is employed regularly with other elements and strategies, each reinforcing the other, playing upon the victim in different ways, as the gang determines impact. Which technique works independently? Which works effectively or quickly? To identify this, the Repertoire may be employed in its widest context, e.g. using several components and a range of variables, e.g. increased volume, high frequency, multiple techniques. If each element is undertaken by different people then it is overwhelming for the victim.

Strategising via the Gang Repertoire

The components of the Gang Repertoire are an established menu of possible strategies providing the gang with a teleological group of actions, which overtime and through differential association (Sutherland 1947) have become inherent in gang functions. These components have been used before and will be used again, (thus creating the Gang Repertoire). The employment of a particular component as a strategy is determined by estimates of its appropriateness and effectiveness in achieving strategic objectives. Employment is also contingent upon other actions within the social field at the time. Successful employment of a component is enthusiastically recounted by members after the incident with the key planner being accorded substantial street capital.

Once the gang or individual has decided upon their strategy, e.g. revenge, they determine how to implement it. Implementation introduces numerous variables. These are dependent upon the individuals involved, whether it is a gang or individual strategy. As the core objective (revenge) remains the same, the outcomes are determined by interaction of variables. (Multiple variables lead to varying outcomes which are more difficult to control). Thus they use varying degrees of dosage of violence, speed, stealth, etc, and this varies from incident to incident. This provides for Popparian testing of the Repertoire. The chosen technique is then utilised until the police get on top of it at which point the gang alter the variables, adapting the technique. Members developing a successful technique of strategy implementation achieve advantage and advancement and seem to have a good grasp of ‘warfare skills’ and leadership qualities of conceiving and executing a plan effectively. This knowledge is traded/ exchanged and its possession, a favoured and valuable asset, worthy of its
own reputation. Those failing in this regard are most likely new to the social field and do not know how to employ the Repertoire or do so emotionally.

In contrast to the teleological components, sit a range of variables upon which the success of the strategy rests. Some variables can be controlled, e.g. timing of the action, and others cannot, e.g. the response from the victim. Variable selection and thus implementation of the Gang Repertoire is therefore often arrived at heuristically - most often for the Elementary tier. Those acting through their own individual agency also have their preferred method of implementing the Repertoire heuristically. The range of possible actions, variables and strategies adopted by a gang reflect the wide ranging goals and objectives operating within the gang at any one time. The multiple uses of the Repertoire, its variables and the sheer volume of its use, gives the impression the gang is chaotic and random. The expected impacts are learned through this process of testing outcomes, but this can change and vary depending upon other multiples and variables. Thus there is a process of using skill, constant learning and adapting as shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4 Key skills in implementing the Repertoire

| **Longevity and experience** | Olders achieve rank through longevity and skillful testing of the Repertoire. As knowledge and experience grows and becomes embedded they develop an intimate knowledge of Street Life and Gang Life, i.e. what works when, how and with whom; why to use it; how best to use it or to vary it; and importantly, when not to use it. This is valuable street capital and builds reputation. Olders explain and demonstrate to Youngers how to engage with the Repertoire then monitor their progress. |
| **Adaptability** | A person is either a key player/instigator in an incident or a secondary player/ follower. Key players have developed skills in use of the Repertoire. They may be omni­competant (skilled across a wide range of techniques); or a specialist in one particular element. Reputations are enhanced depending upon the use of the Repertoire. As a Younger advances in the gang they become more skilled in implementation. Indeed advance in the social field is partially determined by skill in implementing the Repertoire. Those acting with individual agency are most likely highly skilled operatives at employing the Repertoire. Employing the Sanction Repertoire comes more easily to anyone well established. |
| **Multiple uses** | When to engage multiple elements is important as usage depends upon the objective and motivation for use. |
| **Timing of use** | This can alter the impact of the intervention, e.g. when is the best time to rob or burgle a target? |
| **Using rising tensions** | If tensions increase the gang can increase its influence over the actions of those seeking protection. For safety, more people will ‘check in’ with the gang re their movements, e.g. more information is actively sought and checked. Tension can act as a recruiting tool with increased requests to join. |
| **Ability to change or stop** | A skilled player can identify when to stop using or change a technique, e.g. when to move from bullying and intimidation to reward, or vice versa. |
| **Emotional investment** | Emotional investment impacts upon outcome. It may be desirable, e.g. when using violence. Youngers get too emotionally involved leading to reckless behaviour. Olders employ emotional investment sparingly. At other times ‘cold detachment’ is required, e.g. conducting a set up. |
Regulated Variables

A number of variables exist which alter/impact the way techniques ‘play out’ in the social field or are employed. Most can be identified, planned for or regulated by the gang: others are more random. As shown in Table 5, variables and their relative importance alter depending upon the element employed, e.g. Respect – the key issue is speed and timing of response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Impact / example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment / Use</td>
<td>Varies re level of involvement and length of time of involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Long term harassment or short fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dosage</td>
<td>Heavy or light.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>How often to use the same technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favoured usage</td>
<td>May equate to creation of a personal repertoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Determines element to be employed, e.g. money or revenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation</td>
<td>A need to vary techniques and variables in response to policing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of deployment</td>
<td>May vary and be important e.g. a robbery on/ off the estate. For Set ups - location is key; for Steaming, timing is key. Location is most easily planned for and can be surveilled in advance using local knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unregulated variables

A range of external variables also impacts upon the execution of strategies. These lie beyond the control of the gang and cannot be regulated (see Table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Repertoire employed by other gangs</td>
<td>Rising levels of violence may be ratcheted up in each gang repertoire. Successful techniques are lauded and then adopted. The reputation of these events will be important and the level of reputational ‘traffic’ will be monitored by Olders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Media influences, the breadth and reach of national stories will influence the repertoire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policing</td>
<td>Policing operations to disrupt, reduce or terminate gang activity impact on how the repertoire is employed and the variables used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unknowns and temporary suspension

This may include new gang members working with you for the first time, e.g. they may introduce unexpected violence or a fail to perform or get caught. Victims are an unknown variable and ‘ultra-violence’ may be used against them to reduce risk.

Aspects of the Repertoire may be temporarily suspended by the gang until the situation cools down. When re-employed, the element is altered, e.g. its location (displacement). The five different levels
Adaptations to the Gang Repertoire

What is permissible within a Repertoire is guided and bounded by the social field. This changes over time as new techniques are identified and tested. New components are added or variables manipulated when a major incident lowers the benchmark of what works or what is permissible. Key ‘trigger crimes’ in gangland, local or national have such an effect, e.g. in 1998 when Avril Johnston in Brixton was shot dead by four men in front of her children in an execution style killing. This then ‘permitted’ such future acts. It was reported that the indiscriminate shootings of two girls in 2003 in Birmingham resonated within the social field of the gang and was widely discussed across gang communities.

A sensational incident considered universally impressive results in a high volume discussion amongst the gang. This equates to ‘reputational traffic’. Such incidents also register with the community and reverberate through families, churches and community forms. With each discussion the reputation of the offender is augmented to celebrity status. The event will be mythologized and then local folklore. Such is the case with the shooting of two young people in a crowded McDonald’s restaurant in Brixton in 2006. Such incidents recalibrate the boundaries of the repertoire within the social field. Shropshire and McFarquhar (2002) argue that any firearm use in a school environment would similarly remove the taboo against guns in schools leading to a dramatic increase in their use in schools.

The Gang Repertoire is the tried and tested techniques employed by a gang. Should they fail in execution, fail to deliver successful outcomes, or fail to be employed easily and effectively, they can precipitate a challenge to leadership and even potential gang fracturing (see Chpt 6). Alternatively the variables will be altered.

Strategising, field hierarchy and social order

Writing as part of the Chicago School, Zorbaugh (1929) argued that street gangs acted as the labour pool for the Mob. Within this ‘labour pool’ is a broad spectrum of pooled labour with different characteristics.

These different characteristics are determined, not so much by age, but by experience and position in the field hierarchy, levels of accumulated capital, and desire for distinction. It is recognised however that converting street capital to economic returns is best achieved at the higher levels of the field hierarchy. Thus those at the lower tiers of the hierarchy must struggle up the ladder to achieve success and advancement. Success in the lower tier of the gang allows advancement to the upper (Mature) tier (Olders) where economic capital rewards are greater and more easily accessible,
e.g. those achieving high stocks of street capital are brought into higher value economic activity, e.g. Class A drugs, cash van robberies.

Olders are members with established street capital and Rep. As such they have less use for lower level antisocial behaviours which Youngers employ to raise their stock of street capital. They now have access to economic capital or opportunities to acquire it. It is in the interest of Olders to ‘maintain a steady ship’ to maximise economic capital. Bourdieu termed this ‘conservation strategies’, (Swartz 1997:125). Olders therefore eschew activities such as ‘postcoding’ and incursions which are considered the strategies of Youngers. Moreover, some Olders are now specialising in certain elements of the Gang Repertoire, e.g. in robbery, violence, weapons. The actions adopted from the Gang Repertoire now reflect more instrumental types of crime.

By the Mature tier, Olders are more bonded to the overarching gang strategy and are expected to place the gang strategy above their own individual strategies.

As within any social field, newcomers have the lowest rank and must prove their investment in the ethos and values of the gang. This is demonstrated through loyalty which is often severely tested. However newcomers and Youngers also present a dynamic for change. Bourdieu termed this a succession strategy (Swartz: 1997:125).

While most Youngers are keen to build their cultural capital (knowledge of the gang and locality) and their social capital (connections and networks) there are some Youngers that advance quickly. These individuals pose a threat to the gang and can be subversive. They seek to overthrow the Olders for fast access to economic capital. This represents Bourdieu’s subversion strategists (Swartz 1997:125).

The gang retains its own version of street capital rating. Olders know that they must constantly recruit to maintain brand status and conserve their privileged positions. This keeps strength in numbers and generates a wider pool of Youngers from which to manage business and for selection for higher level activity. This can sometimes be referred to as a mentoring or grooming process. Whilst most newcomers are grateful and compliant others may turn out to be potentially heretical and subversive.

Once acquired, street capital must be maintained and gang members are vigilant in this regard. This is best evidenced by violent responses to disrespect and neighbourhood incursions – both of which are attempts by others individuals or gangs to diminish their stock of street capital. Assets of street capital are thus defended robustly. This is often viewed protecting one’s reputation.

Reputations may be built on trust or local knowledge (cultural capital); about ‘the Game’ or through violence and ability to sell drugs and maintain your Rep. Youngers who demonstrate a high degree of cultural capital (knowledge and information) or retain a high stock of social capital (connections and networks) may be mentored or advanced by Older. Small gains, drug profits and useful information can be rewarded by Olders who will later convert their street capital into economic capital.

Due to their age and desire to develop their share of street capital as rapidly as possible, Youngers have the potential to be wild, troublesome and erratic. This must then be controlled via the Sanction Repertoire, e.g. threats and intimidation, violence, sexual violence, gossip, rumour and
revenge. Positive sanctions are also included in the Sanctions Repertoire, e.g. affirmative inducements, benefits, bungs, kickbacks and party handouts. The Sanctions Repertoire is largely controlled by the Olders. Olders may also restrict access to economic capital.

Where it is not possible to control the Youngers - either through unplanned events (such as a shooting or imprisonment), or through the forceful nature of a subversive individualist, - the aspirant leader may challenge the gang leadership in a subversive strategy. This subversion may lead to a fracture of the main gang and has happened several times recently in SW9. Often this aspirant young leader will then break away to form a new gang which may or may not retain close links to the maternal gang. In this event the individual strategy of a forceful and dominant Younger has superseded the gang strategy.

Above the Olders sit the Elders - the Advanced tier - what the police would call career criminals or organised crime. Their activity is more professionally based, only engaging their links to the gang as required. Elders and Olders set the rules for converting social and cultural capital into economic capital. This is dependent upon the situation at the time but is governed by trust and the value of any street capital being traded.

The gang therefore operates across three recognised tiers: Youngers, Olders, Elders. The recent appearance at the lower tier of Tinnies (young people aged 11-13) and the continuation of gang membership for Elders indicates an expanding age profile. This suggests a system which is becoming harder to avoid on one hand and harder to leave on the other – an expanding social field. It is in the interest of all those within the social field that the gang is maintained and thriving. For most, there are too many vested interests for it to fail. Moreover it provides the key opportunity for impoverished young people to achieve distinction in this social field. Through recruitment, grooming and the relationship between Olders to Youngers the gang replicates the social field through differential association (Sutherland 1947). Values, attitudes, beliefs and techniques are transmitted from one generation to the other. An elongated age profile for the gang now offers a trajectory for involvement from age 11 through to 30 plus. If this trajectory is successfully undertaken by a gang member it is likely that he would experience more than one gang and thus more than one urban street gang social field. At the end of this journey, all the actors he associates with may also have changed. However the social field of the urban street gang will continue as it is replenished by new recruits and those returning at a higher level. As some move out of the gang into the wider community, others move up to take their place. By such mechanisms the urban street gang replenishes and sustains itself in the social field.

Having established that social field theory is the perfect lens through which to examine the urban street gang in SW9 and having established the key concept of street capital, how it is acquired within this social field through strategising and the Gang Repertoire, I shall now move forward to detail the habitus of the gang in SW9.
3 METHODOLOGY

The Literature Review identified the gaps in our knowledge of gangs, including neglected areas in the UK research base. Bourdieu's concept of social fields as arenas of social conflict was then utilised to determine the theoretical perspective for my study. Bourdieu's techniques of social field analysis were then adapted to construct a suitable research methodology by which to analyse the social field of the gang in an open/public setting (Bryman 2004). This chapter provides the reasoning for the methodologies used to analyse the social field before setting out the primary research techniques utilised and the ethical considerations pertaining to accessing young people in gangs.

Choosing an ethnographic approach

The approach adopted for this study is ethnographical. Several elements identified this as the most suitable approach. I shall list these below before examining in detail the methods used.

Field analysis as a research approach

The research sought to use social field analysis (Bourdieu 1991:33) to reveal the dynamics and structures of the social field of the gang in SW9, its internal conflicts and struggles, power dynamics and power relationships. By applying field analysis it was hoped that assumptions about the social field may be indetified. The applicability of social field analysis to gangs is confirmed by Swartz's comment that ‘field analysis of this type provides for an attractive structural mapping of arenas of struggle over different types of capita, power and privilege’, (Swartz 1997:293). Swartz usefully sets out the research agenda as determined by Bourdieu's theory that action is generated by the encounter between opportunities/ constraints and its interface with the habitus. The habitus of those in the social field was therefore a useful starting point for considering any relationship between agency and structure.

In his analysis of Bourdieu’s sociological research method, Swartz (1997:142) considers three steps in this approach:

- Research must relate the particular field of practices to the broader field of power.
- What are the forms of economic or cultural capital specific to the field under investigation? How they are distributed and what are the dominant and subordinate positions for all?
- Research must analyse the class habitus brought by agents to their respective positions and the social trajectory they pursue within these fields.

By broadly adopting this approach I sought to identify and analyse: the Habitus of the youth gang; the characteristics of its social field; its social structure and key actors; relationships of power and capital; capital acquisition and retention; gender dynamics; determining how these are guided by the habitus.

Social field analysis is therefore a useful and much overlooked lens by which to analyse gangs. The nature of social field analysis lends itself to ethnographic study whereby interviewing and data analysis can be combined with observation in a ‘natural’ setting, (Gilbert 2008).
Chicago School legacy

The processes required for social field analysis derive much from the detailed ethnographies of the Chicago School sociologists, notably the works of Thrasher, Burgess, Shaw, Mackay, Goffman, Sutherland and Zorbough. This study is both observant of and guided by their work. Over the years several elements remain surprisingly pertinent to contemporary research not least their naturalistic stance and concept of ‘appreciation’ (Matza 1964) of their research subjects in their ‘symbolic world’. This is best summarised by Goffman who observed that ‘any group of persons...develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable and normal one you get close to it...and a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to ...(their) daily round’, (Goffman 1961: ix-x).

Social field analysis further echoes their concepts of social ecology (Shaw 1929; Shaw and McKay 1931 and 1942) with its emphasis on human communities, habitual living and neighbourhoods. Detailed ethnographic work led them to conclude that over a 20-30 year period neighbourhoods remained remarkably stable in their status as high crime areas despite population churn and changing ethnic composition.

Ecological theory and theories of social disorganisation have further resonance for contemporary gang researchers as it points to high rates of delinquency arising from absent community values and norms whilst highlighting the available option of joining gangs for protection.

Lastly the Chicago School has much to teach us in terms of participant observation techniques and examination of inter-personal relationships. As Savage and Warde (1993:13 quoted in Valier 1998) note, ‘the work of the Chicago School is best seen as an extended empirical inquiry into the nature of social bonding in the modern, fragmented, city’.

Living and Working in the social field

A further reasoning behind choosing ethnographic research was my long history and knowledge of the social field through living and working in the case study area of Lambeth, London SW9.

I lived and/or worked in Lambeth from 1985 – 2012, including five years living on Loughborough Estate, SW9. During this time I became cogniscent of the privations of those living on the estate, especially those in receipt, as I was at the time, of State benefits and experiencing unemployment. I became knowledgeable as to how the estate functioned, who was involved in vandalism and petty crime, where to buy stolen goods, the drug dealing from the local taxi office and on the ‘front-line’, the ‘wall of silence’ following a crime, the imperative of not grassing. Increasingly I became aware of the local gang, the 28’s, later to become the PDC.

During proposals to improve the estate via incorporation into a Housing Action Trust in the late 1980s I observed the local matriarch organise resistance and observed the PDC members as they moved freely around the estate into areas that I would not go for fear of being attacked. I observed their movements as they in turn ‘monitored closely’ the tenants that voted for environmental changes to the estate, acting as a continued ‘watchful presence’ at council tenants meetings. Slowly I became aware I was living in a crime hotspot and became increasingly conscious of young men using walkways to observe and report on police movements.
Two events were key during this time: being caught up in the 1985 Brixton riots which arose from the police accidentally shooting a black woman whilst raiding her house to arrest her gang-affiliated son; having an altercation with two young black women (neighbours) and subsequently being violently attacked by their brother, leading to several weeks off work.

From 1990 - 2008 I worked regularly in Lambeth, travelling through SW9 daily. From 2005-08 I took an office based post in SW9 working on crime and gang issues. I became immersed in all aspects of gang culture in SW9 including: managing London’s most extensive gun and gang project; initialising and chairing a multi-agency Gangs Commission for Lambeth; participating in the multi-agency Five borough Gang Alliance in London and managing a series of interventions for gang affiliated young people.

Blended methodology

As acknowledged by McCall and Simmons (1969), ethnographic research traditionally provides for a range of research techniques which include interviewing, participant observation, field notes and document analysis. In this work the schema employed is ethnographic (Cresswell 1994), and I employ all the above categories. In analysing the social field of the gang in an open /public setting (Bryman 2004) this offers the best opportunity of clarifying my role as observer within the social field, whilst promoting the collection of empirical data.

The overall approach adopted is Inductive. I start with the empirical social phenomenon of gang presence in south London and by analysing such groups, generate a broader theory about the social life of gangs as they present in SW9, (De Vaus 2001:6). Techniques subsequently used support this approach: being open ended and exploratory. In line with an inductive approach focusing on social interactions and subjectivities, I selected a qualitative research method to explore people’s experiences/ values and the processes inherent within the social field, (Bryman 2004). This method highlights views and experiences permitting exploration of what is happening, why it is happening and how it is happening. Such methods support Bourdieu’s recommendations for field analysis. In addition the role of indepth interviewing as a route to understandings the context and motivations of young people’s offending is acknowledged (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

Adopted data collection methods

Study area selection

Primary research included selecting a known gang-afflicted locality for data collection using interviews obtained under a characteristically intense investigation of the setting, (Bryman 2004). The London borough of Lambeth, was selected because:-

- it is a recognised definable area and recognised community
- four areas in SW9 are among the 10% most deprived in the country
- out of 21 Lambeth wards, SW9 displays high volumes of crime in terms of reported Total Notifiable Offences (TNOs) as follows:-
- Coldharbour Ward ranked 1st out of 21 wards for reported TNOs
- Oval Ward ranked 5th
- Ferndale Ward ranked 3rd
- Vassal Ward ranked 8th
- Stockwell Ward ranked 12th
- Larkhall Ward ranked 11th

- SW9 has high levels of crime (Table 2 (Introduction) including London’s highest number of problematic drug users with above average levels of crack cocaine use (Lambeth First 2011)
- has a strong reputation for gang activity, including one of south London’s most recognised gangs, the PDC, (Pritchard 2008).
- The borough Strategic Crime Assessment 2011, states clearly ‘a high proportion of youth violence can be attributed to gang tensions or is committed by individuals with gang links’, noting ‘widespread but sporadic gang and group violent activity in Lambeth, centred in areas of social housing, and producing the high risks of serious youth violence and associated offending’
- Osman Warnings (warning of death threat or high risk of murder issued by the police to the expected victim) in Lambeth are reportedly increasing with approximately four High-rated and 20-40 Medium-rated weekly, (Lambeth MPS).
- the location has been subject of numerous recent gang initiatives and incidents (Pitts 2007; Lambeth First 2008) (see Table 1).

Within the borough I needed a bounded Case Study area. Alongside the above criteria, additional criteria included:- a designated postcode; mixed/ social housing; gang-affected neighbourhoods; the area features significantly on the Gangs in London website (2011). The SW9 royal mail postcode was thus selected (see Figure 1) which includes six local council wards:- Coldharbour; Stockwell; Vassall; Larkhall; Ferndale; Oval. A recent Community Engagement Survey by LCPCH (2010) identified areas of SW9 as some of the least safe spaces in Lambeth.

Primary research

The data collection methods selected included: semi-structured in-depth interviews; participant observation; media analysis documentation collated over three years; web research on social networking sites. Thus research used mixed methods (Bryman 2004) to triangulate findings, (Gilbert 2008). The research instruments adopted were:

| Appendix |
|-----------------|---|
| Information sheets for key workers and professionals | 1 |
| Information sheets for young people | 2 |
| Consent forms | 3 |
| Semi structured interview schedule for gang consultants | 4 |
| Semi structured interview schedule for professionals | 5 |
| Semi-structured interview schedule for young people | 6 |
| Adult Show Cards | 7 |
Devising research instruments

To undertake the interviews I developed a semi-structured interview questionnaire which I later piloted and adapted. Interviewing presented several challenges. Unlike professionals, young people often experience difficulty in articulating criminal behaviours/activities. This is similarly the case when explaining their involvement or the impact of the incident upon their feelings. As attention spans are limited, I organised show cards as a facilitative technique allowing respondents to articulate their understanding and 'unpack' their understanding without highlighting any knowledge deficit. Furthermore this allowed discussions to take place in the third person if necessary, thereby removing or distancing personal involvement.

The show cards were created by establishing an elementary typology of activities or behaviours ranging from interpersonal to community issues; legal to illegal; expressive to instrumental. These types were presented to interviewees as prompts for discussion. (Gilbert 2008). This facilitated the interview ensuring retained focus on key topics.

The typology was derived from three sources:-

- A list of known gangs and recent council interventions by Lambeth council (see Table 7).
- Issues identified in initial discussions with recognised 'gang professionals'.
- Adaptation of a tool used in domestic violence training: the Domestic Violence Power and Control Wheel (The Duluth Model) as pioneered by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, USA (1984). This training model, (see Figure 2 below), illustrates connectivity between actions, patterns, control and domination over women in a DV setting in relation to different spaces or environments, e.g. Public space. It illustrates the tactical choices from abusive authoritative power to direct personal control, including active use of sanctions.

This model with its concept of differentiated spaces provided a template for how gangs might control a neighbourhood. Tactics were then identified appropriate to the differentiated spaces used by gangs and possible activities grouped into categories. The show card list was not exhaustive and through 'adaptive theory' this inductive process allowed for expansion throughout (Layder 1998), e.g. Religion and Grooming were added later. This categorisation assisted in determining if activities were individual or community oriented. This process further assisted in the thematic analysis listed below.

Show cards permitted respondents to rank priorities or group variables, e.g. most important for gaining respect; most dangerous activity, most financially rewarding, permitting easy visual recall of topics and for multiple perspectives or scenarios to be discussed simultaneously. Though devised for use with young people they were used with all respondents to great effect.
Table 7 Known Gangs in Lambeth 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle operative gangs and targeted interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Murder Zone - x 2 ASBOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organised Criminals/ GAS - x 4 ABCs; 1Interim and x3 full ASBOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ABM - x 3 interim ASBOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Roadside Gangsters - x 22 warning letters; 4 Interim ASBOs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other operative gangs
- PDC/PIF (Peel Dem Crew/ Poverty Driven Children)
- Loughborough Soldiers/ LPY – Lick Ped Youngers
- D Block
- Pepys
- 031 Bloods– O-Tray
- Acre Lane Campaign
- Tulse Hill Thugs
- TN1 (Youngers to T Block)
- Ghost Town
- Gipset Crew
- New Park Gunnerz
- Brixton Hill bullies
- South Man Syndicate
- Front Line Bangers
- Corleone Family Riders
- Blenheim Gardens Squad
- St. Mathews Boys

Source: Lambeth Community Safety Division August 2010

Prior to finalising my research instruments I undertook five semi-structured interviews with gang consultants working in or near SW9. These pilots provided insight into the research question; informed and strengthened questionnaire design; generated Show Cards; provided examples of activities and behaviours; allowed practice of show cards. Thus I was able to determine if the issues raised were widely generic or localised. These discussions were central to the development of my research instruments. I further piloted my research instruments with two professional charity youth staff resulting in several additions.

Show Cards were then grouped into Individual or Community themes which allowed for some broad animating questions and perspectives to undertake participant observations (Delamont, 2004: 224; Silverman 2006: 80). These two thematic groupings allowed me to frame discussion around each category – Individual or Community – then around each action to gauge how the actions are employed; are they employed equally across both groupings?; are some favoured as more effective than others?; how regularly are they used, i.e. daily or intermittently?; are some actions age specific?; what are the effects of time and space?; how do individuals and communities respond to these actions and what is like for young people to inhabit these neighbourhoods. This facilitative technique uncovered a huge amount of data within each interview, presenting numerous variables and perspectives.
Following the pilot interviews I amended the questionnaires. The youth questionnaires experienced a continual reduction to the point where they were largely broad topic headings under which discussion took place. The Show Cards proved highly effective for active discussion.
Interviews

Respondent Sampling

To triangulate views and opinions from across SW9 I identified different groups of respondents. Table 8 shows the groups and the number of each group accessed through my research.

Table 8 Successful Interview sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of respondent</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Number who are also resident in SW9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young People who are/ or were recently gang-affiliated</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang professionals working with gang-affiliated young people in Voluntary orgs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals working with gang-affiliated young people in Statutory organisations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I began each interview with initial conversation and discussion before commencing with the semi-structured questionnaire, allowing spontaneous issues to be raised.

For young people I used the investigative field-title of ‘What is it like to live to live here? This provided: an easier point of entry into questions; allowed positives to be recorded; allowed spontaneous raising of gang issues; provided suitable cover from peer gossip.

I then used the Show Cards to determine the importance/priority of issues raised. The Show cards ensured no issues were left out. A map of the case study area was presented and referred to by respondents.

In July 2010 I undertook a focus group of new immigrant arrivals to SW9. All were gang-affiliated and none had English as their first language. Although the interview could not be conducted in as much depth as others, the show cards proved a useful facilitative technique.

Access issues

Each set of respondents were accessed differently. Police were accessed directly via nominations from the Lambeth MPS Superintendent, based on those working with gangs.

Professional respondents included those working with gang-affiliated young people; Community Safety Officers, London Probation Service, Youth Offending Service.

A resident contact was initially provided by the PCSOs and then two further contacts were made via snowballing, (Gilbert 2008).

Professional respondents working with gang-affiliated young people were accessed through voluntary sector organisations, registered charities, locally funded agencies and drop in centres.
Young people were accessed through three local charities operating in SW9. Each charity works with young people who are gang-affiliated or at risk of gang affiliation. Young people were aged 16-25. New arrivals (immigrant) young people were also accessed through a focus group set up for me by a local charity. This included young people aged 16-20.

I had two refusals from housing organisations who were unable to participate. The original intention was to access young people in the Lambeth Youth Offending Service. However despite initially agreeing to provide access, this offer was subsequently withdrawn following internal management difficulties.

Research Stages

The research process began in October 2008. The fieldwork was conducted from April – April 2011. Following piloting I moved quickly on to accessing police and residents. I began by interviewing officers with local knowledge on the ground.

The final stage of research was with young people. This was due to the need to gain new access to a cohort of young people following refusal of access by Lambeth council. However, this allowed me to build up considerable knowledge and examples of gang activities before interviewing them. I could thus triangulate many comments made and use real examples in discussion. I also translated the show cards into ‘youth show cards’ which proved highly effective.

Participant observation.

As part of the ethnographic approach I undertook participant observation, (Stephens et al.1998) making 60 site visits to SW9. Each visit was entered into a field log and used to monitor activities and changes in patterns observed or evidenced on the ground, (Gilbert 2008). These were written up immediately after the visits, which included respondents not showing up for interview (Patton 1987).

Field notes were also used as a reflective log following meetings with my tutor and as a repository for thought and discussion, including any insights or changes in direction of the work. Summary notes were kept separately.

I also set out to undertake participant observation at locally organised meetings, e.g. Tenants and Residents meetings to gather empirical evidence of concerns and observe local dynamics. Ultimately this proved impractical as meetings often cancelled. Local Safe Neighbourhood Panels proved similarly unsuitable.

Webb et al (1996) talk of ‘unobtrusive measures’ to collect data by walking around the area, waiting at bus stops, etc. I had originally proposed not to enter the area unaccompanied but this proved an exaggerated response to media reports of violence. The findings from such visits however yielded fewer findings than had been hoped for due to:-

- Gang issues are often hidden from view and occur over time
- My presence on estates may influence behaviour, i.e. activities may well not take place as I could be (and was) taken to be a figure of authority (Gilbert 2008)
Potential danger of sitting for long periods in a car on the estates

**Thematic Analysis of primary data**

Ethnographic methodologies often generates rich research findings, however, 'it is at the analysis stage that this style of research presents the most difficulties', (Gilbert 2008). This process was eased by my previous experience of immersion in the social field which provided a greater understanding of the realities of the actors, locations and names.

Interviews were digitally recorded, with the exception of one police officer who refused, and were later transcribed by hand. The use of the projective technique of Show Cards facilitated discussion of considerable length, generating interviews between 90 – 200 minutes in length, (up to 70 pages of A4 transcribed). These were then all transcribed verbatim in long-hand before being typed up. The transcription process, though long and time-consuming, proved to be useful in terms of getting acquainted with the detail (Gilbert 2008).

The data was then subjected to rigorous thematic analysis. Firstly data was entered into Excel spreadsheets with text highlighted or colour coded under thematic headings (Cresswell 2007); the Show Cards acting as pre-selected headings and natural groupings. Recorded conversations and pre-grouped categories allowed for interpretation based on the context of words used and expressed. Use of Excel spreadsheets allowed one text or quote to be grouped under several different headings. Similarly through this process new groupings began to emerge, e.g. Expressive, Instrumental or Sanctions. Once all transcriptions were loaded onto Excel, it was possible to analyse each theme, e.g. Robbery, as a separate folder. It was now possible to determine differences in perspectives between the key variables of Age, Gender, position within or outside the social field. This process provided rich data illuminating significant differences between these variables.

**Secondary research**

**Collation of media coverage**

Local and national newspapers were analysed for content from October 2009 – October 2011 permitting identification of incidents, locations and historical context, allowing me to build up examples and references for use in interviews.

**Review of Social Networking Sites (SNSs)**

A range of gang locations were identified by random snowballing and later following leads from the police. These were accessed live and reviewed over a two year period. This permitted opportunities to assess how incidents were ‘played out’ online; to identify common themes; how gangs presented themselves; the location of gangs; terminology used; current ‘beefs’; links to gang culture and symbolism; age groups; etc. This technique again proved useful in interviews with all respondents.
Analysis of police data

A number of requests for police data were also made directly to the Lambeth police Borough Command Unit, including a list of previous convictions of those involved in Operation Navarra (to seize dangerous dogs) see Table 11. A request for data on Osman reports in Lambeth was unsuccessful; as was a request for a DVD compilation of SNS videos compiled showing gang-affiliated young people taunting rivals and displaying firearms. A request denied request was for further analysis on a possible correlation between ethnicity and specialist gang functions.

Ethical considerations

Undertaking gang research always highlights ethical considerations for the ‘dignity, rights, safety and well-being’ of participants, (Stuart et al. 2002:3). This research, conducted in line with the ethical guidelines of the Social Research Association (www.the-sra.org.uk), identified ethical considerations principally relating to accessing young people and issues of safety.

Young people

I had originally planned to access young people aged 16 and above via the Lambeth Youth Offending Team. Sifting criteria relating to postcodes and gang affiliation were drafted alongside Informed Consent forms. Due to a last minute change of heart by the YOT I was unable to access these young people.

Ethical considerations regarding interviews with young people were nonetheless fully addressed in all interviews. Consent was agreed through the charity/agency manager/director and subsequently with each young person. Each interviewee received an Information sheet detailing the study with the name of third party contacts and provisions were made to raise issues of ‘significant harm’ with agency managers if declared: these provisions were not required. No incentives were paid to participants. Young men and women were interviewed and at no time was the gender of the interviewee or the researcher considered problematic, or raised as an issue by either party.

Safety and minimising harm

This research relates to vulnerable people and sensitive issues of criminal activity and violence. To minimise harm or distress to researcher or participants, all possible impacts were considered and monitored, (Gilbert 2008) and the following provisions undertaken:

- All research tools were tailored for young people to maximise understanding
- The research title was reframed to avoid any negative impact on willingness to participate.
- Interviews were held at private locations.
- Young people were able to use a pseudonym
- Assurances were given re confidentiality: no comment were attributable
- All interviews were uniquely referenced
- Only broad categories were used in writing up commentary
- Data was secured at all times.
Confidentiality was reinforced throughout interviews. Participants could withdraw from interviews or to refuse to answer at any time. The emotional well-being of participants was considered. The researcher was clearly identified at all times and at no time was this purpose concealed.

Anonymity and terminology

Ethical consideration was given to the appropriateness of revealing the location and names of gangs active in the area. It is argued, most notably by Aldridge et al (2008) (but also by Klein 1971; Ralphs 2009; Hobbs et al 2003) that introducing anonymity in published research reduces stigma to local communities. Referring to gang research undertaken in ‘Research City’, Aldridge et al, argue against ‘strengthening’ gangs through research publication, noting local communities did not wish to further glorify gangs as ‘brand names’ and sought to limit ‘identifying talk’.

I argue this approach is located in traditional labelling theory and not conducive to the more realist perspective of social field analysis. Herein lies a key methodological point of difference. Adopting a field analysis approach ensures the local context and history of the area is central to any understanding of local dynamics and the interactions of actors. Without such context the history or habitus cannot be fully explored, assessed or elucidated. Without situating the research study the perspective of local residents cannot be contextualised and established gang history cannot be considered, e.g. in SW9 the long standing history between the black community and the police; or the Jamaican community and drug dealing, is unavoidable. In my theoretical approach such aspects are central dimensions of social field analysis and cannot therefore be ignored. Indeed it is the habitus of such areas that affects and governs actions within the social field of SW9 and of the gangs existing within SW9 (see Chapter 4).

The relevance of local historical context and habitus is further heightened when researchers seek to map changes or evolutions over time. Without situating or contextualising gang research, evolutionary insights are dulled and claims of change cannot be tested by those with local knowledge. This is a crucial element in moving beyond field reportage to field analysis.

Moreover, anonymising the findings from SW9 or the gangs involved, inhibits understandings, denying realities on the ground. This view was shared by local residents who are highly cognisant of local gangs and their histories and are realistic and knowledgeable of the discourses widely available in the public domain. They are cognisant of the reputation of SW9, its gangs and are realistic about their existence. They do however seek a better understanding of the phenomenon. Abstracting any findings, some argued, would deny their experiences.

Whilst seeking to avoid stigma is doubtless a worthy objective it fails to account for the social field in which the gangs themselves inhabit. It potentially denies the enormous changes, made daily reality for young people (and for gangs), e.g. social networking within this field. The challenge therefore is
not to worry that research publications will glorify ‘gangs as brand names’, but to enter the social field of the gang – here brand names already exist, they have a currency and street value. The challenge then is to explore why they exist, for whom they hold relevance, how are they monitored, advertised, etc. The issue of stigma is relevant to those outside the social field of the gang rather than those within it.

I have therefore followed a Left Realist approach essentially dictated by both theoretical perspectives and field responses and have chosen not to anonymise the findings.

Similar arguments to those above are often expressed about the terminology ‘gang’. For some researchers, (Aldridge et al 2008; Ralphs 2009; Hallsworth & Young 2008; Hallsworth and Duffy 2010), the term is often misattributed and widely misunderstood. For Hallsworth and Young (2008) who remain sceptical of the existence of gangs in the UK, the term ‘gang’ and the subsequent discourse of ‘gang talk’, is to be avoided.

The term however drew wide consensus amongst my respondents. Although one or two respondents preferred to set their own slightly amended definition, as interviews progressed the term gang was used easily by all. Whilst for some, gangs are an issue ‘which dares not speak its name lest it become manifest’, it remains a term commonly utilised within the field are of SW9. Although lack of an agreed definition is acknowledged the term was used in the research and is used within the published study.

In the following chapter I examine in more detail the habitus of the social field, how street capital is accumulated and how ‘The Game’ is played.
In chapter two I set out the main theoretical perspective of field theory, and how capital operates within the social field by way of 'the Game', leading actors in the field to employ investment strategies using the Gang Repertoire. By so doing, they seek to generate street capital and thus advance within the social field. The Gang Repertoire therefore acts as a menu of tested actions or strategies. The contents of the Repertoire and how it is implemented, i.e. the strategies employed, are determined and coordinated by what is possible within the social field, which is determined by the habitus of the social field.

It is now pertinent to look more closely at the social field and to explore further the various elements which constitute the habitus. I shall then consider the mechanisms of capital accumulation in the social field, focussing on street capital, its acquisition and retention. Firstly, it is useful to focus further on the actors within the field, the role of habitus and how it determines opportunities within the social field. To accompany this exposition I shall refer to the experiences of the respondents in the field.

The Field

Concentration of poverty

A further recognisable feature of SW9 is the concentration of poverty within specific wards. Table 9 indicates levels of deprivation in the wards of SW9. These wards are characterised by high unemployment, high levels of social and rented housing and high levels of population churn with new arrivals whose first language is not English. This data suggests that young people in these wards in SW9 experience significant degrees of deprivation which indicate reduced life opportunities and in some cases, increased availability for and proximity to, the social field of the gang.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Key Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Coldharbour  | By far the most deprived part of the borough  
61% of residents are social housing tenants (LA 38%)  
38% of residents receive child benefit (LA 28%)  
34% receive housing benefit (LA 21%)  
22% receive council tax benefit (LA 14%)  
20% receive income support (LA 12%)  
21% receive tax credits (LA 12%)  
13% unemployed (LA 8%)  
53% residents are aged 18-34, (LA 45%)  
74% are from ethnic minority backgrounds (LA 51%) - predominantly from black Caribbean (22%), black African (14%) and 10% mixed/other ethnic group.  
Fewer residents speak English as their main language (69%), (LA 82%)  
42% of households include children (LA 34%)  
18% care for someone that is sick, disabled or elderly (LA 3%) |
| Ferndale     | 28% of residents have lived in Lambeth less than 2 years, (LA 21%)  
47% are social tenants (LA38%)  
20% of residents receive council tax benefit (LA 14%)  
18% receive tax credits (LA12%)  
43% receive no benefits  
24% of ethnic minority residents speak English as a second language (LA18%) |
| Vassall      | 58% of residents live on housing estates (LA 40%)  
52% of residents are low socio-economic grade DE (LA 28%)  
31% of residents receive housing benefit (LA 21%)  
19% receive council tax benefit (LA 14%)  
18% receive Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance (LA 12%)  
17% of residents are 18-24 year olds (LA 12%)  
Black African residents account for 15% (LA 9%) |
| Stockwell     | 78% of residents live on a housing estate (LA 40%) and 52% are social tenants  
39% are sole occupiers (LA 29%)  
48% of residents are in the lowest DE social class (LA 28%)  
68% are from ethnic minority backgrounds (LA 51%)  
39% are classified as ‘white other’ (LA 19%) – Portuguese = (11%); Polish (7%) and non-specified white other origins (19%)  
38% of residents do not have English as their first language (LA 18%) |
| Larkhall     | 17% of residents are aged 18-24 year olds (LA 12%)  
29% of residents have lived there for less than two years (LA 21%)  
39% of residents are economically inactive  
47% of residents are social class C2DE)  
46% are in receipt of benefits |
### Oval Ward

- 8% of residents speak Portuguese (LA 4%)
- 65% of residents live on housing estates (LA 40%)
- 36% of residents tend are social grade DEs (LA 28%)
- 53% of residents are aged 18-34 (LA 45%)

Source: Published with kind permission from Lambeth Strategic Assessment 2011, Lambeth First.

### Capital distribution in the Social field

For young people in SW9 the social landscape is often one of social exclusion and deprivation. Ascension within the social field of SW9 is therefore both challenging and problematic for those ‘individuals and groups (seeking to) draw upon a variety of cultural, social and symbolic resources in order to maintain and enhance their position in the social order’, (Swartz 1997:73). Bourdieu, recognising these resources as capital, also acknowledges their unequal distribution, (Bourdieu 1993). Young people in SW9 are quickly made aware of the poverty and social deprivation that pervades their communities and the headlines which accompany this, (Lambeth First):

- Lambeth is one of the most densely populated places in the UK
- Population churn is 24% of the total borough population and in 208 accounted for a movement in and out of the borough of over 70,000.
- 9% of all households are headed by lone parents
- The 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation places Lambeth as the 5th most deprived borough in London and the 14th most deprived in England.
- 67% of households live in rented accommodation
- 41% of households are low income households
- One in three children attending Lambeth schools is eligible for free school meals
- Unemployment in the borough was 9.4% in 2010 – but higher for young people (Ancer Spa:2010:10)
- ‘the proportion of children and young people living in poverty is higher than average, as is infant mortality, teenage pregnancy, childhood obesity, primary and secondary school permanent exclusion levels and the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training’, (Lambeth First, 2009b:10)

Economic capital in the social field of SW9 is thus limited. For young people is limited yet further and for those from BME communities may yet be further limited.

Cultural capital in this social field refers to verbal facility, cultural awareness, educational credentials. Importantly in this social field cultural capital relates to a knowledge of the history of the area ‘with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts. In the urban street gang this might mean the acquired and assembled oral history of the gang or the neighbourhood or the symbolic artefacts or places resonant with the community. Cultural capital acquired outside the social field does not always translate to cultural capital inside the social field of the gang. Thus actors within the social field with higher levels of cultural capital tend to be elder males in possession of accumulated prestige. This is not readily available to younger people or to new arrivals and takes time to accumulate.
'When you grow up on the estate, you would see Big Cars, Big man, big motorbikes, jewellery — and you think, I want it.' (African Caribbean Male Older)

Information, on the other hand, which also acts as cultural capital is more readily available to those in the social field and as a result it is easily sourced, acquired and traded. Information acquisition is also the element of cultural capital most easily accessed by girls and young women. I shall explore Information in more detail in chapter 5.

Social capital in the form of network connections, friends and acquaintances is central to the social field of the gang. One’s volume of social capital is a reflection of the breadth and reach of one’s network and one’s ability to mobilise the cultural and economic capital held by these network connections. Again young people and new arrivals to the social field are in deficit here.

'It would be “dem Man is flying Post offices, dem Man is shotting drugs, crack and heroin.” I’d be like, “Wow for real”. This is when I was about eight. It stuck in my mind, that is what doing them things gets you. I still see them now and they are driving Porche’s now. That’s what creates the gang too. “Cos you are looking up to certain Man and certain Man have nice tings”. And they ain’t getting it from doing right. They getting it from doing wrong’. (African Caribbean Male Older)

It is through building and nurturing social networks that girls and young women can excel in the social field of the gang, often making themselves central and indispensible to the functions of the field.

Taking these forms of capital as Bourdieu’s ‘casino chips’, it is likely that some actors play with very few chips.

The Actors

Overall, the vast majority of young people operating as actors within the social field of the gang experience a deficit of capital. Ascension in the social field is therefore only achievable through the accumulation of street capital. It is this commodity which becomes the subject of convulsive struggle. In the social field of the gang only street capital will lead to distinction.

'Everyone knows the reputation of the Head Man. Such is respect for his reputation that local people in the wider community will stop him in the street and ask if they can do something for him’. (White Male Resident)

Distinction will lead to increased opportunities and economic capital; mostly it leads to a way out of the social field and its poverties of aspiration and socio-economy. Accumulated street capital also offers increased safety in this contested and violent arena. The acquisition of street capital is therefore a natural response to the conditions of the social field.
‘Everyone wants to be feared, empowered or known — they all want to be that external force. To try and reach an Elder or Older — they will do all they can to stay in power. With young men, there is a level of ego which comes with this, because of who I am, I want to be affiliated with the biggest names. I want the finest cars, biggest crib, beautiful girls, money. I want all of this to make me Cool. Whatever it takes or costs to be cool, I will do because I am going to be Cool’. (West African Male Older)

What is it about the personal social ethnic and cultural circumstances that makes this kind of behaviour an imperative? Essentially the struggle of this social field is about one thing - Survival: this may mean the avoidance of social fate or simply staying alive. It is evident to all concerned, early in life that they have been dealt few ‘chips’ with which to play life’s game.

‘Our teachers saying you’ve got a criminal record so you can’t go to University — you might as well stop now’. (West African Female Older)

This can be viewed as a lack of capital resources, (see below).

Actors take position in the social field depending upon the quality and weight of their chips.

‘The Olders would be going to rob a Post Office and I’d be like, “Let me come Pleaseeeeee!” they’d say — "You’re too small, there’s not enough room in the car bruv". I’d cry cos I couldn’t come cos I was too small. I wanted what the Olders had — NOW. I wanted the cars etc’. (African Caribbean Male Older)

Ethnicity

The population of Lambeth is ethnically diverse with over 36% of the borough's population from ethnic minority groups. In the borough the largest non-white ethnic group is black African (11.5%), followed by black Caribbean (9.8%). The child population is however more diverse with 59% of children from BME communities compared to 37% of the general population. In Lambeth schools this rises to 80% of the population. Over 140 different languages are spoken in the borough an almost one third of primary and secondary school pupils (30%) are not fluent in English. Black residents are much more likely to be unemployed (57%) as are those of mixed ethnicity (56%), when compared to the number of white residents in employment (80%). SW9 is made up of several wards and African Caribbean and West African populations are disproportionally represented in these neighbourhoods (Lambeth First 2011), e.g. in Coldharbour ward, 74% of residents are from BME communities.

Within the gang the ethnicity of membership is a direct reflection of the ethnicity of the local neighbourhood or estate. This finding was also affirmed by Aldridge in her work in Manchester (Aldridge et al 2007). In SW9 the street gangs are largely made up of black Caribbean or black African young people with some Portuguese and white British. Police recognise that all gangs in SW9 are ethnically mixed and no single ethnicity dominates. White ethnicity still exists in gangs, but
to a lower extent. Around Brixton the gang membership could be 30-50 strong, with only 2-3 white members.

**The Gang Habitus**

Social action within the field is guided and coordinated by the habitus. Habitus (as seen in chapter Two) functions as a regenerative repository of previous experiences and social conditions which subjectively frames future actions and decisions, i.e. it leads actors to decide what is possible and not possible within the social field:

> ‘You learn it just by hanging around. You know what is honour and what isn’t. You know what you are supposed to do and not supposed to do really. Just like what you are allowed to do at school. They don’t even need to explain it’. (West African Male Older)

This ‘bounded agency’, (Evans et al 2001:24) ensures those in the same social field often share the same social trajectory. Experience in this environment determines actions which are likely to bring benefits or advancement.

> ‘You only get respect if you are a hard body. I hear things like my boy is the ‘best ratchet’. If you don’t talk about them quick and then don’t act, you’ll not get the respect you deserve. You’ve gotta be bad...you know he done this, he done that. Then it goes through the community quickly, you know, he threw the petrol bomb through the window – he’s COLD! Then my Rep starts. Then someone does wanna test you but until someone’s does then you’ve got respect. Y’know, don’t mess about with him, he’ll throw a petrol bomb through your window. And that’s how you get respect. (African Caribbean Male Older)

Action in the social field is determined by how these subjective frames, both personal and social, interface with opportunities, meaning that for many, ‘future possibilities’ are bounded by ‘past experiences’, (Evans et al, 2001: 25). Class, history, habit, experience and tradition thus determine the individual habitus, (Bourdieu, 1997:95). In this way, any course of action is determined by what is perceived to possible or credible: thus for some, ‘the Game’ becomes the only game in town. Thus actions within the social field are largely predisposed or constrained by the habitus, e.g. by the Code of the Street.

In this social field habitus dictates that educational achievement is not credible, where as street knowledge and ‘standing up for yourself’, is:

> ‘you can’t get a job if employers know you are from SW9’ (West African Female Resident)

This translates to building and maintaining reputation and respect, i.e. street capital which is acquired by employing strategies from the Gang Repertoire. Maximising street capital helps achieve distinction and success.
Street Code

A key element of the habitus operating within the social field of the gang, as in the social field of many deprived and contested neighbourhoods, is the unspoken Street Code. In his seminal work, Elijah Anderson (1999) identified and described a pattern of hidden cultural rules operating in many deprived communities. These hidden rules amount to a codification of expected and permissible behaviours which become established as the social norms and form part of the habitus.

‘There was one chap, if he hit you, you would fall over. He was a cage fighter and well known. You wouldn’t hit him as he could take it and he has stamina. He had a certain physicality that I recognise. I can tell by the way he moves and just by his movement the way he conducts himself and what his street cred is. How, under the street code, he deals with himself is very important’.

(African Caribbean Male Elder)

Anderson notes that the Code is understood by all in the neighbourhood and passed down from generation to generation. In SW9 this Code was understood by all respondents.

The transmission of ‘street’ knowledge from generation to generation is referred to by Sutherland as differential association (Sutherland 1947). On the street, the Code is viewed as a virtual survival manual and it forms the basis for the establishment of street capital. It varies slightly from area to area reflecting the habitus of the neighbourhood and the social field in which it operates. There are some key tenets which are comprehensively understood and largely adhered to in such communities. This can be paraphrased as:-

- No grassing or snitching
- We sort out our own problems, ourselves
- Limited interaction, if any, with authority
- Defend yourself and don’t take any shit
- Violence is part of the ‘hidden contract’ of reprisals for any infringements
- In SW9 this will mean accepting, unchallenged, the dominant Code of the Street, (Anderson 1999).

‘To these particular individuals that’ll be enough for them to react. Code of the street says you must get your respect back or you will forever be thought of as soft. Yeah, absolutely so they have to act and live out the role basically. You can’t just do the talk you have to go and follow it up’. (African Caribbean Male Police Officer)

The social field of SW9 and of the gang are defined and informed by their habitus and also by their history. In SW9 this includes a long list of events formative for both the community and UK policing, including:- the arrival of the African Caribbean community, the ‘Sus’ laws or Stop and Search (Kennison 2000); political and community sensitivities culminating in the Brixton riots (Scarman 1981) widespread suspicion regarding fair treatment or potential racial stereotyping by the police, including via stop and search, leading to stigmatising of the local community,(Marlow 1999).
history finds visual form in the rapid development of the ‘Brixton crowd’ which quickly gathers during any incident. This experience is still live and ensures an ongoing reluctance to engage with the police that sustains and reinforces the traditional Street Code Wall of Silence. This is now included in the habitus and the social field. The gang understands this fact and thus the Street Code defines behaviours, expectations and actions. It is used as a control mechanism for other gang members or those external to their immediate social field. This code operates as the ‘social wallpaper’ for SW9: the social field of the gang operate its own codes of behaviour.

Grassing

Grassing, is viewed as abusing information with the intent of causing grief; by informing to the police, resulting in arrest, or by providing information to another authority. In his work on Grassing, Joe Yates (2006) notes young people are socialised early in life about the social taboo of grassing via informal community networks. In the social field of the gang this forms part of the habitus. Grassing is also an example of an individual strategy taking supremacy over a joint or collective strategy, i.e. placing oneself first and above others for personal gain or advantage and thus stepping outside the gang. It shows disrespect and lack of allegiance to the gang whose reputation or street capital is now violated. Thus any group protection offered previously is quickly annulled and withdrawn. Reprisals are sanctioned quickly, often resulting in group attacks as the gang re-asserts its authority in the social field. All previous friends and peers are actively corralled against the individual placing him in considerable danger. The level of reprisal, i.e. fighting, stabbing or shooting depends upon the seriousness of the incident.

In a social field where incidents are much hyped and exaggerated individuals can suffer a serious violent reprisal based on rumour, gossip or unverified and inaccurate accounts. Receiving multiple threats amplifies the dangers, furthermore informing authorities is taboo. In SW9 even young people who are seriously injured do not request police involvement. Younger people are afraid of being seen to talk to the police lest others interpret their actions as snitching. Arrests within the gang can also cause repercussions as accusations fly over who has snitched. The use of unknown police informants can also be problematic as the wrong members may be suspected. Providing information to the police would result in the person having to leave the area. If your family remained they could then be targeted.

The code of no grassing is understood by both Youngers and Olders. Youngers can, through fear or enthusiasm to demonstrate loyalty, act as powerful guardians of this rule and they remain anxious not to impinge it. They will seek to increase their street capital by claiming excitedly, ‘yeah I’d go inside. I wouldn’t talk’. They often have little understanding of the consequences of their actions believing that current relationships with the gang naturally continue if they went inside. Olders can exploit this using Youngers to enact violent actions by proxy knowing they won’t snitch and get a lighter sentence if arrested. For some young people this requirement not to discuss anything to their family or friends brings an almost unbearable burden. Trust and loyalty to peers is constantly under consideration. To build trust, many young members only go out in groups to minimise and monitor grassing.
Reciprocity

The habitus in SW9 demands a strict Code of Silence, (Evans et al 1996). This is achieved through fear and intimidation but also through gifts and the function of reciprocity. In this way silence is 'bought' through community engagement in low level criminality. The threat of potential repercussions to informers is widely understood. Repercussions are widely advertised to both community and gang: this includes physical violence. Young people growing up in SW9 learn this as part of the Code of the Street. Both Coleman (1994) and Putnam (2000:20-21: 134-148) identify reciprocity as a central concept of social capital, describing it as a social norm arising from social networks and trust. In the social field of the gang, this contractual mutual exchange includes silence. As inducement for silence the gang offers handouts to struggling families, e.g. food and cash. Such assistance may not always be repaid, however there is the unspoken acknowledgement that you have to keep your mouth shut. Flaunting the Code indicates a challenge to be addressed through the Sanctions Repertoire. One example of how reciprocity works in this social field is through the buying and selling of stolen goods:

Buying and selling stolen goods is fully condoned within the wider community and forms part of the habitus of the neighbourhood as well as of the gang. This 'hidden economy' is linked to poverty and deprivation and is not unique to gangs (Bourgeois 1995). It is an example of Cloward and Ohlin's (1960: 161-171) 'integrated communities' where legitimate and illegitimate local economies co-exist. Sullivan identified the market for illegal goods as the 'most pervasive social supports for youthful economic crime' (Sullivan 1989:119) and in Lambeth it represents a form of 'cultural adaptation', (Hagan 1994:69), is 'not censured' by adults (Sanders 2005: 43-55) and is locally 'highly valued'. All low income areas have their local 'Handler' who will buy and sell stolen goods. It is thus an established social norm for many both within and outside the social field of the gang.

In SW9 gangs are often central to the functioning of localised chains of supply for such goods. This activity is a further transitional element between the Expressive and Instrumental Repertoire and an entry-level activity for those seeking to be introduced to the gang. Success in handling may result from family or personal networks. Those operating such networks are valuable as help distribute goods quickly, create influence and goodwill and generate information and buy silence.

The habitus of the social field is well understood by the actors from an early age. They are long skilled in the Code of the Street as it relates to SW9, to not grassing; they know who runs with the gang, who to approach if they need to acquire money, drugs, stolen goods. They understand the role of violence to settle disputes and the imperative of respect. They have been raised in illusio of the 'the Game' and do not question it.

'The Game'

The stages of 'the Game' are readily understood by all those in the social field. As determined by the habitus, the rules are firmly established and quickly become known to prospective players. Actors in the social field must first accumulate starting chips. They are then invited to join 'the Game'. In the social field of SW9 those about to join the gang must first generate Respect. They must then quickly
manufacture street capital by developing a Reputation. Establishing a reputation in the social field permits entry into ‘the Game’.

“When I was in my first gang, the older lot above me were the bruvvas of the group that I was in and then there was a younger lot behind me. And I’m not established in this group, I’m new. No-one knows who I am. So, what happened was something came up and everybody run and I didn’t. I just stayed there and run at ‘em, run at the crew. Everyone was like, ‘He’s a nutter!’ That was it, it was just like, that’s it, the end of the line, man. That’s it, I’m freelancing. I’m in the ‘Cools’ now. So now I’m working for the bigger group. So I’ve gone from here to working for the bigger group as I’ve established my leadership qualities amongst my peer pressure. So now, I’m working for the bigger group, getting bigger vibes and betting brought into bigger situations’. (African Caribbean Male Elder)

They will be severely tested during this process. A range of strategies are available in the Expressive Repertoire to choose from. Initial strategies might include personal branding and ways of evidencing to others that you are now part of a gang, e.g. wearing colours. This then moves on to strategies and activities which impact more upon the wider community. During this process the players test the Repertoire and also the boundaries of the social field.

Once this is part of ‘the Game’ has been successfully completed, players may then ‘Move up’ to the next level. This is the stage of maximising street capital. Here the players exhibit strong or profound attachments to the gang and it’s Endz. Goods acquired through strategising may now be actively sold within the community to generate further street capital.

Once street capital is maximised it must be maintained. This is done by strategising using the Instrumental Repertoire. Two key strategies, street robbery and drugs, act as entry points for those transitioning from the Expressive Repertoire to the Instrumental Repertoire. Here players cut their teeth with Olders generating low level economic capital alongside street capital.

Finally all players must constantly monitor their street capital within the social field.

I shall now explore each of these strategising sequences in more detail.

**Getting started in the Game (Earning Respect)**

To become a Playa in the social field of the gang you have to begin with your allotted handful of chips – the accumulated capital resources. The level and weight of your chips will initially determine the amount of respect you have due to you on the street. This is your starting hand of street capital – it will now be up to you to play the Game and by so doing increase or decrease your street capital. For those with few starting chips Respect must be earned quickly.

‘It comes gradually. For me my English was not strong so I affiliated with Cool kids and I had to prove myself. It happened subconsciously for me. When opportunities presented themselves I jumped in – mostly fighting. I
beat up one guy one so much by next day it was – don’t mess with that guy. They all knew. Then younger kids wanted to know me. If this happens in school imagine how much more this is On Road – there are no boundaries On Road, no one will exclude you for fighting or suspend you. You win, you lose, you carry on. So it could be a gradual building of a reputation – but if you do something extreme then your Reputation goes up in an extreme way. There is a replication or mirror effect. We always looked for a fight. Who can knock out someone with a first punch. But then I needed a reason to do it: so you need to justify your actions’. (West African Male Older)

Respect is described by professionals as: ‘a very high issue right now’; ‘They are steeped in this; It surrounds them all the time’. Young gang members describe it as a current issue, ‘Yeah, it’s a big deal right now at the moment’ and ‘Yes, very much. It’s always been so. It is the key to it all’. It is widely acknowledged that people understand this concept from an early age (Winlow 2001; Anderson 1999; Yates 2006).

Respect has to be earned, though some can acquire it more quickly than others. Background, history and physicality increases chances of gaining and retaining respect. It is about both actions and attitude. It is temporal and needs to be constantly reinforced and re-established. The attributes which allow respect to be conferred relate directly to the habitus and social field.

‘I’d respect him, but he’d have to have some attribute that would back me off. If he doesn’t have that he’s gonna find it very difficult to get that Street recognition. Cos Street recognition is based on competitiveness, aggression, athleticism, physicality, the gait, you know it’s all part of it’. (African Caribbean Male Older)

For many, winning respect is a long process which occurs over time.

‘There were people I grew up with whose name wasn’t ringing back in the day, but their names is ringing now. But I know they always had it in ‘em. They just weren’t as popular as some others. A couple of people I grew up with would’ve done more wicked things, they always had potential – and they have rose to power now. Now they are there where they wanna be. It was always in them’. (African Caribbean Male Older)

Even once you are gang-affiliated it remains a continual process. To get respect you have to:-

To get respect you have to be:-
• Connected
• Being a Hard Man (a Badman)
• A Brand name
• Signature style
• Wildness
• Not backing down and stamina
• Reputable in business
• Unpredictability
• Loyalty
• An Elder with longevity
• Cool

If you fail to provide respect to someone on the Road, it indicates you are challenging them or you fail to appreciate his Street Capital. It is then his duty to make you understand and appreciate lest you challenge him or take him for granted. Showing you have failed to understand his Street Capital value, indicates you are failing in your knowledge of the Street code. You are thus thought to be ‘green’, new, or unschooled. This marks you out as potentially ‘soft’ and likely to be targeted. Thus instant and ongoing recognition is key. It quickly defines your ability to ‘read’ levels of Street Capital; demonstrates your street skill and knowledge setting the template by which you are ‘ranked’. Alternatively if you demonstrate an ability to ‘read rank’ and thus wilfully display disrespect, that then indicates challenge. A key example of this is the Visual Bump which can act as a trigger for violence, (Katz. 1988: 110), also known in Brixton as ‘screwing’ (Sanders, 2005).

Some Elders claim many young people now want respect but have not deserved it and this occurs both within and outwith the social field of the gang. On the other hand being well versed in issues of respect can open up opportunities for those seeking to build bridging social capital. If one is considered to be well versed in aspects of respect and the Code of the Streets one is able to respect both local and personal boundaries. Such people then become ideal candidates to deal drugs ‘up country’. Such people are considered more likely to recognise the boundaries of other social fields and act accordingly and respectfully.

In the social field of the gang, respect is often allocated for issues considered perverse outside the social field.

‘They have to fight too. They have to use all the right gestures and language, loud voice, frightening speech. It builds Rep. Or 2 or 3 girls hanging around to show he’s the Daddy. Or wearing all the proper gear to show he’s cool, trendy or he smokes the right things – stronger joints, always has some on him. Talks to girls like dirt. Girls will follow. Then they envy him and respect him’. (Turkish Female Resident)
This relates directly to the habitus and the tested Repertoire which has proven successful in acquiring street capital, i.e. shooting someone in a public place in an innovative or daring fashion, e.g. a drive-by on a motorbike, will achieve kudos.

Violation (disrespect)

Youngers talk about disrespect as being ‘violated’. Outside the gang’s social field violation is considered physical interference or penetration. Within the social field it is viewed as desecration of something sacred; a personal outrage or spoliation of their Street Capital. Such transgressions are viewed as purposeful and deliberate. Minor infringements are treated as if major. To those outside this social field, many issues are viewed as trivial. Those operating in the social field will put their lives at risk to defend their reputation and prevent their Street Capital from falling.

‘Dissing? From their gang member point of view they are interfering with how they can progress through their criminal ranks to earn more money and get higher status. If they are constantly disrespected then they are not going to get their higher status’. (African Caribbean Male Police Officer)

Disrespect may also commonly occur through rumour. Rumour is employed as part of the Sanctions Repertoire. This may be an apparently minor issue such an individual saying he heard that person X has called you ‘moist’, (a derogatory term meaning soft. Soft means easy target). This is considered enough to reduce street capital and warrant a confrontation or retaliation which can lead to serious violence.

Declining respect for Olders and adults.

Older and ex-gang members were quick to point out that there had recently been (in the last five or six years) a change in levels of respect in SW9 and in how respect as a tradable commodity was seen and used. One recounted how several years ago if you mentioned you were PDC,

‘No one could talk to you or touch you. They looked up to you. Now you can’t say to people I’m in this crew and expect them to leave you alone or to respect you. For these young people will say, “I don’t give a fuck who you are, it doesn’t mean nuttin to me”. (African Caribbean female Independent Operator)

Some professionals and ex-gang members also noted a change in levels of respect for older adults.

‘You might have been terrorised by certain people at first, but you hold it in. Then you get bigger, older. Then you turn on them. Certain people have got pain cos of what they’ve been through and how they’ve held it in. And they
just end up being wilder than the rest. There’s a lot of Man out there like that, a lot of one man armies. (African Caribbean Male Older)

Earlier deference for adults, their authority and community standing, is now limited and conditional. For adults outside the social field of the gang there is no change, however challenging a gang member or remonstrating with them makes them viable targets.

‘It’s different now. They still do respect some adults sometimes but it is limited. It’s not as it used to be. People are sliding. Now, if Mum pulls him away, you’d bring it to her – “who are You to speak to me?” So that is kinda changing a bit now with respect to the elders’. (African Caribbean Female Independent Operator)

Street Name and Brand Names

For young people everywhere adopting a nickname is part of youth culture and growing up. Within the social field of the gang it signifies something considerably more and provides a number of important functions. It allows for the creation of a second self or second life, (Presdee 2000), possibly signifying to peers you are now part of ‘the Street’. For some young people it is a pre-requisite for moving into the social field of the gang. Once adopted, any illegal or anti-social activities can be ascribed to the character inhabiting the street persona rather than the person who attends church each Sunday with family.

Crucially taking on a Street name allows them to join ‘the Game’, i.e. the pursuit of street capital. This Street Name is the one by which you are known, the name you seek to have recognised, to market, to build a reputation around. They may be chosen or allocated by peers. Street names cover four broad areas:-

• Early adopted names - A new arrival may choose or be given a name illustrating his character, e.g. Sneaky
• Expressive names - signifying their role in expressive crime, e.g. ‘Blades’ or ‘Pulla’
• Brand names - conferring protection and demonstrating links to contacts and networks.
• Pre-fixed brand names - which link into another brand name

Most names are retained throughout ones gang career. In the social field of the gang, your street name becomes synonymous with your reputation. Overtime they may move to a new name suggesting advancement or which signifies a role, e.g. Shells, Pulla or link into a brand name. Certain names carry weight, e.g. If person X is after you, you may already fear his name and brand. ‘There are some names they can use and if uttered people will run off’, (African Caribbean Male Younger). Some of the older gang members retain their reputation separate from the gang. The younger members from rival gangs will show them respect. Youngers will actively seek affiliation with a known brand name. They will have to earn a reputation in order to be known:
'If you are Serious Guy Younger then you are Cool. You are connected. A lot of people connected to them feel untouchable as well. So they'll join the gang to be untouchable in school. Certain people converted to Islam a year or two ago to prevent themselves from being robbed. For a time that was cool'. (African Caribbean Male Older)

Acquiring or building a brand name allows for several potential desired outcomes, - notably being feared.

‘My rep was always physicality and stamina. I would keep coming, keep coming, keep coming. That is where the reputation starts kicking in’. (African Caribbean Male Elder)

Achieving this means street capital is maximised and your services are increasingly in demand. The greater your reputation the more you are feared and respected. Big brand names travel and become known outside the social field extending beyond the Network. Having a Brand name may reduce the possibility of victimisation or lead to increased challenge or provocation. Importantly it brings the opportunity of being empowered and known which increases the likelihood of reaching the status of an Older or Elder. For others it enhances the ego, implying closer affiliations to big names, access to the finest cars, biggest crib, beautiful girls, money. Such items bring the most elusive element of Street Capital, - Cool.

Pre-fixes

A pre-fix is often added to an established name and street brand, providing advantages for the Adopter (Younger) and the Provider, (Older).

For the Adopter (Younger) it demonstrates links to the Network giving instant connectivity into 'street' or neighbourhood history. It demonstrates high bonding capital indicating to others they should tread carefully lest you call upon your connections. It confers street capital, establishing you in the street hierarchy. It fast-tracks Youngers by permitting them to trade on the reputation of the Older; 'It says, "I am connected so don’t fuck with me, I’ve got connections"'. Using a prefix also brings unforeseen complications. Some view it as a lazy way of getting a reputation: this can provoke challenges. For this reason such prefixes are often used by close family connections, i.e. via family, e.g. the youngest entrant being called Baby X. This abbreviated code signifies connections and affiliations and buys into the family brand.

For the Provider (Older), a prefix allows status and role expansion within the gang and beyond and facilitates marketing. It implies his brand is worth buying into; his contacts, desirable. This bolsters his rank and position. It may even generate brand durability or dynastic aspirations. Either way, the Older has established an unwritten contract allowing his name to be used offering protection to the Younger, who he then inducts, e.g. if the Older is called Poser, then the new member is Younger...
Poser. A further induction might be Tinnie Poser. This process defines his role as Leader not follower. The follower now takes advantage of strengthened connections to the upper tier, including Elders, e.g. calling upon assistance if required. Such arrangements make leaving the social field more complex if they are regularly requested to intervene on behalf of their Younger.

Prefixing of names also applies to girls allowing them to claim association to senior members and thus increase their street capital and demonstrate their network. This increases their status amongst peers indicating they are ‘taken’ or are the ‘property’ of the name provider. This defined association provides a trade platform for girls which may improve access to goods and services or to higher grade confidential information. In addition to Bluey, Younger Bluey and Tinnie Bluey you may find Princess Bluey, Lady Bluey or Wifey Bluey representing the girl friends or Baby Mothers, either long-term or casual. Designations are valued, documented and reflected in social networking sites. Some names will imply their role, e.g. Wifey. Others aspire to Street royalty, e.g. Lady or Queen.

Rented names

A recent development is for an Older to ‘rent’ out his name, e.g. an Older who is starting a family or temporarily exiting the social field. This arrangement gives protection for the Adopter whilst providing a kickback to the Older. This may not be in terms of goods but of services, e.g.

'I look after you – but I want a kick back. This will be protection if you are troubled. I will get them. If I want to rob a shop or something, you could do it for me. If I need to get someone stabbed you could do it for me'. (West African Male Older)

For Bourdieu this represents self interest. Such ‘gift exchange’ may also represent deferred favours and actors can misperceive the objective consequences of their actions. Depending upon the status and reputation of the rented name, this may also represent symbolic capital – the legitimation of power relations through symbolic forms, (Swartz 1997:91-92)

Manufacturing street capital through Reputation

Creating and maintaining a reputation (Rep) in this social field was uniquely singled out by all respondents as ‘a massive issue’ and ‘very, very, very, important’ by professionals and ‘the key to it all’ or ‘everything’ by Youngers. The process becomes the first real test of the social field. It sifts those able to manufacture a reputation from those who cannot. Having a reputation increases the likelihood of being approached to affiliate as a Player in the social field. It signifies your Playing rights and acts as an entree into ‘the Game’, allowing you to be part of something and be accepted. This then allows you to; play at a higher level; take control of your destiny, strategise to build your reputation. It reduces the threat of oblivion or victimisation as an outcast, increasing opportunities for advancement and distinction.
As illustrated in ‘Street Boys’ (Pritchard 2008:224) a biographical account of gang life in SW9, 15 year-old Younger called Tempman seeks to build ‘his own name’ by targeting boys with a bigger name than his, ‘if other people had a name I took an instant dislike. I’d move to them and beat them up in front of their girlfriend and take money off them’.

Individual stocks of street capital are monitored by having a recognisable reputation in which you and others can invest. This will build upon your street persona. It can be created and nurtured in both virtual and real worlds. As you invest more and more time and energy in maintaining it, it becomes indistinguishable from you. It embodies your character, persona and gives life to your street capital. It signifies your bonding or bridging social capital becoming a trademark extending well beyond the boundaries of the social field. It can be your passport to celebrity status or your passport out!

If you fail to have a reputation you will be victimised, designated an outcast, perceived as weak and ultimately victimised by ‘everyone’. Young people in the social field are often challenged to account for themselves by listing their named contacts. Failure to know these Brand names or the ‘right people’ who confer credibility will bring a designation of ‘Waste Man’, i.e. dispensable, not connected, a wannabe. This designation invites victimisation for fun. Anyone seeking opportune moments to increase their street capital will view this as a free gift. To manage this risk acquiring a reputation is also a defence mechanism which prevents future violence and victimisation.

Having a reputation also brings offers of affiliation, closer. To join the gang you need a reputation. To be invited to join, you need a reputation. To stay involved, you need a reputation. To avoid falling or sliding, you need a reputation. Survival in the social field, and the demands of the Street Code, conspire to reinforce the imperative of a reputation.

As you ascend within the social field, Olders might seek your association. Such an approach requires a reputation. Reputation also offers the benefits of establishing leadership. In this social field a Leader is determined by attributes other than age, i.e. he could be the youngest operative in the peer group. This role is more likely to be determined by their reputation and how they carry themselves. Thus by having your name out there, the offers will come.

The current situation on the Road suggests that having a name is no longer sufficient of itself and that what is now required is for someone to be seen to be or reputed to be a ‘BadMan. (Winlow 2001; Anderson 1999; Hagerdorn 2008). Once you have a ‘Badman’ reputation, no one will make a move against you, ‘the worse you are as a bad person the bigger the rep’.

Reputations for Youngers

For most Youngers, a reputation is built up gradually, often through violence. Yablonsky (1962), Whyte (1943), Pearson (1983) and Sanders (2005) all noted the importance of violence in establishing a reputation. For Youngers it is fighting rather than the commercial activity of selling drugs that earns respect and reputation. Physical violence is therefore their principle strategy for earning street capital;
Physical violence

For many young people physical violence is a common element of the social field of deprived/disadvantaged neighbourhoods, (Winlow 2001); however in the social field of the gang, it is ubiquitous and normalised. Aldridge and Medina (2010) found that ‘most violence emanated from interpersonal disputes, often about friends, family and romantic relationships...jealousy and debt’ rather than drug disputes. Aldridge and Medina (2008) also found that ‘gang members did not specialise in violence, but that violence played an important role, particularly in symbolism and rhetoric’. However they present no evidence as to how, why and when violence is used.

Similarly, violent interpersonal disputes are sometimes misrecognised by researchers (Hallsworth & Duffy 2010) as evidence that most violence occurs outside the gang. Viewing such incidents through the lens of the social field clarifies that many such incidents actually occur within the social field of the gang. I argue that violence is employed strategically by all tiers of the gang. Some strategising may be individualistic at the time, but it remains contextualised, bounded and determined by the social field. Violence is central to maintaining reputation, building name brands and maintaining respect. Violent rhetoric is ubiquitous and hyperbolic. This is most commonly seen on YouTube and SNs. Youngers struggling to build street capital employ strategies of physical violence more readily. For them it is both normative and casual.

One key factor in determining the increase in violence in the social field of the gang is the fact that physical violence is the preferred strategy for building Rep, raising street capital and also for sanctions. This tripartite employment of this strategy results in a social field where Youngers describe violence as constant and unpredictable. Those outside the field view this as random and volatile. In December 2010 four young men were seriously injured in a drive-by machine gun attack whilst tending to a man who had been stabbed in the street.

Violence can be and is used between young men and young women, as previously held social norms that such action was not permissible, have long since evaporated (Firmen 2010). Physical violence is also the sanction of choice for those using the Expressive Repertoire: ‘There is a lot of stabbing in the bum – to me that’s more of a warning than a deliberate act to take someone out’. (Younger)

As a strategy physical violence underpins all the threats and intimidation verbally offered by gang members. It is used as a strategy of first resort for Youngers, more sparingly by Olders and less so by Elders. It is said ‘Olders keep violence in the Hidden Contract’.

’Cos they know they can’t go to the police. Cos there is a hidden contract and code that everyone knows. You know you can get that vibe. People say to me how come your missus doesn’t get any problems? I say she keeps violence in the ‘hidden contract’. Cos what happens you get in a partnership with someone who thinks they understand the quid pro quo but when it becomes too difficult what they do is they call the police on you and then you go – Hold on a second, that’s not how it goes, you are not playing the game right! So that is the hidden contract’. (African Caribbean Male Elder)
As a Younger’s reputation progresses in the social field they may find an Older now asks them to perform favours. If successfully undertaken, the Older will view the Younger as an asset. On both sides of this reciprocal contract, the street capital increases. The Older now actively boosts the Rep of the Younger by acting as PR agent in promoting his Rep. This builds trust between the two (at least for the short-term). This arrangement is acknowledged by gang members. Thus favouring and gifting is a recognised and tested strategy from the Sanctions Repertoire for earning street capital, see Chapter 6.

A further example of strategising to build reputation by using the Expressive Repertoire is by employing criminal damage such as graffiti and vandalism:

**Graffiti**
As with colours, visual controls such as graffiti tagging and murals, are used to demonstrate gang existence and market via branding. In the Expressive Repertoire it is largely employed by the Elementary tier. Tagging provides opportunities for Youngers to generate reputation, status and street capital using artistic flair. It was considered a non violent way to create status which accounts for its popularity in some areas, (although it can however lead to challenge and attack). Profligacy and daring generate street capital. Tags are either individual or gang branding. Until recently, tagging was popular in SW9, often being used to mark territory. Before the advent of social networking sites it was also used occasionally to denounce anyone who grassed.

It is widely agreed that graffiti and tagging is significantly reduced or dying out, but is still used to deface property by way of revenge. Marketing of brand names has now moved almost completely online to social networking sites. Graffiti is also used to promote music and CDs made by the gang.

The use of murals dedicated to the ‘fallen soljas’ of gang is however on the increase. Some claim this is an influence ofSomalian gangs. Murals provide an opportunity to glorify members who have been ‘killed in action’. Murals act a permanent reminder to rivals that this will not be tolerated or forgotten and that ‘Vengeance is Coming!’ They demonstrate to prospective and current gang members that their memory is kept burning by their peers and shows the gang looking after its own which provides further marketing. Often used as gathering points for reflection, they offer a platform for continuing to build status and street capital for the deceased. This allows for them to enter gang mythology and Pantheon of fallen. In this sense the murals represent a form of symbolic capital for the gang – a landmark with symbolic value and utility. A Swartz notes, ‘symbolic power is the power to ‘consecrate’ and render sacred’, (Swartz 1997:47). It is possible that such sites are designated, either by Elders or by members as sacred. Their removal then becomes highly contentious. Existing gang members who are close family or bredrin’ will overtime glean additional Street Capital through association to the lionised name and by tending the site. Such murals are now increasingly evident in the cultural lexicon of the urban street gang.

**Criminal Damage**
Criminal damage is a key component of the Expressive Repertoire. Like many aspects of expressive crime it is not solely the premise of urban street gangs. Criminal damage is listed as anti-social
behaviour and links strongly to: opportunities for having fun (Katz 1988); mark territory by 'wallbangin', (Phillips 1999); express involvement with Hip-Hop (Phillips 1999); boredom or to threaten rivals (Klein 1995). Sanders (2005) working in Lambeth found none of his respondents thought the tags used then were to warn rivals or to communicate, suggesting instead they were 'acts of transgression' (Katz 1988). Whilst boredom is often given by professionals and residents as a key reason for gangs undertaking criminal damage (Downes 1966), it is employed as a strategy to generate street capital. Several locations are frequently targeted for criminal damage:

- CCTV
- Lighting
- Door entry systems

Fast-tracking strategies

In the crowded, contested field of struggle, Players must stand out. They must quickly seek to elevate themselves from their peers. This might be achieved by acting out of the ordinary for example, employing a strategy in an unusual way outside the social field, or by testing the variables of the Repertoire. Kudos can come from incidents which may thus appear random. Often however these ‘apparently random incidents’ are deliberate strategies by young people aimed at increasing their street capital, e.g. randomly grabbing chains from people. Other examples might indicate skill, craft and daring: one gang recently obtained a CCTV disc from a control room. Such actions build trust in the gang and this is required to get closer to the top. Filming incidents on mobile phones helps to build status and earn street capital.

Similarly any violent or ‘extreme’ act will build reputation acquire mega-street capital. The bigger the scalp taken, the more kudos. Through such strategies it is possible to ‘fast-track’ yourself into a higher tier of the gang, e.g. In 2008 a 15 yr old boy entered a McDonald’s restaurant in Brixton and shot two young people in broad daylight. A Mac10 was used some months later in a multiple shooting at a club in Peckham. Others achieve notoriety from stabbing strangers without provocation. Some professionals or academic refer to this as ‘gang initiation’. Such a term implies instruction and control from the gang for a Younger to undertake such an action. In reality such actions are just as likely to be generated as a strategy for earning street capital or fast tracking a reputation which has stalled. Many professionals believe young people add an extra element of violence to a situation or are ‘over-violent’ to maximise their Reputation.

In the social field members will know if you have a reputation for violence. You are then expected to act upon this lest it be taken away. This similarly applies to reputations for selling drugs. A reputation for violence however is more enduring and is only utilised infrequently. A reputation for extreme violence means you are probably less likely to be called upon to fight. Those members reputed for ‘crazyness’ or a what Vigil calls the ‘locura’ (Vigil 2003) will be given a wide berth.

Reputations for Olders and Elders

Olders have moved up through the ranks of the social field, are less interested in expressive crime and more interested in instrumental crime. They have created their reputations and are now
motivated by money and generating business opportunities. New reputations can now be created based on economic returns: ‘I would say a “face” is always based on the money they bring in’. Clearly some Olders believe they have made the grade regarding their reputation and that this allows them to travel anywhere unchallenged. This may however be illusory and they get stabbed while on another estate. Alternatively their reputation may lead rivals to instigate attack to ‘steal’ his street capital and enhance his own.

Elders command respect for having gained and retained respect. Their instructions are followed; their demeanours studied and copied. If an Elder says, ‘Stop that!, don’t trouble that house’, the house will not be troubled and Youngers will reference the instruction. Elders may be rarely seen which creates a mystique compounding and enhancing his reputation. They appear sparingly at lower tiers in the social field and are used largely for interventions; having stolen objects returned; liaising with Elders of rival gangs; negotiating ceasefires and high level drug deals.

Elders recognise that things are different from when they were Youngers. Some Elders believe that people have ‘Names’ for no apparent reason and they are unproven instead of having developed and evolved their reputation over time.

As a gang member moves through the ranks building his business and reputation he may engage in serious violence to dissuade others from stealing his business or his Rep. Otherwise he will engage support by proxy, e.g. friends or family. This will also build up his reputation. Getting involved in numerous activities and incidents helps further. The police report some young people view participation in the gang as pursuing their chosen career. Thus disrespecting is seen as interfering with their career prospects – though they are also interfering with progression through the criminal ranks to earn more money and achieve higher status.

Manufacturing a Gang Rep

Building a shared reputation for the gang is also important in the social field. The gang as the common unit demands its own common identity. Building this identity and reputation becomes a shared experience allowing group bonding and strategising. Committing to this demonstrates loyalty and builds bonding and bridging social capital.

‘We were definitely aware of building a Rep for the gang. Everyone worked towards this. It was important to have a fierce Rep ‘cos you feel untouchable from other gangs. ‘Cos they’ve heard about you and things you’ve done and have heard if they did do something to you, what would happen to them. We were working in partnership with other gangs from other estates. They liked what we were doing and wanted to be a part of it’. (African Caribbean: Male: Younger)

It is not uncommon for the gang to promote its reputation by shouting the gang’s name during the altercation. This creates fear in victims and passers-by.

‘They’ll be happy to say the name of their group, GAS when there is an incident or an altercation. Someone from GAS gang will shout GAS, GAS
This technique implies a desire to stamp authority on the incident but also implies fearlessness and causal disregard of potential consequences. It also allows for such incidents to be clearly identified in subsequent film footage in social networking sites. Shover (1996:91) notes that young men are 'judged' by their responses to challenges and that violence is 'condoned if not expected' and seen as a 'prime virtue' in this social field.

Through such means the members market the gang brand, increasing its visibility and affording members some control over its brand, strategic direction and reputation. This might be to demonstrate ability, capacity, numbers, or weaponry, i.e. 'We can do this to you'; or establish a USP, 'this is what we are known for'. The reputation could be for an individual who would 'do anything', 'get anything', 'being fearless', 'always armed', 'quality weed', 'loyal', 'wild' or 'crazy'. Some Reps are common to many, e.g. loyalty, whilst others are individualistic, e.g. Wild man rep.

Establishing the Gang as a recognised entity with a physical, virtual and reputational presence designates the gang itself as a Player amongst other gangs across a wider social field, e.g. south London.

A further example of a strategy for raising visual awareness of the gang is to use designated colours to represent the gang.

**Gang Colours**

Many people associate gangs with visual symbols such as clothing which signifies the gang, (Decker and Van Winkle 1996), e.g. hoodies, scarves, coloured bandanas. Such signifiers provide a visual presence and shared meaning for the gang and represent a key element of the Expressive Repertoire. In the Elementary tier colours can be important to gang identity. Visual presence maximises street capital, fitting in with branding and quickly becoming a symbol of gang affiliation. They are often used to establish early reputations offering a visual representation of 'otherness'. Colours, as with tattoos, may work to their advantage or dis-advantage. As reputation increases there is less need to wear colours. Olders are not usually seen in colours.

Pritchard (2008:287) notes that the 'new generation was getting into "colours". Black clothing is now the regular choice for all gangs and only occasionally are colours produced. Police quickly became wise to colour coding and this increased stop and search amongst young people.

Visual presence for the gang has increasingly moved onto social networking sites further reducing the need for colours. Most respondents agreed colours were a phase and 'very 2008'. Sanders (2005), noted no gang colours used in Lambeth.

The increased territorial nature of postcode 'beefs' means those wearing colours are at greater risk of attack. Colours may now only be worn during an en masse event. This may be an occasion for the gang to demonstrate its visual presence by grouping together en masse event. Such events occur quickly and often relate to revenge attacks on rivals or organised fights.

Under the rules of 'the Game', the sanction of corrective action can be levied towards any member of a rival gang. This notion is widely understood as a rule of the social field. If, for example two gang members undertake an incursion into rival territory, the rivals may seek retaliation against any
visible member/associate of the two intruders. Reducing visibility and thus minimising risk is a key reason for the reduction in wearing ‘gang colours’. Gang tattoos are not a feature of the social field of SW9.

Manufacturing a Neighbourhood Rep

Creating a reputation for the Endz (neighbourhood) helps a gang get more established and develop more notoriety. This is similar for recreational gangs, (Kintrea 2008). Many neighbourhoods become associated with or stigmatised by gang affiliations or violence:

‘Back then, Brixton had a bullet-proof Rep. If you came from Brixton you didn’t need a gun. People were in fear anyway. I’d go anywhere and rob a boy of his bike and know that he wouldn’t come back on my people. They were scared. Back then I could go by myself anywhere cos of my Rep. No-one could mess with Brixton’. (African Caribbean: Male: ex-Elder)

Establishing such neighbourhood reputations supports the strategy of generating a gang Rep. Any reputational branding for the neighbourhood is then often enhanced by those outside the social field. Whilst those outside the social field view unfavourable neighbourhood reputation as stigma, those in the social field of the gang achieve added reputational advantage. In this way a reputation for the Endz, e.g. SW9, is a useful device for any gang providing numerous benefits:

- To those outside the social field, it implies the gang occupies or ‘controls’ the entire neighbourhood space. In reality the gang is bounded by its own social field.
- The device operates as a permissive reputational cloak, permitting behaviours and activities to occur within the neighbourhood which would be out of place elsewhere. Thus it recalibrates the social norms where aberrant or extreme behaviour is now ‘to be expected’. When normative behaviours are modified this then supports the gang’s ‘claim’ they ‘control the neighbourhood’. For some young people this becomes a formative narrative.
- Gangs claim responsibility for and ownership of the notoriety of the neighbourhood allowing them to lay claim to actions not pertaining to the gang. Reflexively this is then furthered by lazy media reporting blaming the gang for all actions within the neighbourhood. In this way the general public often assume gangs to be larger than they are.
- A notorious neighbourhood reputation acts as a protective shield by reducing the number of rivals entering the area; thus reducing potential confrontations. This also alters the way the neighbourhood is policed. Casual police patrolling and community policing is likely to be reduced or withdrawn in favour of targeted intelligence-led swoops. The gang then view this style of policing as easier to monitor and respond to. Absence of policing may then support gang claims to ‘be in control’ of an area. This absence of police or their apparent reluctance to enter the neighbourhood, is viewed by young people as either confirmation of the gang’s authority or confirmation of the gang’s strategy to dominate through reputation.
• Reputational expansion into the wider community spreads fear, facilitating easier control over some individuals or areas.
• Reputational expansion might support criminal activity, e.g. an open drugs market. If maintained over time a reputation may develop its own gravitational pull, e.g. SW9 or Angell town for drugs,(May et al 2007) and reinforce the Code of the Street attaching known Brand names to the Code, thus making it a reality.
• Reputational expansion means neighbourhoods can become irrevocably associated with the gangs reputation and stigmatised themselves, e.g. Angell Town and PDC, (Pritchard 2008; Hanley 2007). This stigma leads to a flight of business and those with the ability to move, do so (MacDonald and Marsh 2005). Neighbourhoods can then enter a spiral of decline which leads to a further concentration of crime and poverty (Hope 1998) and concentrations of disadvantage (Pitts 1998). Such circumstances may benefit the gang providing unchallenged opportunities for it to expand its social field.
• For many in the gang, a Gang Rep or Neighbourhood Rep is the same thing. Once a reputation for their Endz has been established the gang then views any incursion or violation as intensely personal.

The virtual nature of the Rep transcends the boundaries of the social field, potentially blurring them with the boundaries of other social fields. Individual ‘reputational reach’ depends upon one’s profile. In traditionally close-knit communities like SW9 and Lambeth this reach could be considerable. This may also stretch into networked contacts elsewhere in London. Whilst gang members and their reputations are known by ordinary residents in the wider community (outsiders), they are not directly affected or influenced by them unless they enter the social field of the gang.

Strategising within the wider neighbourhood

As they continue to develop their reputations and generate more street capital the players increasingly seek to expand their visibility and in places seek to control public space. This may be seen initially as grouping on stairwells and in foyers to tower blocks but may also move on to activities which are now visible more visible to the general public or the community and are often viewed as a threat. There are several strategies within the Expressive Repertoire which can be chosen by players seeking to generate street capital in this way. Examples include:

Control of Public Space

For Elementary tier gangs, the control of public space is an important component of the Expressive Repertoire. Public space provides an arena for several different characteristics of the social field and the repertoire to be played out.

Controlling public space allows gangs to demonstrate localised power and authority and visually market themselves. They assume territorial rights over public spaces adjoining their Endz and engage in expressive offending behaviour to build street capital. Public spaces fall into three broad categories:

- Open spaces within or on the periphery of the estate or neighbourhood
- Public shopping streets and quasi private areas such as Shopping malls
- Parks

Open spaces, public areas and sports courts on or adjacent to an estate are deemed to part of the
Endz of the peer group or gang-affiliated to that estate. This assumed ownership gives local boys rights over usage. Such spaces can be visited, but one must not ‘take liberties’.

Local shops serving an estate are almost exclusively deemed part of their Endz. Beyond this ‘frontline’, public spaces are freely available to all though some are associated through postcodes to other gangs. It is not uncommon to see groups of 10 – 30 gang-affiliated young people hanging out or moving through an area. In this case, low level ASB including littering, play-fighting and expressive crime, e.g. criminal damage, is expected.

Parks outside an estate are considered public however young people on estates may regularly decamp there and ‘claim’ it as their own. Parks further afield are assumed to be ‘open territory’ or ‘watering holes’ where rival gang violence is temporarily suspended, e.g. the Lambeth County Show in Brockwell Park; or battlegrounds, e.g. Larkhall Park, Stockwell, known as the ‘Killing Zone’. Few parks are deemed to be fully ‘neutral spaces’. Gang-affiliated young people seldom use such public spaces individually or in small numbers. Some view parks as locations for violence. Others view altercations as only seasonal or occurring by chance, i.e. someone is caught ‘slippin’. Serious planned violence often occurs at someone’s home, hang out or recreational venue. The sheer volume of people and noise will however make any gang appearance intimidating, effectively offering them ‘control’ of the space.

Some gangs will use public spaces to progress gang or individual strategies, e.g. physical violence or fighting with individuals or groups. They may also be used by school peer groups for large scale fights which may or may not be gang related. Brixton High Street has increasingly been the locale for serious acts of violence, including stabbings and fatal shootings. Such events ‘raise the veil’ surrounding the gang for the general public. Such events are likely to generate fun (Katz 1988), adrenaline (Presdee 2000), gang-myths and opportunities for filming.

Use of Dogs

In recent years many disadvantaged young people in deprived areas have sought to increase their social status by acquiring large, aggressive dogs in the belief this conveys increased status, hence the term, Status Dog. (Harding 2010). Whilst this phenomenon is occurring all across the UK, (RSPCA 2009) in the social field of the gang it has a particular resonance. ‘Tooling up’ with an aggressive dog provides opportunities to maximise street capital or to strategise to dominate, physically or visually, the open space. This self evident fact is not lost in the social field of the gang. This, and the fact such dogs provide a range of important manifest functions for the gang, has resulted in a recent proliferation of status dogs in SW9 and in Lambeth in general.

‘At one point it was like everybody on the estate had an ugly dog, a Pitbull. I thought my God, - you could not go outside. You could not go outside-seriously’. (Turkish Female Resident)

The use of dogs by gangs in SW9 fits into both the Expressive and Instrumental Repertoires for example to through street fighting to gain credibility and resolve gang conflicts, (Ortiz 2010). Similar ‘Chain rolling’ of dogs is evident on estates in the UK (RSPCA 2009c) and in SW9. Dogs offer a credible threat of violence to others (Daly and Wilson 1998) whilst supplementing the physicality of a gang member through its amplified musculature or what Wacquant called ‘crude body capital, (Wacquant 1992). For young men seeking to demonstrate their individuality (Jacobs
and Wright 1999) or to ‘get a rush’ (Katz 1988), such dogs act as the perfect foil.

Young men experiencing a crisis in their self image (Winslow 2001) or seeking to establish their street capital will employ strategies to maximise their status. To dominate public space as a member of the Street Elite (Katz 1988), young men may use dogs to complete their ‘cool pose’. In the social field of the gang dogs now form part of the habitus, (Harding 2010b)

Academic research formally linking aggressive or dangerous dogs to gangs has only been undertaken in the USA, (Randour & Hartiman 2007; Degenhardt 2005; Ortiz 2010; Gibson 2005). Daley (2010) has identified a graduation from those involved in street level fighting to more organised ‘Hobbyist’ level fighting. In the UK the Greater London Authority has reported on Weapon Dogs (2009) and, supported by the RSPCA, claimed that some gang-affiliated young people are ‘arming themselves with dogs’ (Briggs, 2009).

In 2009 Lambeth Police undertook Operation Navarra in SW9 and other locations in Lambeth to target known gang members. Twenty dangerous dogs were seized and several convictions resulted. My subsequent analysis of the offending profiles of the owners (see Table 11) illustrates the significant correlation between the ownership of an illegal dog and a history of criminal offending.

Different motivations exist as to how and why gangs make use of dogs in the social field. These are shown in Table 10:

Table 10 Key motivations for gangs using dogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>In deprived neighbourhoods where there is a higher likelihood of victimisation (Hope 2003) dogs are used to provide protection. They can provide a sense of empowerment alongside risk reduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>Aggressive or dangerous dogs (either illegal or legal breeds) are used to support the entrepreneurial activities of those employing the Instrumental Repertoire, e.g. drugs. Dogs protect dealers; guard drug/money fortresses; cannabis hydroponic cultivation. Police reported most known dealers of middle rank retain aggressive dogs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breeding</td>
<td>Illegal or irresponsible breeding provides entrepreneurial opportunities (Merton 1968) for those on benefits. A breeding Pitbull can produce 12 puppies each sold for £300-£500 each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>Aggressive dogs may also be used as weapons to attack rivals or the police. Young people report the crackdown on knives contributes to increased use of dogs: ‘sometimes they won’t have a gun or a knife cos they’ll go to jail so a dog is the next thing. Then they let them off the chain’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On 27th April 2009 an ABM Younger (aged 16) from SW9 was caught ‘slippin’ with friends in Larkhall Park (contested territory) by the rival O-Tray gang. Both boys were attacked by the 031 gang using Pitbulls. The 16yr old was savaged then killed by multiple stab wounds whilst fighting off the dogs. At the Old Bailey trial a murder conviction was obtained using the dog DNA. Detectives reported this as the first time a dog had been used ‘as a weapon’ in a murder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dog-fighting also occurs in Lambeth, (Lambeth First 2011) and in SW9, and is recognised by both police and residents:
In Lambeth, reports of illegal dog-fighting rose from eight in 2006 to 118 in 2008, while seizures of dogs involved in dog fights rose from three in 2004 to 64 in 2008 (Harding 2010). Such proliferation has implications for the use of public space as the dogs are trained and exercised in public parks. It is almost inevitable that an increase in injuries from dog attacks will result. In Lambeth the Streatham Guardian (2009) reported that more than 1,000 were injured in dog attacks in Lambeth in 2008 with 924 injuries occurring in public places. Dog-fighting provides opportunities for young men to group, gamble and win. A champion dog accrues considerable status for itself and its owner. Recent police activity has driven dog-fighting back underground and all agree this activity is less evident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11. Type and number of Previous Convictions of those with dogs seized under Operation Navarra, Lambeth July 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address = A1 etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conviction</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assaulting police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Robbery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breach of Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of Bail order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving without insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to comply with Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling Stolen Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a false statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perverting the course of Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of Cannabis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of Class A drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession with Intent to supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstructing Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offensive Weapon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoplifting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theft from person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats to Kill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Controlling Access

Elementary tiers may control or monitor access to and from local estates. A common sight on all estates in SW9 over the past 20 years, this practice has recently altered as a result of ‘Postcode Beefs’.

When undertaken, Youngers act as Watchmen on balconies, stairwells, walkways, rooftop vantage points and perimeter exits of estates to identify and challenge other young people and provide early warnings of raids and police operations. Warnings are shouted and gang members run to pre-arranged locations, homes, hidden areas, hangouts or underground garages where weapons may be secreted. Mobile phones are now used, or whistles, to warn members. Internal check points within an estate may also be used, e.g. stairwells and congregation points for the gang.

If unknowns enter, they are challenged and possibly subjected to violence. Controlling access may be either covert or overt. It may be done in shifts or only at certain times, e.g. when a drugs stash is being moved or when the gang is in ‘Beef’. Such activity if witnessed regularly will be intimidating for local residents and is the subject of many complaints to the police.

Police entry onto the estate is considered a violation of territory and members may retaliate through ASB, e.g. throwing missiles, etc. On occasion this may be directed at other unknown people entering the estate adding to an atmosphere of intimidation. This offending fits well within the Expressive Repertoire and is considered great entertainment and a gang duty by Youngers providing opportunities for building street capital.

In SW9 controlling access to the estates has been described as patrolling ‘drug patches’. This is a mis-recognition. Only occasionally are Watchmen posted to oversee safe transfer of drugs/money. Largely their presence is related to the ‘Postcode Beef’ (see this chapter). Look outs may be posted only when a beef is in play or expected. Due to ‘postcode beefs’ and self exclusions, access is now successfully controlled ‘virtually’, through reputation.

By employing such strategies young gang members are able to manufacture a Reputation. The examples listed above are the strategies favoured by those new to the gang. These often highly visible strategies will generate street capital each time they are employed, establishing the new affiliate as a Playa. Having manufactured a reputation and some initial street capital, they must then strategise to maintain it.

Maintaining your Street Capital – ‘Being Tested’

If creating a Rep is the first big test of the social field, maintaining and defending it is the second. Those in the social field quickly become aware of who is serious about their Rep and is not; who will act and who won’t. Failure to act quickly with sufficient force damages your Rep (Matza and Sykes 1961; Messerschmidt 2000; Anderson 1999) and diminishes street capital. Having established your market share of street capital one must now strive to defend this at all costs, preventing it from being destroyed, diminished or acquired. Young people refer to this as ‘Respecting their Rep’. Any attempt to interfere with this Rep is termed a violation (disrespect or ‘dissing’). Those outside the social field refer to such incidents as ‘Respect issues’. In the contested social field of the gang young people can strategise to increase their own street capital by diminishing that of others. As street capital represents tradable market shares, this is achievable by simply disrespecting someone, or by
failing to act when the Code of the Street demands it. An attempt to diminish or acquire another’s street capital is called ‘Being Tested’. Similar issues are identified in US gang research. In an account of membership of an LA gang, Monster Cody, talks of building respect to the status of Ghetto Hero, a position which ascribes the benefits of walking the neighbourhood unmolested. However he notes this high ranking marks you out as a target as others try to take your place and thus gain status themselves, (Vigil 1988).

Testing is done regardless of age and gender. One young woman who acted as an independent agent in SW9 dealing Class A drugs was regularly tested by young men, including being threatened with a gun to her head, physical assaults and fighting. It is unclear in this case if the testing was for gender reasons, business reasons or reputational reasons.

Testing often takes one of two forms:- an immediate provocation in a group or social setting and a virtual provocation. If it takes place face to face in a social setting the victim of the provocation must act quickly to challenge the offender. Violence may well be expected. Such provocations may be either internal within the gang or from a rival gang, or externally from someone outside the social field. Virtual provocations will take place in social networking sites and are usually targeted towards another gang or specific members.

The purpose of destroying or disrespecting the reputation of another (Dissing) is to diminish their street capital and thus acquire it for yourself: ‘I reacted quickly. If someone took the piss, I’d hit him straight away’, (West African Male Younger)

Once acquired, reputations must be defended and maintained at all times as being tested may occur at any time or place. Youngers and new arrivals to the social field will be tested more those with established reputations or street capital. For many young people in the social field this brings its own pressure and means they get locked into responding even though they don’t want to, (Winlow 2001; Anderson 1999). Some aspire to having a ‘Badman’ reputation so nobody will challenge them: ‘It’s all about maintaining your Rep – once it starts you can’t back down or back off. Yes, it’s like a spiral’. (White female professional).

If a gang member is hit, stabbed or shot then speed of reaction determines their reputation and ability to retain their street capital. Most will not let it lie; ‘you have to show what you are made of, otherwise you won’t ever be able to come back’ (Male African Caribbean Police Officer). For most their reputation is heavily linked to violence and how they react to violence. Many young people express anxiety over the pressure to maintain their Rep. This is understandable as any decline in their personal stock of street capital will reverse or stall personal advancement within the social field, leading to increased victimisation. Maintaining one’s level of street capital is therefore both a strategy for advancement, and a strategy for survival.

**Transitioning from the Expressive to Instrumental Repertoire**

Having now established oneself as a Playa with a recognised reputation, Youngers are able to expand their use of the Gang Repertoire. As they grow a little older they now seek more financial rewards: money becomes more important in order to socialise and win the affections of potential partners. They begin to experiment with elements of the Instrumental Repertoire which are less about capricious ASB and instant fun and more about making money. The deployment of the Gang Repertoire becomes more strategic. This embraces moves from territories to commodities, from
impulse to calculation and from bounded social spaces to more complex social networks. For those still operating as Youngers in Elementary tier gangs the new elements of the Instrumental Repertoire provide some immediate economic capital which otherwise may lie outside their reach. Youngers are now more likely to be spotted or selected by Olders who wish to make use of their talents to support their own advancement. Some Youngers view this stage as moving to the next level, as in a computer game. At this new level, previous knowledge earned will pay dividends, but one must continue to prove oneself and learn how to employ new strategies from the Instrumental Repertoire if one is to advance.

Robbery and drug dealing both offer opportunities to transition from the Expressive Repertoire to the Instrumental Repertoire. Street Robbery and dealing drugs operate at the lower Street level end of the spectrum, easily undertaken by Youngers, keen to make cash whilst building their reputations. Both offences have their own internal ladder of progression to higher level and more organised aspects. For example robbery will move from peer to peer robbery or so-called school-boy robberies to street robberies of strangers in town centres to Cash in Transit robberies; drug dealing will move from dealing (shooting) cannabis locally to larger scale drugs supply or importation. These higher levels are be undertaken by Olders and those proven capable and skilled at the lower level. Street Robbery and street drug dealing is therefore an entry level strategy as well as transitional strategy. A third strategy, handling stolen goods, complements these two. Each can be undertaken as a group strategy or by individuals. Some young people mix individual with gang strategies to maximise their reputations and rewards.

**Robbery**

Robbery is usually the earliest form of instrumental crime engaged in by the Youngers as they move from committing expressive crime to instrumental crime. At the Expressive level it accompanies physical violence permitting early manufacturing of street capital, e.g. in the school playground. It can also be used a part of the Sanction Repertoire. It is easily undertaken in a variety of locations, including schools, colleges, local streets, the estate and also within the social field of the gang itself. Offering instant returns of street and economic capital and its ability to be employed frequently and repeatedly, makes robbery not only ubiquitous in the social field, but the supreme activity for gang-affiliated Youngers. It offers and allows for:

- numerous testing of the Gang Repertoire and its variables
- employment as gang or an individual strategy
- opportunities for peer bonding
- generation of extensive bragging rights
- opportunities to add to gang folklore
- opportunities for hype, fun and exaggeration, (Katz 1988)
- instant returns to allow trade/exchange
- financial returns
- generation of social capital
Moreover, robbery is policed only in a limited fashion and reporting levels are famously low. By using this strategy a gang member can hone his personal skills in fighting, giving the Squeeze, emotional control or physical violence. As a strategy, it is constantly available with numerous possible locations and victims. It provides access to the latest technology and via theft of mobile phones, to improved information. Those operating within the social field have already experienced robbery at school and have accepted it as part of the social experience of the social field. In short as a strategy it provides almost a constant outcome of success.

Robbery also offers opportunities for employing a secondary strategy, humiliation, e.g. to purposefully humiliate someone after they have lost a fight. Stealing a chain from the loser in a fight will enhance the victor’s street capital while diminishing that of the loser. Such is the universality of street robbery as a successful strategy within the social field of the gang, it leads to the strategy being employed in a very casual manner, ‘You see, if your phone broke, you’d just go and get another’ (West African Male Younger).

This casual acceptance of robbery within the social field of the gang may also extend to some households. When a parent requests a young person to ‘bring something to the table’, it is reported that there is a tacit understanding on both sides of what this means. This casual approach relegates robbing phones to the level of bullying and ‘taxing’ (robbery as payment of dues, e.g. dinner money). In police parlance, it is not necessarily ‘crimed’ by them. Robbery takes a number of different forms as shown in Table 12:

**Table 12 Robbery strategies in the Instrumental Repertoire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual or group</td>
<td>Individuals employed their own agency or group up. It is this ‘apparent’ individual agency which leads to confusion as to whether street robbery is an individual or group activity, organised or not. Some members may specialise in this, testing variables until they build their own personal robbery repertoire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation Robberies</td>
<td>Street robbery is often an early initiation process. By age 13 – 15 many boys have been robbed at school. Youngers are told to rob to prove loyalty. Approach, style, threat level and violence are assessed by peers and Olders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanction robberies</td>
<td>Sanction robberies are those targeted towards individuals for revenge, punishment or control. Seldom reported. Some young people may experience multiple victimisation form such events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised robbing groups</td>
<td>In the more organised Mature tier tasks may be specialised to maximise skills and abilities. This represents a gang strategy rather than individual agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stash in transit (drug profit robberies)</td>
<td>Gangs will target the movement of drug profits if the stash is over £1,000, usually crack cocaine but occasionally skunk. Olders undertake these big jobs and proceeds are seldom shared. Some Olders reported robbing another dealer of their stash as a ‘rite of passage’ activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pack robberies (Steaming)</td>
<td>This expressive form of instrumental crime can involve up to 20 plus people. It is used effectively on public transport where targets are corralled. Implementation includes careful application of time variables. Pack robberies provide group bonding and fun. Yields are higher but gains divided more widely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash in transit</td>
<td>Part of the Instrumental Repertoire operate at the higher end of criminal activity. Often undertaken by Olders/Elders they may be opportunistic or planned. As a strategy they are often high violence and low yield. Increasingly involve Youngers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An example of maximising street capital: Drug Dealing

A further strategy for maintaining street capital is through drug dealing. The selling of drugs is an integral element of the social field of the urban street gang in SW9 (May et al 2007; Sanders 2005). This appears to differ from the research findings of Aldridge and Medina (2008) in Manchester. Here they note ‘drug sales now appear to be fundamentally an individual activity, not controlled by the gang’.

Although a transitional part of the Instrumental Repertoire, drug dealing is an entry level activity, similar to street robbery, where Youngers can start to engage further with the gang and raise economic capital. Through street dealing, gang-affiliated young people can employ a range of gang and individual strategies for advancement, earning street capital and cash. In SW9 drug dealing is a long established social norm. It is widely recognised as central to the social field as both open and closed drug markets operate (Ruggiero & South 1995). Economic capital is the main objective for most Youngers and young people view drug dealing as both ‘employment’ and ‘enterprise’ (Bourgois 1995; Hagedorn 1988). The higher end of the market is highly organised though it is also well organised at the local street level. By focussing on the actions of teenagers selling £10 bags of weed, it is possible to under-estimate the overall importance of the drugs market and its level of sophistication and organisation. A central element to the success of the drugs market in Lambeth is the unique history of the borough and Brixton in particular.

‘Yeah, and that is how the game’l work out. So the ones on the road are the soljas. They knew the rumours, the things, etc they maintain the reputation and listen out for the gossip. They are behind that will be the second in command. He will know where the stash is, cut[s] the deals and he won’t be dealing pocket deals at all. If he deals, it’ll be a couple of ounces, two ounces. If it gets any bigger - the deal, then you bring in the next man up, who knows where the warehouse is now and talking to the main people themselves and so if there are any really big deals then you go back to the main man’. (African Caribbean Male Elder)

The activity of drug dealing involves a range of players, actions and counter-actions by the police and a cast of familiar characters in the shape of clients. The ‘cat-and–mouse’ interactions with police, have earned this strategy the gang nickname of ‘the Game’. However it is also possible, that in choosing this epithet, gang-affiliates recognise the transparencies and common traits for advancement within their social field, along with a belief that ‘the Game’ is worth playing, (Bourdieu 1991:22-25)

Unique characteristics of Brixton & Lambeth

The SW9 postcode has long established historical links to drug leading in Lambeth, (Sanders 2005; May et al 2007) and the street market demand is extensive and London wide (Sanders 2005). Dealing in weed or skunk is similarly a familiar part of the social field of the community and not just that of the gang.
Certain types of offending, notably drug dealing in SW9 have however been traditionally associated with the Caribbean community, (May et al., 2007; Sanders 2005; Pitts 2008;). Ruggiero & South (1995) noted that selling crack, smack and weed was an activity that occurred amongst a greater proportion of young black men in Lambeth, and May (2007) noted ‘Brixton has a well-entrenched reputation as a place where drugs can be readily bought’. Connections between the Lambeth African Caribbean Community, drugs and the West Indies (notably Jamaica) are locally well recognised though under-researched. Pitts in Reluctant Gangsters, (2008) highlights this Caribbean Connection noting that family links between Brixton and Kingston operate as an extended network of family and business connections which facilitate the illegal economy of drugs. Given such family and business links it is acknowledged that the drugs side of gang offending in SW9 is heavily dominated by black Caribbean groups.

Toy (2009) also notes that in recent years the traditional supply routes of cocaine have shifted from South America/Caribbean – London to West Africa, Nigeria. Toy argues these new supply routes represent ways of maximising opportunities for supply, delivery and human trafficking. It is also possible is that these new distributive routes evidence increasingly strengthened and established business links between the growing black African community in SW9 and the longer established Caribbean community. Such links have a locus in the gang and whilst levels of involvement in distribution of such drugs will vary between gangs, the emergence of new West African routes will enhance the roles of gang members of West African origin, potentially offering improved higher value networks. Whether this means a shift in the traditional role of those linked to the Caribbean Connection remains to be evidenced.

Many respondents in this study noted significant changes in the last five or six years, e.g. those selling drugs are now much younger. Several years ago Youngers began selling drugs for cousins at age 16/17. It is widely agreed that Youngers are now doing this aged 12/13. Youngers report smoking weed started around age 18, now its ages 13-14.

**How the estate based drugs market works**

There is considerable cannabis dealing taking place in and around SW9: often high grade skunk rather than resin and is most likely grown in England. Supplies enter the neighbourhood daily to be distributed by Youngers under the supervision of Olders. Dealing is largely undertaken on the estate but may on occasion switch to the wider area. Every so often the gang changes its pattern of operation. Increasingly the open drugs market is becoming a closed market facilitated by the use of mobile phones. A dial up service is offered to regular customers.

Class A drugs, such as crack, heroin and cocaine, are also dealt in SW9 and this offers members the opportunity for more profitable returns. The main suppliers live off-borough. The street gang Elders employ an overseer for their whole operation. He operates as the main person moving the class A about the neighbourhood, distributing them to Olders. Dividing up the drugs is a spatial practicality rather than a business function. This ensures each member has received something to sell.
The Youngers will meet up with customers then telephone an order: Youngers retain several phones. The Shotter is usually on a mountain bike. The Older with the Class A drugs then meets the runner, passes the drugs over and the runner will go and meet the client. Only small amounts are passed at this level to minimise arrest. Youngers are favoured for their wily ability to outrun police. It is also assumed they will get lighter sentences if caught. Deals are one or two £10 bags which are often hidden in locations around the estate. These are easily accessible in commercial areas or homes, flats, brickwork, wooden slats, in roof spaces, grass areas, bin-sheds or bins, street column and dry risers. Guns may also be located in those places on estates. Sometimes they use stairwells or unused garages on the estate. This system maximises the proximity of the drugs to the runners; keeps the waiting time for the customer to a minimum and also significantly reduces the accuracy of police intelligence and likelihood of arrests. Youngers are used as Shotters and Runners for both cannabis and cocaine. When police stop the Youngers they may often have several wraps of crack cocaine on them.

Youngers

Drug dealing for Youngers commences via Early Adopters who get involved selling weed - most likely Youngers acting on individual agency or via family connections. It is also a way for them to maintain reputations and street capital. When confident enough, these Youngers will bring friends in to act for them. By so doing these individuals are already using their individual agency to progress through the gang, drawing the support of other Youngers and evidencing entrepreneurial flair which mark them out for quickly advancing up-rank. Such Youngers may now be trusted with greater sums of money, higher quantities or harder drugs, or with more responsibility. These entrepreneurial Youngers then begin to monitor and check their own Youngers, or Tinnies and are now themselves expediting their advancement to becoming an Older. Their success means that their brand and their Rep now grows more quickly.

Certain individuals will make a lot of money. For young people this is accepted as the highest aspiration. Some young people want to sell drugs whilst others get pressured into selling. Of those who want to sell drugs some do it for money and others do it because it has a strong element of ‘street cool’: ‘Starts with weed then you work your way up to Rocks’

As they get older the allure of being a recognised drug dealer becomes more attractive and more normative and they commence movement from the Expressive to the Instrumental Gang Repertoire. Many decide they now want to be drug dealers and the life becomes more real for them. They are increasingly able to fund their social activities through drugs. One or two may start selling drugs initially, becoming a group thing later as larger amounts get involved. Drug dealing also provides opportunities for maintaining street capital, building and expanding reputations for quality drugs, availability and effective control of Youngers.

For Youngers, dealing is seldom a big commercial scheme, it is ‘money on the side’. It is also fun. It helps them to learn the ropes of the neighbourhood and access information. Youngers are seldom trusted with large amounts of drugs or cash and are closely monitored. If large quantities of drugs or cash are allocated it is usually for some pressing emergency, e.g. CCTV operators report drug wraps
sometimes handed to Tinnies aged 9 – 10 yrs old to hold when the police enter an estate. For many young people such elements of 'the Game' are a normative part of life on the estate.

Some vulnerable people get pressured to sell drugs. Olders strategise by exploiting vulnerable people to run drugs for them and then pay them 'peanuts'. The Olders then maximise their own economic capital whilst Youngers make little. Bonuses for extra effort are handed out as supplements. Often the Olders believe that Youngers are dispensable and care little if they get arrested. Some Youngers may sell regularly, make little money regularly and then get arrested regularly. If bullied into selling drugs, upon arrest, many Youngers would prefer to 'take the Bird' and go to jail, often viewing arrest as a chance to accrue street capital. When they come out of incarceration they look to be re-employed selling drugs.

Olders

By age 16-plus the Youngers are becoming Olders; realise they can't get a job and are now under increasing pressure to maintain their reputation and street capital. This includes an increased necessity to maintain a visual appearance matching their reputation and status. Sporting the latest street gear is now a necessity, as is having a steady income. It now becomes 'All About the Money'. Selling crack or heroin is facilitated by another Older who assist them in taking on this new venture. Now as Olders, they are less likely to be pressured into doing this and have most likely made a choice to sell Class A themselves rather than shot it for others. Olders may also now be able to sell drugs in nightclubs or at college with casual selling of drugs 'just to get by' not uncommon.

Youngers sell drugs largely within the confines of their own estate. For Olders the field of selling widens: thus increasingly drug selling is not dependant on the locality of the estate. As gangs reach the Mature tier drug patches vary and are not be the same as gang patches or turfs. They become larger, encompassing more than one estate. As economics is now the main motivation for the gang an Elder may supply drugs to two or three different gangs across a neighbourhood. Some of these gangs may be rivals and in a 'beef'. This stratified dimension to the spatial distribution is often confusing to professionals. In summary, Youngers deal on their own estate; Olders travel more widely; Elders supply a range of gangs in different neighbourhoods.

Some Olders operate through their own individual agency and remain un-affiliated, working the spaces between the gangs, thriving on their wits. They work to specific targets, and may stop or 'go low' once it is reached. Such positions bring heightened dangers and threats of violence with several different gangs seeking to take your stash. As one female individual operator put it:

'It came with problems. I had a gun put in my face and nearly lost my life several times'. (African Caribbean Female Independent Operator).
Going ‘Up country’

Olders, and only very trustworthy Youngers, are used to transport drugs from SW9 to other parts of England, in a process known as going, ‘Up country’. Toy (2008) confirms similar findings in Southwark. Popular destinations include Cardiff, Nottingham, Coventry, Luton, South Coast towns, University towns and East Anglia. Some SW9 gang members reported travelling regularly to Yeovil and Glasgow. This takes more planning, but offers higher yields for the bigger risks involved. Given this fact it is only Class A drugs that are transported ‘up country’. If a Younger is ‘rising’ they may be invited to deal ‘Whites’ ‘Up country’. There they can increase their profits by up to 200%. Some Youngers go away for 2 weeks on ‘the money chase’. This further provides an express opportunity to build and maintain street capital, demonstrating links to Older/ Elders along with increased trust and responsibility. Many towns are ‘fresh areas’, not dominated by existing gangs and they may even be asked to be a supplier for the area by local consumers.

Some gangs have a more differentiated system of selling with Youngers selling only on the estates and Olders ‘up country’. Recently Lambeth police arrested 10 Olders from both Croydon and Lambeth, aged 17 and 18 yrs old, (with strong links to the Islamic side of POe) selling drugs to undercover police in Humberside. They had been driven to Hull in rented cars and housed in a locally rented flat. The police admit they significantly underestimate such activities.

The process of selling drugs in towns and cities outside London involves more sophisticated and complicated selling arrangements possibly requiring links to other local gangs. Such links are established through prison. Properties are legitimately rented for a short period.

Economic capital

Earnings from drug dealing vary depending upon age, rank and reputation, e.g. Youngers could possibly make £50 a day - a lot of money to them from only five buyers. Youngers smoke a lot of weed and quickly spend their money. A bag of weed for an Elder might last a week; for an Older - 2 - 3 days; for Youngers this might only last two hours. It is heavily smoked and a social norm to share it around to build trust and reciprocity. Having a ready supply or access to one, builds street capital, failure to ever carry a supply depletes street capital and dilutes reputations. Smoking is habitual and routine and occurs at school, college and at home. Some Youngers interviewed recognised the strength of the skunk as ‘very strong and coated in chemicals’. Several reported friends who had developed cannabis psychosis as a result of regular and multiple use.

Youth workers report many Youngers make little money. Some Youngers aged 13 – 16 may try to sell an ounce of cannabis for £130. They may make £200 an ounce if they know how, but only every other month. Money is quickly spent. Not all the Olders make such returns but if successful, an Older aged 16 – 17 could potentially make £25,000 over several months.

Cars are used to transport drugs, stolen goods and money. The Police report some senior gang members live in one-bed roomed flats with no furniture, hiring different cars at a weekly cost of approximately £300-400. Girlfriends are used to hire cars and documents are changed weekly. If stopped by the police, members exchange the vehicle making it untraceable.
Those dealing crack cocaine and high volumes of cannabis are Elders who are seldom on the estate, except in cars. Most of those making money and especially those 'on top of their game' are Elders and are often not affiliated. Often drugs are 'cut' (mixed in with additives) locally; especially if powder is sold as this permits bulk weights to be increased. This common practice allows for a lower quantity of pure drugs to be purchased, 'cut', then sold on in greater quantities, giving greater yield. Unlike heroin, the street turnover of powdered drugs is quick as it can be sold to a variety of general users (including stranger contacts), rather than to 'regulars' who are supporting a habit.

Despite this, larger sums of money in circulation around SW9 are not uncommon. During one police pursuit of Olders in SW9, one boy dropped £7,000 from his pocket. It is highly unlikely Youngers or even Olders would have bank accounts. A police raid on a property in Brixton revealed a teenager with a gun and £70K in cash.

Gang members are aware of new police powers regarding money laundering, e.g. anyone carrying over £1,000 cash can have the money seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act. Where this occurs gang members claim it is winnings from gambling but often fail to produce a receipt. Failing to account for the funds leads to arrest for money laundering. To risk manage this, gang members seldom have more than £1,000 on them when stopped. If a car is stopped then it is common to find each passenger will have £250 each on them.

Youngers dealing drugs often engage in expressive violence and ASB which is often mis-recognised by police and professionals as fights over drug turf. As Youngers move to the mature tier and Instrumental Gang Repertoire there are more opportunities to make money. At this point it also becomes important to protect the business. This scenario fits for Elementary tier gangs in SW9, e.g. GAS gang, and also for others, e.g. DSN gang in Croydon. Thus members in the Elementary tier initially employ physical violence and only latterly move into drugs markets having established a reputation for violence. It is possible that the unique social norms of Lambeth may mean this process happens earlier or even in parallel, i.e. Lambeth, especially SW9, is one of the biggest UK drugs markets; with links to Jamaica, (Pitts 2008). Police records show both inter-generational and family links to drugs in SW9. Police reported one gang member currently selling crack as did his father 15 years previously.

Drugs Debt/ Losing money or a stash

Failing to produce your sales earnings incurs sanctions: because the deal has soured and the street capital of the Older supplier, is now diminished and leaving this unchallenged risks depleting his reputation as a businessman and Playa. Any Younger who then boasts they acquired an Older’s drugs and reneged on a deal – without incurring any sanction – risks violence. In this scenario, the drugs must be replaced quickly, often with interest.

The Fortress.

Prior to being 'cut', large quantities of drugs and drug profits are stashed in a 'fortress', often a house or flat, on or off the estate. It will have security mechanisms to slow or prevent entry, e.g. bars and grilles, possibly simple traps at the door and locked-down windows. Techniques in securing
properties are often swapped in prison. Within the house is a hiding place for the stash with a secondary stash in the bedroom which can be obtained quickly if necessary.

Some Elders have the fortress in their home with alarms and ‘Emergency points’ and strategically placed weapons. All house dealers are ‘trained’ to deal with potential incidents – how to save the stash; deal with intruders or troublemakers; getting the money; exiting. Multiple stashes are further insurance against getting ‘turned over’.

Some have large aggressive dogs for added protection or to slow progress of unwanted entrants: now a common feature for hydroponic farms. If ‘serving’ is done from the same house as the stash then such dogs are considered ‘good for business’. Others use dogs to sit upon the stash:

‘you have your dog there as well, a key-purse safe to make sure that if anything goes wrong you can rely on the dog, maybe ‘cause you can’t have the gun. It’s basically another way of having a weapon without having a weapon’. (African Caribbean Male Elder)

Operating Information

Information is central to operating a solid business for the Olders/ Elders. It is crucial to know the customer base and historical contacts in the area. The gang establishes itself faster as it gathers more information, e.g. who the main man is; where the money is; where the goods are sold; who has the drugs; where the drugs are; what kind of drugs they like; how they earn their money; and what type of earning exist. Information and knowledge is key in ensuring the right people are respected in the right way. Those with established reputations are granted favours, e.g. supply on short loan. Newly organised suppliers may easily make a mistake of disrespecting an established brand name.

Moving up

Smart Youngers will buy drugs from Olders then start supplying through his own network of Youngers. This means the Younger is potentially muscling in on the economic capital of the Older. This generates increased demand for the Older. Eventually the Older may not be able to meet this demand and may at this point introduce this entrepreneurial Younger to a new supplier for an introductory fee of 5 – 10%. This arrangement must be negotiated. If the Younger goes behind the back of the Older, this is a violation and depletion of his street capital. Olders would then instigate a 50% tax on the Younger or employ a strategy of physical violence to regain diminished street capital. The level of violence depends on the level of violation alongside any message he seeks to give his other shotters. If it is ‘Whites’ – coke, crack, etc then a Younger may be ‘taken out’.

Other strategies for maintaining Street Capital

It is evident that physical violence, bullying, harassment and intimidation are the most common strategies employed for those seeking to maintain their levels of street capital. In addition to street robbery and drug dealing, (transitional strategies for those moving from the Expressive Repertoire to
the Instrumental Repertoire), there are several other strategies which are employed to maintain street capital, i.e. burglary, business crime, controlling accommodation and prostitution.

Burglary

Burglary is an element of the Instrumental Repertoire. It may be either an individual or group activity and offers opportunities for maintaining street capital and also obtaining economic returns. Often burglary is undertaken to obtain tradable items for resale within the social field. Selling stolen goods generates reputations and increased levels of street capital. Furthermore it establishes necessary bonds of trust and reciprocity within the social field. These are highly desirable by-products derived from the on-sale of stolen goods. Burglary is therefore a highly effective strategy to maintain street capital.

For some, burglary is also a transitional offence for those moving from expressive to instrumental crime. Youngers may be invited along by Olders and used to access and enter problematic premises or act as Watchmen or to fence stolen goods. Youngers are used to provide information on suitable premises. New members or new arrivals to the social field may be targeted for burglary. Traded information provides a constant source of intelligence of movements in and out of the neighbourhood, e.g. householders may be watched by Youngers as they leave their building. Other burglaries are linked to a search for drug or money stashes. In this scenario, it often becomes a group activity involving two or three gang members breaking down a door and ransacking a house.

Whilst the majority of burglaries are targeted towards those in the wider neighbourhood who have no relationship with the gang, burglaries are also used as a Sanction strategy, e.g. for revenge or warning. If a warning then this may include cleaning out the flat (often not be a huge amount of goods), or leaving a JuJu or totem in the flat. Where such strategies are used against those in the social field it is a strong signifier that their status has started to slide. A minor incident will be considered ‘a little touch’, whilst a major burglary will signify a considerable drop in your status.

Business crime

The Instrumental Repertoire provides a range of strategies targeted towards local businesses, (as shown in Table 13 below). With the exception of low level pilfering and intimidation (Expressive Repertoire), business crime is the preserve of Olders/Elders and can be an entry level offence to more organised crime. It thus operates as an income generator as much as a way of maintaining street capital.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Employed by</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low level intimidation</td>
<td>Elementary tier</td>
<td>This can also be orchestrated by Olders/Elders using Youngers by proxy. Mostly low level ASB as Youngers use shops/cafes for meetings and to arrange deals. Owners may be threatened with violence. This is not racketeering/protection. Youngers may steal openly from shops in small groups or undertake en masse pilfering. Though intimidating, most managers allow them to leave. Turf accountants and off licences may be subject to threats/intimidation. Both are also favoured by young people dealing drugs as they try to connect with potential demand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money lending</td>
<td>Mature tier</td>
<td>Money lending involves providing short term loans on high interest rates, with severe penalties for late payment. There is widespread agreement this does not occur in SW9 and is not part of the Repertoire of gangs in SW9. It is possible other street gangs retain it as a strategy in their Repertoires. Loan sharking was generally referred to as a ‘white man’s crime’, linked to organised crimes. It was widely accepted that any loan comes with repercussions if not paid back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimate businesses</td>
<td>Mature tier</td>
<td>Some gang Olders/Elders have their own legitimate businesses. On Angell town, residents reported at least one business run by a former well known gang member. Such enterprises may be the result of capitalising on family networks or investing money. Others such as barber shops, nail shops and chicken shops provide easy opportunities for laundering money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small businesses</td>
<td>Mature tier</td>
<td>Local small business, e.g. an Asian run launderette, would only be targeted if already involved in criminal activity. A small business can however be considered collateral when dealings with the gang go wrong. Racketeering in the proper sense was not thought to take place in SW9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door security</td>
<td>Mature tier</td>
<td>Recent moves in SW9 for Olders to take over venue door security. If this strategy is successful, gangs can then control access for favoured entry, weapons, drugs and their own people. This is worth a considerable financial return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takeovers</td>
<td>Mature tier</td>
<td>One productive strategy for Olders employing the Instrumental Repertoire is for them to manufacture the takeover of premises, e.g. pub, club, venue or club night. Pub take-overs often occur when premises sell with gangs intimidating new landlords by causing violence. This may lead to a takeover or the new owner building a relationship with the gang. Some extortion has been reported from club venues in SW9. As above (small businesses), owners often have previous links to criminal activity, e.g. drugs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Controlling Accommodation**

The Instrumental Repertoire includes strategies for taking control of private accommodation – usually from a vulnerable person or those in debt. This is an activity for Olders/Elders at the Mature tier often linked to drugs/prostitution. Although scenarios vary, the basic modus operandii remains the same: taking over the home of someone is who is vulnerable (emotionally, intellectually or financially). This can happen quickly but can be gradual and may go unrecognised by the tenant until it’s too late. Eventually they lose control over their own homes, unable to deny entry or make
decisions. Those taking advantage now move in with little to lose as this is not their permanent address. Such situations prove highly problematic for local residents. Whilst some tenants are duped into losing their homes, others become less passive over time and seek to benefit from the newly developing circumstances. Others may take a long-time to deduce what is actually happening.

There are several scenarios and aspects to how this activity is employed as shown below in Table 14

**Table 14  Scenarios for taking control of accommodation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>Those targeted are often intellectually disadvantaged, have poor education, mental health or drug problems, e.g. a first tenancy or pensioners seeking company. Social Housing tenants are particularly vulnerable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations</td>
<td>Some estates, e.g. Stockwell Park Gdns, are favoured locations for takeovers due to a confluence of factors which provide ideal conditions for such activity, i.e. a range of vulnerable tenants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt</td>
<td>Vulnerable tenants who fall into debt and turn to the gang for help will only increase their vulnerability. Sometimes force is used to conduct a takeover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserved</td>
<td>Often the Olders have little sympathy for those losing control of their homes and feel it is deserved as the ‘losers’ are on benefits, drugs or in debt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual advantage</td>
<td>Here gang members claim a mutual benefit through a hidden agenda, e.g. allowing the tenant to apply for a transfer. This occurs where the tenant is in debt and struggling with rental and bills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-letting and key-selling</td>
<td>In places, sub-letting of the property takes place and the original tenant is offered alternative accommodation by the gang or chooses to quit. Keys may on occasion be ‘sold on’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting up a crack house</td>
<td>A takeover may be a deliberate strategy to set up a drug house or ‘Crack House’. After using the premises as a ‘Smoking Den’, dealing and prostitution soon follow. In SW9 a recent crack house incident the mother of a local crack dealer regularly took a pensioner out of his house daily pretending to be his Carer, during which time the gang used the premises to sell crack.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prostitution**

Controlling sex workers is an element of the Instrumental Repertoire designed to generate economic capital and is undertaken by the Mature tier. This often operates as a transitional crime for those moving from the Mature tier to organised crime (as recognised by the police). Despite this, Mature members operate localised houses for prostitution on estates. At the lower level, the street gang does not appear to get involved in pimping in the classic way. However there is a relationship based on mutual benefit which operates between the sex workers and the street gang:

- Youngers sell drugs to local sex workers
- Protection is offered – in return, women attend parties
- Sex workers are bulk buyers of drugs for their own clients
- Sex workers are regular clients and signpost others
This mutually beneficial arrangement is common. After 10 years Elders retain an extensive network of sex worker contacts so strategising into trafficking or controlling prostitution, this is easy.

Previously this was a common feature on Angell town estate and some prostitution still exists but mostly occurs at the junction of Brixton road/ Loughborough road. Sex workers use mobile phones and live in nearby flats. As sex work is an extensive topic in its own right it is not possible to expand upon this element in this paper.

Maximising street capital through Reputation

Once reputations are established within the social field, continued ascension and safety requires street capital to be maintained. However for many gang-affiliates this is insufficient and they seek faster advancement and ascension. This is achieved by maximising street capital through two key strategies:

• Promotions and marketing of your individual or gang brand
• Group violence and Gang Incursions

These two strategies are critical to understanding the reasons for increased violence in the social field of the gang. Both strategies offer new adaptations to existing strategies and are recently tested and mastered. Importantly, they also represent a gamble within the social field. They may go spectacularly well and bring instant and enduring credits of street capital or they may go spectacularly wrong and bring future grief and victimisation. In this social field where social competition is increasingly fierce and achieving distinction increasingly challenging, it is possible that young people resort to these strategies more frequently. This increases tensions in the social field leading to increasing violence.

The frequent use of these strategies attests to their efficacy. The inherent nature of these strategies dictates how and when they are used, but also dictate that responses from rivals to their use are likely to be extremely violent and emotionally charged. These strategies are purposely utilised to antagonise, goad and humiliate rivals by causing massive and dramatic deflations in their street capital. This occurs because these strategies are:

- Highly provocative
- Intensely personal
- Innovative and creative
- Designed to highlight weaknesses
- Highly public and visually impacting
- Able to be recorded, widely broadcast, archived and repeatedly aired

These strategies can be employed, either randomly or with planning, remotely online, when rivals are present or absent.
Promotions and marketing

An established ‘Rep’ quickly becomes a vehicle for increasing street capital and a passport to advancement and distinction. With an established Rep it becomes easier to further strategise to maintain and then maximise this Rep through:-

- Word of mouth via the gang
- Word of mouth via the Network
- Demonstrating willingness to act on your Reputation
- Social networking sites (SNSs)
- Linking into music
- Hype and myth
- Having a visual presence

As one gang affiliate noted, ‘YouTube can have a large effect. Music is a big part of it – it helps get the gang known, nowadays’, (West African Male Older). Most affiliates have an online web presence and some brand names will be ‘Trending’, i.e. rising in popularity. For Youngers, it is important to market one’s Rep immediately and get their name discussed via SNSs. Websites are the perfect medium to illustrating and reinforcing the core nature of expressive crime – (a show of nature and character) – validating this through the principle medium of expression – Art. Such ‘art’ used to be preserve of graffiti artists. Until the arrival of SNSs, graffiti was the medium for posturing, challenging and ‘dissing’ rival gangs. SNSs have now almost completely taken this over.

The most straight-forward way to market a reputation is to visually demonstrate it to others, providing cast-iron proof of involvement. When viewed by peers, this builds reputation. Visual copy of actions is transmitted as high-grade evidence which then validates any allocation of respect. Visual copy is highly prized because of this evidential factor – but also because it can be easily transmitted and ‘lives forever’ online. Reputationally this continues to earn street capital for the gang member in a way akin to garnering street royalties.

For those seeking to maximise their reputation, gang reputation or street capital, a simple web presence or website is insufficient and viewed as technically low grade. They will seek to use high quality video and DVD productions to enhance their site. Street capital can be maximised by the provocative use of video productions as seen in the example below:

**Use of video**

Street capital can be maximised by gang-affiliates using video production or direction. The more provocative the film, the greater the street capital accrued. Footage usually includes a lyrical rap culminating in free-styling monologues; often provocative claims denigrating rivals with multiple terms of abuse and mocking language, e.g. ‘you are not as brave as us, you Pussies!’. Gangs boast of being ‘untouchable’ and ‘invincible’ whilst illustrating their gang policy and rules. Individuals will openly boast, ‘I cut him, I shot him!’ Brand names are listed to evidence the gang’s numerous branded affiliates, their diversity and to designate assumed territory and authority. Confrontations
and challenges are proffered to rivals. Both gang-affiliates, rivals and the local police monitor the use of SNSs to identify traffic and the profile of those accessing the sites.

High levels of violence, both real and threatened, are posted on the SNSs. Recent video footage shows Peckham Young Guns fighting the South Central Gang in Croydon whilst another shows a large gang fight in the Whitgift centre in Croydon.

After video-posting, the gang will telephone their rivals to advise them a new video has been broadcast. This taunting is considered extremely provocative and represents an electronic version of ‘throwing down the gauntlet’. This generates instant street capital deflation of those challenged. Deflation can only be stopped by ‘picking up the gauntlet’ and either posting a retort or taking revenge. Gang affiliates with specific IT skills are used to spread the word quickly. Incidents can be deliberately manufactured to obtain good visual copy which may even include council CCTV footage. Such footage is highly prized. One recent website, ‘Fear and Fashion’ was recently deleted following complaints it glamorised guns and was a crucible for violence.

Marketing reputations via SNSs generates considerable hype and myth. A buzz will be generated which young people feed off hoping to ‘give action and get reaction’, (Katz 1988). ‘Certainly with the youngsters it’s all caught up in a big hype. That’s why we say is the levels of violence has gone up’. (White Professional Female). This buzz is complemented by opportunities to produce video footage on the Internet and many reputations are made here. At times, active gang-affiliates are disparaging of those who only appear in videos terming them, ‘YouTube Gangstas’: implying their role is lightweight and insignificant. In addition, those peripheral to the social field will find it easy to claim association, saying, ‘Yes I’m part of that’. Others find the buzz addictive and hard to leave.

A further reason for increased violence in the social field is that Youngers and new arrivals to the gang can easily get caught up in electronic provocation and posturing without fully realising the significance and danger of doing so. This leads to a proliferation of provocative postings as Youngers seek to maximise their street capital. The high emotional content of such postings then often leads to swift and extremely violent retribution.

Central to manufacturing and maximising one’s street capital is the role of hype and exaggeration in story telling or trading of information. Herman and Julia Schwendinger note that young people use different moral rhetorics when in discourse with peers. These rhetorics can often support the criminal activity and utilise hyperbole (Schwendinger 1985). This is done by way of strategising to maximise street capital. Such stories recreate the member as central protagonist in their own heroic narrative, demonstrating through oral tradition their ability to control situations and use their ‘street knowledge’ to outwit, survive and thrive. This includes using SNSs to describe incidents more violently than they actually occurred. Police also identify this by matching the stories on SNSs with the actual incidents, e.g. gang members will claim a victim is in ICU, when in reality they only received minor scratches. David Matza (1964) refers to this process as ‘Sounding’ - originally inferred as teasing, insulting or imputing negative qualities which lead people to take offence and then act accordingly. In the social field of the gang however, ‘bad’ is a revered quality. Moreover,
both victim and perpetrator in the above example will acquire street capital through such hype. This is further maximised if the story is repeated multiple times.

**Group violence and Gang Incursions**

In addition to personal/gang marketing and promotions, street capital and reputations are maximised through group activity. Group activities offer a number of potential ways for members to elevate themselves and to earn street capital. These activities also perform additional functions:

- Facilitating group bonding
- Permitting members to test strategies from the Repertoires
- Providing a platform to demonstrate trust and loyalty to peers and to the gang.

The two favoured strategies are group violence and group incursions into rival territory. Both strategies are permissible within the gang habitus, have been tested and proven effective. Both strategies are also responsible for the increased frequency and increased level of violence within the social field. These increases occur not least because of the frequency and repetitive nature of such events, but also because of the sheer numbers of those involved. Critically such incidents involve multiple Players each strategising independently and as a group – simultaneously. This means the Gang Repertoire variables are frequently used in a variety of different ways by different people at once. As a result such events are difficult to control. Group activity may be strategised and controlled at the outset, with an agreed group plan of action, however individual strategising soon leads to mixed variables and individual employment of variables. This often results in plans going astray and significantly different outcomes. Witnesses to these events may report violence to be random or chaotic. The violence that is permissible is guided by the habitus.

Two further elements are central in determining the increase of violence of such incidents. Firstly those seeking to maximise their own street capital may suddenly and dramatically increase the dosage or degree of violence in these events. Secondly in any group attack all those involved must be seen to participate as all wish to increase their street capital. This results in multiple, often frenzied, stabbings at the same time. The locality of the stab wounds inflicted on the body further increases street capital – newcomers to such violence may seek to stab in the legs, arms or buttocks; those seeking to maximise their street capital will stab in the chest, throat or heart. Police report some stab wounds are inflicted after the victim has fallen or died, suggesting some members seek to claim bragging rights by showing they too have acted in concert with the gang.

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**Group violence**

Police and professionals report an increase recently in joint enterprise attacks i.e. several perpetrators acting in concert. The degree of permissible violence as dictated by the habitus of the social field has now changed following the shooting of two young people in McDonald’s restaurant in 2006.

‘People have this mentality, they are ready to do anything. They all know it’s
illegal so that doesn’t come into it. Doing something bad or illegal is easy, it is doing something legal that is difficult. Also the younger people don’t care about the consequences’. (West African Male Older)

Any revenge attack often now has several assailants instead of just one. This further increases the level of violence in SW9. There are a number of reasons why this is occurring:-

- With whole groups being ‘dissed’ on SNS, increased numbers now feel violated and seek retaliation. Also being ‘dissed’ electronically and publically often brings a high emotional content, and immediacy, to revenge.
- As a strategy group violence offers opportunities for group planning, excitement and buzz
- It offers opportunities for group validation and bonding.
- It creates a reputation of the gang acting ‘as one’ - this demonstrates cohesion and organisation (although the actual incident may be chaotic).
- In private, Elders claim benefits from apparent careful orchestration of their members
- Group violence dramatically increases the fear factor for the victim. Attackers expect the victim to carry a weapon. Rushing the victim as a group reduces his ability to retaliate effectively.
- Gang affiliates claim that Youngers have ‘no fear’ of just one person stabbing with a knife.
- It plays out better – either on video, or post event, in myth-making
- It maximises fear and street capital
- It increases the likelihood of success and affiliates eagerly ‘opt in’ to participate in what they consider to be a sure fire ‘hit’.

These events can occur spontaneously, but can be planned if an incident triggers a gang strategy response, e.g. in 2010, a TN1 (Trust No-one) gang Younger from Tulse Hill was stabbed outside Brixton police station by a GAS gang member. Two days later, 10 TN1 Olders visited a local chicken shop in recognised GAS turf. Within minutes approximately 25 GAS members arrived from different directions to surround the chicken shop. Police intervened, breaking up the potentially violent incident. Such instances demonstrate a certain amount of gang planning and fast tactical response.

‘The Game’ in action – habitus, street capital and territory

Social field analysis and the concept of street capital brings a new understanding to the issue of territoriality revealing it as less about spatial dimensions and more concerned with reputation and metaphor. Territoriality is useful in examining how the concepts of habitus and street capital interrelate within the social field especially via gang incursions. I shall now examine these three concepts to illustrate how ‘The Game’ works in the social field. Before doing so however, it is useful to consider how academics and the media have until now misread the issue of territoriality.
Misreading territoriality

The concept of violence relating to a spatially defined area has been much researched thematically by gang researchers (Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Spigel 1964; Hagedorn 1988; Klein 1971; Taylor, 1989; Vigil 1988; Kintrea 2008). Interestingly, Sanders (writing about Lambeth in 2005) noted very few, if any, accounts of young people protecting or controlling areas or of ‘territorial rivalry’.

One example recently foregrounded by Ralphs, Medina and Aldridge (2009) borrows from USA social geographers, Tita et al (2005) and their discussions of ‘gang set spaces’ - said to be ‘geographically defined areas within a neighbourhood where gangs hang out’, i.e. streets, buildings and spaces where gang members congregate. In a later work, Aldridge et al (2011) conclude that ‘gang members understood, experienced and interpreted territory in complicated ways’ with ‘considerable dissensus amongst gang members about what constituted ‘gang set space’. The concept of ‘gang set space’, which fits the quantitative geo-coded spatial discourse of Tita et al, becomes considerably diluted when the gang is considered through the lens of social field analysis. Although my research and participant observations identified locations favoured by gangs, these were often highly variable and used functionally. They were also used by non gang members. Social field analysis further identifies that spaces are seldom exclusive and usually shared with participants in other social fields. They are functionally differentiated by actors operating in different social fields, e.g. local parks used recreationally by neighbourhood families may be used for dog-fighting by local gangs; a housing estate stairwell may be used by the gang to smoke weed, discuss business or have sex, whilst for local residents it is how they access their homes. These spaces are not ‘set’ as implied, largely because temporal variables impact upon their spatial functions. My findings identify gangs are more likely to functionally and temporarily utilise ‘gang social spaces’. Social interactions amongst gang members are ‘played out’ in virtual spaces as well as underground garages; reputations transcend postcodes; gang-affiliated young people may not live in the neighbourhood which hosts the gang to which they affiliate. The role of girls and young women, Olders and Elders do not require their street presence. ‘Gang set spaces’ is therefore a gendered concept mostly pertaining to the Elementary tier acting out the Expressive Repertoire: it relates to male activity rather than the roles of girls and women. Focus on ‘gang set spaces’ risks obscuring the functions and strategies of girls and young women within the social field of the gang. The concept of ‘Gang set spaces’ is not therefore used in this thesis.

Social field analysis and the concept of street capital is a useful tool to analyse the complexities and misunderstandings of territoriality. For example, Aldridge et al (2011) found that fear of ‘straying’ into rival territory was linked to ‘previous conflicts with particular individuals (rather) than to rival gang status per se’. Such dichotomous arguments between individually motivated actions and gang motivated actions can be addressed through social field analysis. Utilising the concept of street capital I argue that whilst appearing separate, these issues are linked within the locus of the gang and the dynamics of the social field.

A further example or misreading of territoriality, now clarified through social field analysis, is the claim by Ralphs, Medina and Aldridge (2009) that young people (including those not identifying as
gang-affiliates) are given 'gang labels' and mis-identified as 'gang associates' based 'on their use of place and space'. A process which leads to: victimisation by other young people; stigmatising by the police; vulnerability to targeting by police attention; and exclusion by statutory authorities. Ralphs argues that the 'less discriminate use of gang-status labels by both gang-involved youth and officials has severe implications for the personal safety and exclusion of those who live in known gang areas'. Social field analysis clarifies it is not labelling by officials or gang-involved youth putting them at risk. They are at risk already as young people and as actors within the social field of the gang, whether they are gang-affiliated or not. Others actors in the social field assume they are linked, networked or affiliated. As I shall illustrate below, the social field operates in conjunction with street capital (including local history, habitus, family connections and friendships) to provide an imperative of risk analysis. This risk analysis operates an effective presumption that a young person is 'networked' if they share the same social field/habitus. These assumptions are made first and foremost by other young people to allow them to monitor their own safety. This is much more than the simple attachment of labels.

A further mis-interpretation of territorial issues relates to so-called 'turf wars' over drug 'patches'. This interpretation suggests that territorial disputes are based on fights over rights to sell drugs with commercial gains to be made by expanding one's turf into rival territory, (Toy 2008). This narrative, often media inspired, portrays territoriality as 'drug wars' with Youngers controlling access to estates to prevent rival drug dealers from entering to take over the patch, (market).

Whilst drug dealing is central to the local economy on many estates in SW9, I found no evidence to suggest that this is the causal factor in territorial disputes. Nor is it a causal factor in the so called 'war' between Brixton and Peckham. Gang violence between SW9 and Peckham, (largely the PYG), is essentially one of respect played out through territorial violations by Youngers against Youngers. The locally termed 'Gang War' has lasted many years. At the lower level, drug selling is estate based and often highly localised. Thus we can discount the theory that any prolonged dispute is based on drug dealing as Peckham is simply too far from Brixton for any 'war' to be about drugs. The commercial transactions of the drug trade continue to operate at a lower level undisturbed by this dispute. At a higher level, Olders/Elders profit from larger cross-borough deals. Market economy requirements soon preside over any disputes forcing a resolution that favours profit. Thus drugs do not fuel the 'war' with Peckham.

In Peckham, numerous gangs operate under the umbrella of one banner, the PYG, with its rumoured ability to mobilise up to 300 people if required. Indeed large numbers of PYG do undertake incursions into SW9 and GAS retaliate in return. PYG has its own social field and its own Network, operating their own loose affiliations and alliances, presently united in their contempt for the GAS gang. This does not however amount to a confederation as it is loosely based and established on a variable and needs only basis. It is not planned or negotiated and is unlikely to be enduring for any great length of time.

The reasons for the 'war' are now largely lost in time. What is clearer is how it is perpetuated – by gangs on both sides maximising their street capital, minimising their victimisation and enacting group strategies which achieve this. Importantly this includes the provocative use of SNSs to diminish the reputation of rivals. An alternate theory for this 'war' is that Peckham and Brixton now host different communities that do not get on: Black Caribbean's in Brixton, and Black Africans in
Peckham. This, not uncommon theory, is supported some say by the fact many young people recently attacked or killed, have African surnames. Some claim this reflects a rise in numbers of black Africans in south London. The ‘war’ between Peckham and Brixton is thus theorised as one between these two communities. This is however too simplistic and not supported by evidence. Whilst some tensions are acknowledged between the two communities in Peckham, none were evident in SW9 or Lambeth. Some however felt that Black Africans were ‘taking over’ in both Brixton and Peckham.

A different theory suggests that the over-representation of African names as victims of gang violence relates to the fact they are new arrivals who do not understand the social field. Whilst this may be true of some instances of victimisation, it is over simplistic. In Brixton and across SW9, African names are themselves common. There is no evidence to show that African young men are being targeted for violence because of their African heritage or name. Indeed the majority of young people of African descent living in SW9 or Lambeth have grown up in Lambeth, been schooled there and have UK cultural identity. In the social field of SW9 it is not the country or culture of origin which is significant; it is where they reside now. Thus the ethnicity of the gang reflects that of the community.

It is however possible new arrivals experience ‘network poverty’ (6:1997). This would significantly reduce the level of knowledge and information which a young person who is a new arrival might be able to access. This is likely to increase his risk status. As such he may have unwittingly placed himself in situations or relationships of increased risk and potential danger.

**Territory as habitus and metaphor**

In any social field, it is the habitus which guides action. The habitus also determines what actions are permissible as social norms within the social field. However the habitus is generated by history of the neighbourhood and is thus spatially as well as socially determined. It is this spatial dimension which links to the perception of territory. For many in the social field, the issue of territoriality therefore assumes great importance. This is due in part to the recent gang strategy of undertaking group incursions into territory perceived to belonging to or controlled by, rival gangs.

The strategy of group incursion into rival territory is a key element of the rise in violence, as it represents a calculated strategy that allows individuals and gangs to maximise their levels of street capital.

For many Youngers, territory or ‘Endz’, is an integral part of their gang identity and their personal identity (Pearson 1983); a fact recognised by other gangs who express similar feelings. Gangs use this knowledge to both generate and acquire street capital. Street capital can also be generated by one gang simply by diminishing the street capital of rivals, i.e. this can be achieved by violating their territory through gang ‘incursions’. Often mislabelled the ‘Postcode Beef’ in London, the employment of this strategy dominates the daily lives of Youngers in the Elementary tier as they seek to maximise their street capital. It leads to multiple potential hazards and dangers for those
negotiating this social field as they try to avoid victimisation and violence, ultimately adding significantly to the landscape of risk.

This issue of territoriality is high in the public mind having been extensively covered in recent media explorations of gang culture. It is however a complex and nuanced aspect of gang life. Within the urban street gangs of SW9 territoriality is significant in the early formative years relating to concepts of domain protectionism by Youngers creating their own defensible space. Later as they grow older, such issues recede and criminal activity and the economy of drugs come to the fore. Within the dimension of protecting personal home territory are complex dynamics relating to habitus and social field. Younger and newer gang members are aware their influence, 'control' and their habitus has limitations. However they instinctively designate these as spatial boundaries rather than relational boundaries. Relational boundaries are determined by proximity to the gang and its social field, i.e. this determines whether one is influenced by issues of street capital, respect, reputation and violation. Within this localised and spatialised frame of reference, territorial incursions become a metaphor for personal violation.

The world experience of Youngers is very small: their knowledge and 'world map' limited and bounded by their everyday experience, their locality, their school, the High Street and local shops. The physical built environment becomes a metaphor for the corporeal – it is part of their life history. The spatial entity of the estate becomes the physical space of the group. This gives Youngers the opportunity of viewing the territory as more than just the domain of the gang. It comes to be viewed as an entity within the gang itself. It is the habitus. The neighbourhood reflects the habitus of the individuals in the gang and vice versa. They are linked to it and it to them. Of course the territory is only really their territory in their heads. For them, the neighbourhood retains the physical embodiment of their local history. To protect the estate is to conserve their history, albeit this might only be several years.

For younger gang affiliates the neighbourhood becomes a metaphor for the gang; as an entity it is allocated domestic or intensely personal qualities. Any violation of this territory is viewed as a violation of the gang corpus. For Youngers seeking to associate in group dynamics, this physical metaphor for the gang takes on supreme importance. The estate or neighbourhood becomes an entity over which they can quickly exert influence and then control: exercised through basic forms of intimidation, amassed numbers, visible presence and elementary forms of the Expressive Gang Repertoire. It is 'control' formed and sustained by group activity. This control, albeit often more perception than reality, is their creation and has been achieved through their dedication and hard work.

Alternatively, Olders 'pass on' the estate to Youngers installing in them a sense of manly duty to take responsibility for the space as they did. This is often a false narrative. Having established control in the neighbourhood, they then consider it their responsibility to advertise this fact, manage the space, retain control over time and look after the space as if it were an actual gang member. Thus begins the very early narrative of the strong personal relationship felt by a Younger to their estate or neighbourhood.

Thus begins a formative opportunity (especially for Youngers) to build a relationship of trust and territorial attachment: you understand it, know it intimately, know where to hide, how to escape,
how to move through it, locations of key building, walls, fences, location of objects to use as missiles, defensive positions. By acting together as a group to defend and protect their neighbourhood, Youngers develop trusting relationships with their territory and their peers. These territorial relationships become a binding and bonding contract, both personal and group, upon which all agree; around which all rally.

Yet again, these concepts of territoriality are highly gendered. They relate to male privilege and assumed hegemony where male Olders ‘pass on’ the neighbourhood to Youngers to defend. They are bound up in male narratives of defending honour (and street capital), of being schooled in defence techniques and fulfilling ‘the man’s role/duty’: essentially ‘doing’ masculinity, (Messerschmidt 1993).

As the estate or neighbourhood is the habitus, and the habitus is the self, then the desire to protect and defend the estate or neighbourhood is protection of the self. Applying this logic, the gang excuses any actions used to defend the territory from incursions. Incursion becomes a form of spatial violation, of disrespect to the habitus, in much the same way as a slap to the face. They claim ‘it is about being violated and disrespected and people doing things’, (African Caribbean Male Older). Incursions are then regarded as reasonable provocation for any subsequent defensive action. For many, however this just becomes a reason to fight.

An alternative reasoning for incursions is argued by Sanchez-Jankowski who found that ‘fear of organisational decline’ could motivate an attack on rivals to ‘deter internal conflict, encourage group cohesion, and create more control over member’, (1991:163). This was however not supported by evidence present in SW9.

**Reputational (Street Capital) deflation**

In this social field, protecting territory is more than protecting member’s homes; it is protecting the embodied reputation of the neighbourhood - something the gang believe they can control or influence. For them the neighbourhood has also has a brand name and reputation to be defended. This is aligned to their own street capital as a reputational moniker against which their own street capital is ultimately valued, i.e. a diminished reputation for the neighbourhood dilutes or diminishes the street capital of the individual. A tough reputation is built upon a tough neighbourhood.

However the neighbourhood reputation is subject to fluctuations, similar to their own. Rivals have a vested interest in diminishing this to elevate and maximise their own street capital. As Youngers have so melded their own reputations to the gang, and the gang to the neighbourhood, any diminution of reputation for the neighbourhood brings a correlated diminution in street capital of the gang and its members. Any deflation of street capital or reputation must be quickly reversed.

Violation of gang territory, viewed as a violation of the reputation of the gang corpus, precipitates reputational deflation of both neighbourhood reputation and gang members. Young people ‘defending their ’hood’ or Endz, may thus strategise to reverse any deflation and maintain stocks of street capital. Several Elders/Olders reported this has happened to Brixton recently; Brixton has lost its ‘bullet-proof reputation’. With a reputation that is falling, it becomes easier to denigrate or
malign Brixton, and so by association, its populace, or more specifically its gang-affiliated populace. It becomes easier to desecrate, dishonour and transgress against a neighbourhood once its moral authority is weakened. An area which once traded on its reputation amongst those with criminal or gang affiliations, as indomitable and inviolable, is now considered open to penetration and violation. Its moral authority has been questioned.

The ability to generate reputational deflation increases the effectiveness of group incursion as a tested strategy. Incursions thus retain a triple benefit - one single incursion precludes a decline or fall in the reputation of the member, the gang and the neighbourhood. The greater the numbers of young people involved in an incursion the greater the multiplier effect, magnifying humiliation. In Bourdieu’s social field casino, it is a sure-fire winning gamble.

It offers two further attractive features; firstly, an opportunity to advance or maximise your street capital in a safe environment of group action. Participants are potentially hyped up rather than cautious and wary. Bravado and reckless daring is thus evident and members report to greatly enjoy the experience. Secondly, a group incursion is a gang excursion. This foregrounds the agency of the gang and the gang strategy, reaffirming it as dominant to any individual agency. It is thus a bonding experience for participants, offering rich rewards of boosted street capital, minimised risk, bragging rights, gang affirmation and creation of joint histories. Whilst such group or joint enterprise is often referred to as ‘defending the ‘hood’, it could perhaps be more accurately described as, ‘defending the reputation of the hood and thus protecting my own street capital’.

Any subsequent fall in the neighbourhood Rep which takes place, will impact upon the host gang and must be arrested urgently. Failure to do so will lead to irreparable decline in the Rep of the Hood which is reflected in a status decline of all residents’ members. This will mean increased risk of victimisation for all in the Hood and will increase the risk of violence. In this way, defending the Hood becomes a risk management strategy. These events also pose a risk to the Leader of the Youngers who must quickly orchestrate retaliation or repeated incursions may bring a challenge to his authority and leadership.

The so-called ‘Postcode Beef’

In SW9, and I suspect elsewhere, the gang issues do not relate to actual postcodes or estates as definitive territories. In many cases postcodes do match the estates. Ordinary young people and gang-affiliated young people are clear in the fact that:

'It’s not really about postcodes y’know' (African Caribbean Male Younger)

Describing it as a Postcode war or ‘beef’ is, in many ways, a lazy way of ascribing the spatial dimensions of habitus, social capital and territory. This description has also allowed for subterranean motivations to be overlooked or taken for granted.
The ‘postcode beef’ is sometimes erroneously described as acquisitional ‘turf wars’. This is also incorrect, as gangs do not seek occupation or acquisition for gain, of a rival’s turf. Many gang-affiliated young people do not view fighting over their own perceived territory as an option, but an obligation. They are not fights to expand territory but are disputes about broken relationships, disrespect and a ritualised humiliation of rivals to gain advantage in the quest for street capital.

Gang-affiliated young people are unanimous in describing that people now ‘in beef with each other’ were previously all friends. That those relationships broke down when somebody ‘dissed’ somebody else or did something to annoy another and it escalated from there. Beefs result from the demise of interpersonal relationships, and have more in common with the swiftly changing loyalties, divisions and alliances that commonly occur in the school playground. Indeed many beefs arose from school. If linked to gang-affiliated young people they take on a whole new form and meaning. When the search for distinction occurs in the social field of the gang rather than the playground and is conjoined with aspects of respect, reputation, fluctuations of street capital and access to weapons, the situation can be dangerous.

The term ‘postcode beef’ has obfuscated the nuances of multiple interpersonal relationships occurring within this social field. For example, two young males in separate gangs may be in beef together over a previous incident. Should a third gang propose an incursion into the neighbourhood of one of the others, it is quite possible for one of the young males to come and support the other. This is often the case with extended family or where future business links transcend immediate disagreements. Business links and deals between gangs are ongoing and need not be either large or significant. They are mostly small at the Younger level, e.g. help me out and here’s £30 of weed. Other deals might involve buying/selling stolen goods. For this reason the gangs are able to work with each other or work separately. A Beef may result from a business deal gone wrong, e.g. trainers are stolen to order and the requester refuses to pay up as they are the wrong brand; one cousin skims money off a deal involving another cousin. In such issues of honour the beef will continue for as long as they see each other - months or years. Overtime the Youngers will hear about it. It then filters down to become ingrained in them. Opportunities to resolve such beefs dwindle as the cousins avoid each other and the beef endures. Historical narratives become gang mythology permitting Olders enduring opportunities to retell their heroic role in the drama. Olders prime Youngers by recounting nostalgic narratives, taunting that ‘in my day no-one come into our area’. Thus it favours their interests to nurse such hostilities. Many such beefs do not get resolved.

**Territorial Incursions**

An incursion is an orchestrated movement of gang members (anything between 3-50 gang affiliates) onto the territory of a rival gang. These raids on street capital (incursions) may be frequent. All gangs are aware that the more frequent and repetitive the raids, the faster the fall in street capital of those ‘allowing’ the incursion. The ‘victims’ are perceived as weak and not in control of their Endz. By summer 2010 the recent tension had lasted 19 months with incursions from Lambeth to Southwark, or vice versa, every other day.
Incursions are organised using mobile phones and SNSs. Members are required to group together before entering the estate on bike or foot. Some members may even travel via bus from opposing directions to give the impression of an ‘invasion’. During an incursion the visiting gang maximises marketing opportunities by filming proof of their incursion which is transmitted within minutes onto SNSs. Filming further elevates reputations whilst diminishing that of rivals.

Once in rival territory the ‘visiting’ gang indulges in strategies from the Expressive Repertoire. As this is not their own Endz, they have a vested interest in causing maximum trouble for maximum effect, i.e. more damage or greater violence, e.g. locating and fighting rivals, petty theft, criminal damage. Residents may be in danger and attacked randomly. Firearms are taken to be openly brandished – occasionally lone individuals are shot. In 2010 PYG entered an estate in SW9 and unloaded several rounds at random into a group of GAS gang members as they hurriedly dispersed. Some incursions involve targeted hunts for key gang individuals. Others involve ‘fishing’ for strays.

The large numbers involved (on average 15-25 boys) demands a police response: usually 3-4 police vans; police on horseback or mountain bike. Police entry onto the estate is monitored by the gang. Local agencies attempt ceasefires by calling the Elders of rival gangs to a neutral location.

Recently, Lambeth gangs have undertaken incursions involving extensive and sometimes quite serious disorder by fighting in Croydon town centre, e.g. between GAS and DSN, (Don’t Say Nuttin). Similarly there was an attack on a gang in Croydon by ABM, which resulted in approximately 30-40 DSN members coming en masse to Stockwell to challenge and reassert their presence to ABM.

Planned incursions are a group exercise, though only a hard core may be fully gang-affiliated. Friends are requested to ‘bulk up’ numbers, sometimes carefully chosen by some so as to be largely dispensable if caught. To some onlookers it might look like a massive school fight.

In the next section, Part II I consider the social field as a Landscape of Risk for young people, looking at survival strategies. I also consider the social structure and social order maintenance in the field in more depth. I then conclude by summarising the factors contributing to an increase in violence in the social field.
Chpt 5 – Life in the Landscape of Risk

'A friend is one who has the same enemies as you have'

Abraham Lincoln

In this chapter, I examine in more detail the Landscape of Risk which characterises the social field of the gang as viewed by young people. This includes examination of the survival strategies employed by young people occupying this landscape with specific reference to the challenges involving territory. I then move on to examine the social field characteristics of information noting its centrality to the social field and its critical utility for survival and strategising. Lastly, I consider the gendered responses to survival in the landscape of risk: looking at how girls and young women strategise in the social field. Crucially I conclude that girls and young women operate key functions of information management in the social field, however this function, and other forms of strategising, serve to often place them at the forefront of risk.

I shall however being the chapter by looking at the mechanism by which young people enter the social field of the gang: itself often a process necessitated by strategies of survival.

Risk and victimisation in the social field

The social field of the gang, the imperative to acquire street capital and its vicarious fluctuating nature, creates what might be termed a landscape of risk for young people. This concept usefully combines Bourdieu’s social topography (Bourdieu 1969) with aspects of my early organising concept of domestic violence and the Duluth Model. In the same way as women in a household characterised by domestic violence devise survival strategies and techniques, so too do young people in the social field of the gang. This metaphorical landscape of risk is, for many, made manifest in relation to territoriality and the so-called ‘postcode beef’.

Risk, usually in the form of victimisation, comes from multiple directions in this social field: gang-affiliates and peers; rival gangs; the police. Interaction with each may diminish street capital leading to victimisation and violence: a social norm understood and accepted from an early age. Those in the social field of the gang are at greatest risk. Young people in SW9 who are non-gang-affiliated are also at risk: they also have a basic understanding of street capital and risk. For some of them affiliation to the gang is the best option to mitigate risk of victimisation. However several different narratives have emerged indicating different push and pull factors for gang affiliation. These are examined in more detail below before I consider how young people seek to mitigate risk and minimise victimisation.
Entering the social field of the gang

Young people living in the neighbourhoods of SW9 are aware gangs operate in their communities - either as a new development or a normal part of growing up. At some point, opportunities present themselves to young people for closer involvement and several factors determine whether or not they enter the social field and if so, how they enter. These include: normalisation of gangs, the influence of family and siblings, school and other push and pull factors.

Normalisation

Many young people grow up in deprived or contested neighbourhoods where urban street gangs are a social norm. Their proximity to the gang or exposure to those involved and their activities leads to a process of normalisation where gangs are part of the fabric of the social field and their activities seen as routine;

‘it was just part of my environment. Kids hanging around, you just wanna be part of it. Some were older, some younger. At first, I didn’t want to get involved. I could see however it became routine for the, stealing phones and robbing handbags. It became quite attractive. I got involved cos that’s what was happening every night’. (African Caribbean Male Younger)

Part of this normalisation is the awareness of benefits and commodities acquired, accrued or accessed by the gang. Whilst economic capital and access to it eventually dominate their motivations, younger people are initially attracted by other benefits such as excitement, risk and opportunity. Another factor in the normalisation process is the involvement of family members.

Getting involved in the gang

Recruitment is an important element in sustaining the gang and ensuring it endures. Through recruitment, the social field of the gang, its power and control can be expanded or consolidated, business can be grown, networks expanded. Recruitment is however often misunderstood and can be a contentious issue amongst agencies who often fail to agree upon its dimensions and modus operandi. The term ‘recruitment’ is problematic, setting up expectations of contracts, membership, or formal offers. Hallsworth and Duffy (2010:6) view the term as ‘the language of control’ and not reflective of real life in the gang. Aldridge and Medina (2008) found the concept of ‘membership’ ‘alien’ to young people interviewed. As young people often pay subscription dues for active sports or club memberships, the term ‘membership’ is personally constructed for them and conjures up their experience of weekly
subs. It is therefore inappropriate as a fieldwork term and their finding is unsurprising. Aldridge and Medina (2008) further align with American research which claims that joining a gang is akin to joining a school friendship group and that only very rarely ‘does anything resembling ‘recruitment’ take place. For them joining a gang is achieved through ‘developing a different kind of relationship with existing contacts’. American literature often also reports initiation ceremonies, however this time, Aldridge and Medina find no evidence of this in their research. Why their UK evidence supports one aspect of the American experience but not the other remains unexplained, as do the examples of ‘recruitment’ in the minority of instances.

The behavioural mechanisms, choices and influences determining gang-affiliation is more complicated than this simple overview suggests. Whilst it is likely that the UK situation differs from the USA, both similarities and differences should be fully explored.

The reality is that push and pull factors operate alongside gang strategy and individual agency. Central to this is the urgency for many young people to mitigate risk of victimisation. Some aspects of ‘recruitment’ are very covert and almost imperceptible, leading to doubts as to their existence, whilst others are more overt. Increasing affiliation seldom relies upon one technique.

For many young people, their experience of gang affiliation is not described as ‘recruitment’, a term more favoured by professionals, but simply as ‘getting involved’. This suggests a more gradual process seen by many as a normal progression of life in their social field. Four key elements in the social field are commonly ascribed by young people themselves to their involvement; normalisation; family; the search for reputation and respect and lastly school. For many young people, the social field presents opportunities for all of these aspects to convene.

Family pressure to get involved

For many, the family is a major source for push factors into the gang or affiliation to the gang (Moore 1991; Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Vigil 1988). The involvement of other family members, especially siblings is a major risk factor for young people in determining their involvement with or affiliation to criminal activity and street gangs (Moore 1991; Curry and Spergel 1992). Recently Klein (2006:147-8) noted that peer pressure trumped family risk factors in his comparative analysis of recent gang research. However there is no guarantee that family pressure determines involvement with a gang on the basis those circumstances exist at home. Nevertheless the proximity of criminal activity and access to criminal networks may well have a negative influence and either push or pull young people into gang involvement or affiliation.

Involvement of an older sibling is not uncommon and sibling pairs do exist in gangs. Actual pressure may not be required nor undertaken. Regular gang involvement by a sibling will de-
mystify the gang to the youngster; its players, its history and structure will be recognisable. The youngster will feel protective and pre-disposed to the stories and the gang. This is further strengthened visually by the older sibling regularly hanging with the gang. For some, mild coercion may exist. For most with family connections, coercion is unnecessary. Joining motivations include witnessing your brother access and retain rewards; desire to emulate the example being set by the brother; protection. These normative behaviours mask the risk and accentuate the rewards and the fun. Older brothers may hold the dominant male position in the household thus their views are influential. Crucially, other options (of not joining the gang) are seldom explored.

Observing a sibling’s economic rewards is both attractive and alluring. In addition, siblings provide a readymade access into the gang, negating need for initiation, providing protection from initial bullying and expediting progression through the lower ranks. Siblings have established links to support, alongside access to stolen goods and rewards as yet unobtainable by the younger sibling. Crucially the younger sibling can trade upon the street name and street capital of an existing Playa.

It is unlikely that any formal offer to join is given or that the gang wait until the youngster is ‘ready’. It is much more likely that a series of small requests and approaches are made over time to carry out small activities, e.g. transporting information or small goods. As such the youngsters are already tested. Nonetheless it is considered hugely flattering for the young person to be invited to hang with the gang or to join them. From the gang’s perspective this new recruit is a safe bet.

Large extended family circles also bring influence from cousins, second cousins and close friends. These dynamic arrangements are themselves an additional risk-factor in pushing affiliation. This risk may be accentuated via the introduction of new boyfriends, fathers and step-brothers into the family unit who may already have connections to criminal activity or gang life. The local Network (see this chapter) also acts to influence, support and strengthen directions given by the older siblings regarding getting involved.

Some of these families are acknowledged as organised criminal ‘cartels’ in their own right. It is also possible for a young person to be both a member of the street gang and a member of the family cartel (an organised crime network or firm that is established and run by a family). Wider opportunities then present themselves via expanded markets and trading potential for both the gang and the criminal family cartel. The supply of drugs into the gang could well be from the family cartel. As a cartel it will set the local prices and control distribution. In Reluctant Gangsters, (Pitts 2008:71), John Pitts notes that the crack business in one borough
he studied was controlled by members or close associates of four families. Should the prospective member choose to play both sides, even openly, this presents several potential risks. He will always need to be explicit who he is operating for at each stage. He may need to absent himself from the anti-social elements of the street gang and avoid prosecution which may lead to exclusion from the cartel.

Inter-generational involvement occurs when parents or guardians seek to actively involve siblings in pre-established criminal activity. The term itself suggests this process occurs over a lengthy period of time as the child grows up in a family household where criminal activity and opportunities are commonplace and normative (Sutherland 1947). This process occurs for some and evidence suggests the PDC, (the longest established operating gang in Lambeth) fits this scenario. Those criminally active acknowledge they have this ‘whole underworld going on that we wanna keep alive, y’know?’

Interestingly this static structure that evolved over time, only seldom fits the reality of SW9. Families here are often more fluid; young people may be single mothers or grandparents; siblings may be related through only one parent; step-fathers or new boyfriends are common; uncles widespread and numerous. In this reality inter-generational pressure need not develop over time between blood relatives but occur regularly via evolving domestic relationships. Lambeth police are familiar with the generational nature of some gang involvement in the borough with several families well known to the police where the entire family is linked into criminality, particularly young men involved in gangs.

Some families claim street socialising is beneficial. This may involve instruction at close proximity to the gang or other criminal activity which they claim is the ‘real education’ and will keep young people safe. They point to the recent deaths in the borough claiming these are ‘new arrival families’, new to Brixton, and that ‘their children are not schooled in the ways of the road’. Such new families are unsure how to play the area, how to adjust and to ask the right questions to get the right information. Consequently, they put themselves in difficult or dangerous situations.

Reputational pull factors

Issues of reputation and levels of street capital are central to the social field of SW9 and joining the gang. Those of higher street capital may be approached to be in the gang. Those of lesser reputation or street capital rating may be subject to other influences.
School

In SW9, the crucible for the urban street gang remains the wider social field of the neighbourhood, within which the school is a crucial player.

All young people and professionals claim schools are central to the understanding and genesis of urban street gangs in SW9. There is widespread consensus of the role played by schools, then later by colleges, in allowing gangs to coalesce, recruit and sustain their activates. This occurs primarily through the provision of a communal space where peer groups of all types naturally form, build relationships and break up. When a young person attends school they will quite naturally align and identify with different peer groups from different neighbourhoods.

The coming together of a peer group who then engage in anti-social behaviour or criminal activity is a well known and natural progression for many young people. The disadvantage and deprivation of the wider neighbourhood of SW9 and Lambeth provide the push and pull factors that lead such peer groups to criminal activity. Where educational and economic opportunities are limited, peer groups may begin to use instrumental strategies to raise economic capital (Pitts 2008).

Under such conditions and within the social field of SW9, opportunities exist for the Elementary tier of the gang to establish itself within the school. Many young people view this as a normal and natural progression to their peer group. Many narratives about gangs use this basis to label gangs as peer groups, (Hallsworth and Young 2008).

The school is a central component of the local neighbourhood and the habitus of young people. Some pupils have connections and affiliations with local urban street gangs or criminally active family members. Thus the normalisation of the street gang in the social field is replicated by the normalisation of the gang within the school. These issues only become problematic if the gang is criminally active or violent. Given the nature of Pupil Referral Units, (PRUs), these can be a particularly fertile ground for gang and gang recruitment. This can also make them dangerous spaces for some young people, e.g. a young boy was murdered outside Park Campus, PRU, in West Norwood in 2010.

Given the complex interactions involved in the normalised processes of child development, it can be difficult to distinguish or disentangle how gangs may utilise the school in any active recruitment strategy. It is possible to view ‘recruitment’ as simply nothing more than the normal process of choosing friends to ‘hang with’. However professional and young people who have now left gangs conclude that the very fact the peer group is a gang and the gang is a brand, compels them to actively ‘recruit’ members from their peers. Some professionals view
this as cold blooded recruitment from a rich pool of unsuspecting prospects. On the other hand, young people mostly view this as the continuation of a gradual process of coming together or ‘getting closer’, that this process will and does happen regardless of location. The school merely provides an opportunity for regular interaction on a daily basis. Both these views are partly true and partly over-simplified. Schools are spaces where young people form allegiances to build social capital and thus prevent victimisation. They also form their own social field where the search for street capital or social capital thrives openly often through bullying, thus gang affiliation for protection becomes a dominant response for many. Some would argue the gang may instigate bullying this or seek advantage from it.

Schools also provide a captive audience for potential marketing of brand names, providing opportunities for individuals or gangs to strategise for mutual benefit. In the school environment fear of victimisation compels many to seek closer affiliation with peer groups or with those in the Elementary tier of the gang. Fear of isolation or being designated an outcast is a critical consideration for many who may actively strategise to develop closer links to any dominant gang. For many, decisions to get closer to the gang or to affiliate relate directly to their desire to mitigate their own current or future victimisation.

Similar strategies for involvement take place in colleges and particularly in Pupil Referral Units, (PRUs. e.g. Park Academy in West Norwood, SE27). Local professionals and residents believe that particular schools are linked to particular gangs and act as a feeder for the gang. Local children can feel pressure to affiliate with this local gang, especially if they are dominant within the school setting. However others act on individual agency having risk assessed their potential for victimisation. Young people living on the estate will experience pressure from the gang on the estate and also at school and may feel the gang is inescapable.

Influencing factors for gang affiliation

Those who do not get involved or affiliate through normalisation or family may find themselves getting involved via a process of influencing. Peers or Olders may utilise techniques to bring young people directly into the gang. More commonly these techniques bring young people closer into its periphery or sphere of influence, so for many, affiliation becomes the only choice.

Recruitment into the gang represents succession strategies for younger members but may also represent conservation strategies (Swartz 1997) for Olders seeking maintain their status quo. For those newly affiliated, recruitment often represents a survival strategy as they recognise they must have a formal relationship with the gang if they live in the neighbourhood. For some therefore, affiliation is a strategy of advancing within the social field and a way of navigating the Landscape of Risk. Key ways of influencing affiliation include:
• Inducements

These may take the form of items seen but as yet unobtainable or items offered and received. In the former, young people see individuals with expensive cars, motorbikes and jewellery. Ostentatious exhibits are noticed and resonate with young people, sometimes from a very young age. As explained by one young ex-gang member,

‘Cos you are looking up to certain Man and certain Man have nice ‘tings. And they ain’t getting it from doin’ right. They getting it from doin’ wrong’ (African Caribbean Male Older)

For many young black men living in impoverished neighbourhoods, prospects and opportunities are limited and they come to realise this early.

• Grooming

It is not common amongst professionals to view the interactions between Olders and Youngers as ‘grooming’ in the classic sense of the term. There are aspects of ‘grooming’ that do indeed fit with how more experienced and established young men invest time and energy in a Younger to prepare him to join or subtly coerce him to affiliate; ‘What draws people in is there are father figures’ (Older). It is notable that Hallsworth and Duffy (2010: 6) view the term ‘grooming’ as reflective of the practitioners language of control rather than a reality of the social field. Toy (2008) writing from a practitioners perspective in Southwark, notes ‘Organisational gangs use social motivational factors to their advantage in the identification, recruitment and grooming of prospective gang members’. This includes family connections, cultural and religious connections and antipathy towards the police.

Grooming in the traditional sense involves, aspects of seduction, flattery, attention, enticements and inducements from an older, mature or experienced person to obtain sexual favours from a younger person who is less mature, unworldly or unwittingly attracted to such moves. Youth work professionals recognise such tactics. In SW9 grooming is undertaken by Olders who identify vulnerably or needy others and provide treats:

‘My son (aged 11) was approached by the lead guy in GAS gang who said, “Oi, young man, do you want to make a quick bling bling; I’ll get you a better bike. You’ll have all these girls falling after you; you are just the right age I can groom you”. I said to my son, do you know what groom is?’ (West African Female Resident)
‘Forced’ affiliation

Professionals in SW9 often refer to the ‘forced involvement’ of young people into gangs. This loaded expression needs further explanation. The level of ‘force’ exerted is often disputed by professionals and by young people, gang-affiliated and non gang-affiliated. The term implies that individual agency is extinguished; this is highly unlikely. It is more likely that the individual accepts he will be safer in the gang than outside it and adapts his individual strategy accordingly. Evidence suggests that bullying and intimidation are widely used within the social field often leading to affiliation. Others resist such moves, possibly with strong family support. If so, this aligns with views previously expressed that such individuals retain a strong individual strategy or agency.

Some young people refer to peer pressure as the main reason for them seeking to affiliate - often expressed as ‘giving in’. These decisions are determined by what happens at school; their primary social arena. Others still refer to external social pressures which act against them and effectively ‘force’ them into gang affiliation by closing down other options or opportunities.

For some ‘force’ is expressed through aggression and violence. Force will mean ‘told to do something’. Young people recount numerous cases of those who have initially declined such force only to be subjected to constant harassment, ‘giving in’ only when family members were harassed. ‘Forced involvement’ might include an initial approach by a gang for a young person to demonstrate suitability and trust, e.g. hide a weapon.

A young person with a previous offending history is likely to have had some previous involvement with the local gang. Where such associations form over time, the gang may become aware of his inclination towards criminal activity and make overtures. Personal networks may be of interest. Where local gang involvement is normalised those external to this normality must account for their non-involvement. Occasionally a young person might be intimidated into joining in order to avoid rumours that they are a snitch.

The Landscape of Risk however is unevenly distributed. New Arrivals are particularly at risk and may be subject to threats of ‘forced’ involvement. Young people with no prior relationship with the gang are also at risk. These two high risk groups may be targeted to conduct a task for the gang, e.g. hide a weapon, with threats and intimidation used to ensure compliance. As bullying escalates, young people can feel they are being forced to choose between acting for the gang (and thus affiliating) or being further victimised. One route offers protection, the other offers constant fear and harassment, (Pitts 2008). Those with stronger family bonds found such overtures easier to ignore or overcome. Those without such support may find no alternative but to join. Several examples were proffered of young people too afraid to leave the house due to pressure from the gang to affiliate. Abuse may also be directed at other family members. In this way risk mitigation might include mitigating the risk to other family members. Affiliation is therefore a calculated strategy of risk mitigation.
Paradoxically however, affiliation is a risk and a gamble in its own right. The two key narratives of risk mitigation include: Protection and Peer Pressure.

**Risk mitigation – Protection**

Individuals motivated to join the gang for protection, do so to migrate or minimise the risk of victimisation in the social field. Young people unaffiliated to the gang can face isolation or exclusion by their peers within their social field. Whilst this may not apply to all and affects each person differently, those choosing not to affiliate are shunned and are at risk of increased victimisation. One young gang member articulated it thus,

> 'If you are not part of it then for young people you are totally ignored, you don't belong to anything' (West African Male Younger)

Quickly termed an Outcast, such individuals may have to sever contact with peers. This potentially reduces access to crucial information further increasing isolation and potential victimisation. This isolation will constrain attempts to raise their own reputation and street capital leaving them permanently in victim status. To mitigate and manage risk it therefore becomes crucial to remain a ‘Playa’. One professional suggested this potential isolation was difficult for mature adults to fully comprehend and noted that it was one of many components that a young person has to consider in making their decision as to whether or not to affiliate.

Non-affiliated young people operating within the gang-affected neighbourhood are at high risk of victimisation, notably those fearing victimisation by rival gangs, or those fearing victimisation by their own peers or local gang. Regardless of the source of the threat, for many young people, the ‘protection’ narrative offers an easy route to affiliate. It offers a trade-off or bargain; gang involvement for a cessation of threats and violence. However this choice may indeed be fake. Once in the gang at a lower rank, the social field is possibly even more threatening and dangerous. Those with lower self esteem or limited individual agency may be brought into the gang via this route, having experienced regular victimisation this route now offers an opportunity to be left alone.

> 'They don’t force you – but it plays on your mind. If I act more like them then they'll leave me alone. I know it’s a contradiction but it’s how it happens'. (West African Male Younger).

These two similar but slightly different narratives are considerably explored by John Pitts in Reluctant Gangsters, (Pitts 2008).

**Risk mitigation – Peer Pressure**

A further strong motivation for gang affiliation is peer pressure. This acts in two distinct ways: firstly as the Quest for Respect. This is a ‘pull factor’ as young people desire to emulate their
peers, including Olders, and are willing participants in affiliation. Emulation of peers will bring street capital; surpassing peers brings envy, kudos and increased street capital.

The second form is where peer pressure relates to mitigating risk. Here young people begin to fear that they are falling behind and out of step with peers. They may be the object of ridicule at first but this will eventually turn to isolation or victimisation. Conforming to peers may be done reluctantly, through compelling force, by threat or against their better judgement. In addition a young person must perceive a benefit from following peers and ‘falling in line’. Many see opportunities to increase their street capital: a benefit instantly realised if they affiliate. Peer pressure can be so compulsive, repetitive, overwhelming or coercive that young people feel they may have limited choices or no choices other than to conform. For most this is a natural process closely aligned with friends. For others, it is ‘giving in’ to a group dynamic that only those of strong individual agency can resist. In the context of the urban street gang, peer pressure is most often associated with engaging in criminal activity.

A central construct of peer pressure is its ability to make people get involved in things they would not otherwise have done. As one young gang-affiliated girl noted, ‘you are involved in the peer pressure so much every single day, it becomes...You! Peer pressure puts considerable strain upon young people and they consider it strongly linked to their levels of street capital. Failure to act in ways that meet the peer group social norms can be read as a challenge or as disrespect to them. Your reputation will suffer if you fail to fall in line or assuage the pressure, e.g. young people can receive daily requests for their involvement in criminal activity. At the same time they are given parallel messages that their educational and employment opportunities are limited. Such adult messages only act to reinforce messages from peers – that you might as well get involved.

Giving in to peer pressure will alleviate the pressure for the young person. For most young people self respect and peer respect are not part of their formative identity and need to be acquired as a process of building their personality. The young person becomes aware that the street capital of others is rising. Not getting involved in group validated action leads to street capital deflation. This presents a dilemma only resolved by giving in to peer pressure and thus salvaging your reputation and street capital. In this way, the individual’s strategy then merges or aligns with that of the gang, which now becomes foregrounded. This quest for respect was expressed as self-gratification by one young female gang member.

‘At first you are pleasing somebody or some people. After a while it becomes self pleasure, cos after a while there is no-one left to please, everyone knows what you do’. (West African Male Younger)
In addition many young people experience family or domestic pressures to get involved. Parents may provide tacit approval for such involvement by ‘turning a blind eye’ to extra money or goods brought into the house or being ‘quietly grateful’. After a while the family comes to rely on such additions and expectations are raised.

The seductive qualities of gang affiliation

Several centripetal forces also operate to bring gangs and young people closer. In the social field of SW9 such elements may prove seductive and irresistible. It is here young people can escape the mundane realities of life which offer little prospect of employment and build a new life narrative or street persona. For some the gang offers excitement and drama and opportunities for distinction.

The charisma and aura of the Leader around whom they congregate may also influence gang affiliation. Younger people in the neighbourhood are familiar with the Brand name and reputation of the Leader prior to affiliation, and amongst Youngers his street capital may be exaggerated or lionised and his name pre-established. It is flattering to know that this person now wants to meet with you and consider you to join his group. Such individuals may also have acquired symbolic capital, *(the ‘degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, and recognition)*, (Bourdieu, 1993:7)

The concept of ‘being Cool’, being seen or known to be cool, cannot be underestimated for young people in general. Within the social field of the gang this factor is amplified. In terms of street capital, ‘Cool’ is a status to be achieved and earned. The concept is thus interwoven with complexities of reputation, respect and ability to build and retain social capital.

A further seductive narrative widely recognised and highly attractive to young people is one that rebrands and reframes the gang as a Street Family.

Street Families

In the landscape of risk created by this dangerous social field young people have created the enduring over-arching narrative of the Street Family. By so doing they aim to create a supportive space and circle of trust within a violent world. It is also a way of managing risk. In this social field where trust is limited and information is critical, there is a need to create useful relationships which, though temporary, appear constant. Young people in the social field of the gang thus nurture the narrative of a ‘band of Bro’s’, a ‘Fam’, grouped together with a common background and common purpose – to survive. For many this is logical extension to school friendships, neighbourhood acquaintances and propinquity:

’I just think it’s a group of people that has grown up together and they sort of like, cos they have grown up in a way where they’ve built a defence mechanism where they’ve had to fight
for their own stuff or defend everything they have just in case.
So they’ve got that mentality’. (African, Female, Gang Consultant)

This narrative of cohesion and shared purpose is compounded through shared experience, longevity, and family links. It is also further compounded by shared language or speech and by a shared knowledge that only those within this social field understand what is being said, or happening. It is thus highly exclusive and exclusatory. The inability of many young people to leave the social field and their deep immersion within it effectively dictates that ‘survivors’ will find shared experiences and common ground. Thus the concept of the Street Family is born:

‘It’s a group of people who have grown up on the estate together. It’s just like a family, it’s like a family out there – a Street Family. If anything was to happen to your family, what is your first instinct, to protect your family innit. So that’s what they are, they are family, anything that goes wrong they will protect it’.

(African, Female, Gang Consultant)

Several other benefits are realised through the nomenclature of Street Family:

- It sounds Cool and implies an alternative family structure.
- It implies a common purpose and thus becomes an attractive centripetal force to gang affiliation
- It is supported and nurtured by Olders/ Elders as a way of group bonding
- It means that recruitment into the gang often becomes viewed as an invitation to become part of the family.

So powerful and seductive is this narrative, ‘on Road’ that many young people only utilise this language and they quickly reject the term ‘gang’, preferring the term Street Family, or ‘Fam’, which they believe more accurately conveys their experience. As a term it is also less pejorative and thus more attractive. Most importantly this narrative provides the basis for the notion of protection:

‘It’s a group of friends that grew up together. A community. They are part of the community. The young people are a group of friends who protect people who are in the estate in a way. Cos there are a lot of people who will come to this estate and will disrespect or try to disrespect anyways, so they try to protect the estate in some sense’.

(African, Female, Gang Consultant)
This narrative also becomes a way to re-frame the activities of the gang into a narrative more acceptable to those in the community.

This is however all an illusion. Far from being a band of brothers, relationships are transitory, trust is a purchasable and rare commodity and everything, even their closest friendships, are fluid and negotiable. The conflict and convulsive struggle of the social field determines that each young person is ultimately on their own, to generate, maintain and monitor their own street capital, often at the expense of others. In many ways the gang represents a congregation of rivals, masking mutual exploitation for personal gain. To restate this, it appears that the social field retains the dividing and shifting loyalties of candidates in the Apprentice (BBC TV), taking place in the hot-house environment of the Big Brother House (Channel 4 TV). Add into this mix teenage hormones and emotions and it becomes a highly volatile mix. The nature of the social field locks everyone into permanent competition and ensures that all must generate street capital. No-one is immune from street capital deflation, even ‘Brers’ and Bro’s.

This Street Family narrative is so widely understood and unchallenged that many young people quote it as reality and truth. It is however a coping strategy to manage risk. Overtime most realise the gang does not offer family values and once trusted friends turn against them, they feel bitterly betrayed. In this illusory world young people feel bounded by a deeply emotional contract. This then creates a further reason for the increase in violence and increased level of violence in the social field.

‘A lot of people don’t trust a lot of people. A lot of things can happen when that trust has gone’. (African, Female, Gang Consultant)

Some young people recognise and adapt to the reality of rivalry earlier than others, realising that the Street Family generate increased risk as opposed to decreasing it. One strategy available to them is to manage their own risk more effectively by becoming Independent or Solo operators within the social field.

Risk mitigation through Individualism

Within the social field of the gang it is still possible to act individually, i.e. pursuing one’s own strategy within the social field by not affiliating. Some young people actively choose this as a way of minimising risk and victimisation, i.e. effectively not affiliating to any known gang. However different types of individualism operate and it is important to differentiate between them:-
Individual agency within the gang

In the gang it is important to distinguish between group/gang strategies and individual agency. Each entrant has decided a strategy that best suits their objectives at that time. Overtime they make choices, i.e. what offers the best advantages personally and what can be enacted through a shared gang strategy. Those seeking distinction will maximize their street capital utilising personal power. Personal qualities and characteristics are essential within this contested arena with ability to rise to the top dependent upon the efficacy of the strategies employed and an individual’s personal qualities, e.g. leadership ability, emotional intelligence or determination. Such qualities might permit you to advance as an individual even though one is operating within the context of a group dynamic. Thus individual agency is key to the advancement of some individuals.

Other members operate individual agency differently. These people may be considered ‘wild’ or ‘loco’. They often retain different personal and emotional boundaries than others: they can be remorseless or sociopathic and may employ the Expressive Repertoire with extreme violence. Such reputations can be actively acquired and they may become gang enforcers.

Others may enact their own individual agency to negotiate a part-time gang-affiliation. This permits individuals to remain affiliated and connected but only to engage in specific actions or operations at certain times. This suggests that those with individual agency retain slightly different qualities of personal authority or power, e.g. physical prowess, intellect, emotional intelligence or sociopathy.

Yablonsky (1962) argues that at the centre of the gang are sociopaths who often use the gang as a vehicle for their own actions. Whilst W. F. Whyte (1943), writing about gangs in the USA during WWII, noted the role played by those with individualistic objectives. In the social field of SW9, those deemed too ‘wild’, or ‘loco’ or who follow their own individual strategy too closely, may be jettisoned by the alders and left to continue their individual strategy as ‘individualists’ or ‘Soloists’, (think Omar in the Wire).

Independent Operators/ Soloists

These are independents who operate between gangs without affiliating to any single gang. This strategy is often used by as a way of managing risks within the social field. Some individuals manage to resist being pulled into the gang structure or having direct affiliation with any specific named brand, i.e. coming from the local neighbourhood, knowing all the actors, sharing the habitus of the social field, knowing the Codes, the rules and ‘the Game’ – but choosing to play it Solitaire. They keep their personal movements and contact private. They are often oriented towards instrumental crimes from a younger age and are less interested in the Expressive Repertoire and may have an ‘independent pass’ to the Elders’. Risks are reduced by not moving a part of a Street Family: therefore the internal rivalries
within the gang hierarchy do not apply. However risks are nonetheless often increased as all
gangs in a neighbourhood treat the Soloist with suspicion.

Soloists employ Gang Repertoire components which best suit their skills and match network
connections, e.g. drug dealing. This becomes their chosen strategy for raising economic
capital, albeit temporary. Increasing street capital and reputation is often secondary to
survival. Alongside the survival instinct is an ability to convert Network connections into local
power and authority. As one Independent girl put it;

'I've been in a lot of situations. Even when young I saw a lot of things. I
was on a mission though. If I made it, I made it, if I didn't, I didn't. I did
a lot of good things. I did some fucked up shit. I have a good heart.
Even though I had money I didn't trouble people. I had the power to be
that middle girl. I had that power. I never told my sister what I did. I
would do it all again. I've gone to college, University and supported my
sister. She knows I am BAD and won't take any shit from anyone. I do
believe it was survival. I never got greedy that's why I survived. I paid
my way through Uni and put a roof over my head'. (African Caribbean
Female Independent Operator)

Risk mitigation following gang affiliation

Having joined the gang, risks are seldom diminished and are usually multiplied. Setting aside
increased risks from rival gangs, there are two key elements to consider in relation to the
affiliation: firstly demonstrating allegiance to the new gang and secondly building trust. Both
are key to building street capital and thus advancing in the social field.

• Demonstrating allegiance

Some urban street gangs are thought to have developed rituals initiation ceremonies to
demonstrate allegiance. These are secretive and unknown to professionals. This is however
not a major issue with gangs in SW9. Demonstrating allegiance to the gang is essentially
about building trust and establishing new relationships. Showing you prioritise gang strategies
is advantageous, e.g. hiding weapons or drugs, though many also do so through fear. Most
commonly, allegiance to the gang and trust is earned by running with the gang over time and
undertaking activities with them and approved by them.

• Building Trust

The ability to create, build and sustain trust between new and existing members is key. This is
no simple achievement given the constantly shifting alliances, allegiances, relationships in the
Landscape of Risk. Knowing who to trust, then keeping that trust, present daily challenges. Information remains central to monitoring actions. Building trust brings you closer into the inner circle and provides benefits of accessing greater opportunities for respect, and financial gain, along with opportunities to increase your Street Capital.

For Youngers, trust is tested and assessed within the group in a number of different ways. Initially this is simply: will you be where you said you would be at a certain time? Will you make yourself available as promised? Will you provide your support as offered? Will you bring the weed as you said you would? Further testing or auditioning will follow, e.g. fighting. Trust is enhanced by keeping silent; sharing proceeds; favouring with kickbacks and stolen goods; appearing as a witness in court.

Many young people commented that gangs were not places where people could be trusted; ‘friendships’ were transitory with double-dealing, back-stabbing, cheating and set ups. This suggests the struggle in the arena of social competition is very high. In some instances gang members are forced to trade in one friendship for another to prevent victimisation, i.e. we won’t hit you if you give up this guy or that guy. Indeed one young gang member was caught out doing this when his phone was stolen and peers accessed his calls.

Risk mitigation for experienced or existing gang members

Experienced gang members sometimes seek to join an existing gang, e.g. following relocation to a new neighbourhood. Several issues are considered by Elders when presented by this scenario: his Network connections including local family and extended family; his Brand name and level of Street Capital. Experienced gang members will understand this. If he is a Brand name then his name will be known and this confers considerable advantages. If he is a new arrival with no such Brand name, then he will start again at a rank suitable for his age. He will then have to begin a rapid strategy to re-establish himself.

Those seeking to return to the gang are generally young men aged from 19 – 25 who seek to re-join the gang following some time away, e.g. in fatherhood, employment, college, or incarceration. They seek to re-join at the Mature level through involvement in higher yield activities, e.g. cash van robberies, (see Chapter 4).

Surviving the Landscape of Risk

The landscape of risk impacts upon young people in different ways and is determinant upon perceived proximity to danger or to the gangs involved. Young people in this social field are cogniscent of some, but not always all, of the dangers. To survive this social field they must adapt and learn quickly. To do this some employ their individual agency or strategise their way
to distinction. All however must employ personal survival strategies and adaptations to avoid victimisation or repeat victimisation. These strategies are as follows:

**Knowing you are Falling (Sliding)**

A decline in street capital and individual reputation is described as ‘falling’ or ‘sliding’: ‘Once you have fallen, you can be targeted’. Thus it is important to maintain your reputation and your ‘visualness’. Falling occurs when for a variety of reasons the stock value of an individual’s street capital takes a downward trajectory. This is generally recognised by others before it is noticed by the individual themselves. An individual may pick up comments or rumour to alert them this is happening, more likely they are just targeted for further disrespect, violence and attack. Falling can occur after a trigger event where: you lost your stripes; you failed to deliver; you reneged on your word. Often this occurs via cumulative events, e.g. being absent for too long; failing to stand up for yourself; letting others disrespect you; no longer having the appetite for ‘the Game’ or for violence. Members assess views on your recent performance, swapping stories about how you have ‘lost it’ and that you are ‘well off your game’ - thus the perceived slide begins. Cumulative minor events and altercations will then push you further down. Other members may have a vested interest in your fall and actively seek to speed this up or to take advantage of your decline to elevate themselves. This can be both overt and covert and may include informing on your activities. Falling is therefore a dangerous position for gang members.

'I had started to slide down. My reputation got tarnished a little bit. I was on cocaine. I'd lost my way. I was using instead of serving. I'm doing things I'd not normally do. People would be carrying on with me and I'd let them get away with it. So when I got my 'little touch', everyone thought well I want a piece. So they came to get their piece by intimidation and all sorts, robbing my home, burglaries and to just...know what I mean?' (African Caribbean Male Elder)

Falling or sliding can be advantageous for those strategising to remove you so they can advance. Those falling may be pushed further down through rivals informing, double dealing or targeting them for sanctions, e.g. robbery and reprisals. One ex-gang member recounted in detail a series of events that began to occur to him when his reputation began to slide or fall. The trigger event was a popular belief that he owed money. At first his car was scratched. Then his house was burgled. Upon entering the house he smelled gas. Entering the kitchen he noticed the knobs on the gas cooker had been smashed off.

When your street capital is in steady or rapid decline it is imperative to take corrective action to prevent further victimisation. This may also require a trigger event, usually violent, to demonstrate a return to form. The fall must be arrested quickly and suddenly to recoup reputation quickly and inflate your stock of street capital: slow cumulative increases often pass unnoticed. Some will plan a key event and others will instigate an over-reaction to a minor
issue. Revenge attacks and ‘spectaculars’ may be undertaken by some anxious to halt their decline. Others will act by issuing threats but they will be expected to carry these out. As a result, ‘innocents’ or those not involved in your declining status, may find themselves a suitable or opportunistic target in your quest to recoup your ranking. Others have to leave or manufacture an exit from the social field.

Hyper-vigilance

In this social field young people manage their personal safety along with any potential decline in their street capital through a state of hyper-vigilance, i.e. they remain constantly alert for the next challenge, test or attempt to diminish, and thus acquire, their street capital. This state of permanent alertness means a readiness to challenge any visual or aural slight usually requiring them to respond quickly and violently to defend their street capital from deflationary pressures. Acting quickly or even proactively permits domination of the situation. The perceived slight or possible threat is identified, called out and challenged. One example is the ‘visual bump’ (Katz 1988:110) which occurs when one person holds the stare of another too long as if sizing them up for a fight. Considered bad manners and a challenge to both authority and street capital rating, it demands an immediate response. Failing to respond brings victimisation as you are then assumed to be ‘falling’.

In group situations there is an imperative for members to evidence and display to others they are ‘on it’ regarding monitoring their own street capital through hyper-vigilance. This may be perceived as acting out of bravado or ‘doing masculinity’ (Messerschmitt 1993). It suggests one is ‘battle-ready’ (Sampson and Lauriston 1994) and prepared or ‘locked and loaded’, ‘ready to rumble’. The slightest event may then trigger an incident or be picked up through this hyper-vigilant state. For some, this can become almost a paranoia which may in turn be exacerbated by smoking high grade skunk on a daily basis or partaking of cocaine.

Others operate ‘selective vigilance’, e.g. when an incursion is expected or when they feel their own reputation or street capital falling. Group vigilance also plays a role. Here a slight or perceived ‘diss’ may be overlooked or ignored by one individual only for another vigilant gang member to identify it and raise it quickly, demanding this cannot be tolerated. In such circumstances the individual to whom the slight or ‘diss’ was directed feels he must now address the issue raised by his co-member and react, lest he be mocked. Here the reaction may be stronger or more violent as he must again demonstrate that he has not let his guard down and remains vigilant. Perceived slights which occur randomly and daily in the street must also be guarded against and addressed immediately.

In street encounters, challenge is offered to identify the individual/s and determine quickly the level of threat they pose to you or the gang. This proactive and provocative action is known as The Squeeze. Questions quickly assess visitor’s connections, street capital, authority or
‘permission’ to enter their social field. Your answers, along with your demeanour and body language determine if the enquirer will then ‘Move’ on you.

The constant need to remain vigilant leads to numerous confrontations and is again partially responsible for the increase in violence in the social field. Such events are often referred to by practitioners and academics as ‘respect issues’. This constant vigilance is extremely stressful for young people.

Protection

To address issues of mobility and potential victimisation, Youngers often move in small groups and are seldom single or seen isolated: this is to minimise random victimisation. Some young people articulate their motivation for joining a gang as one of protection, as revealed by John Pitts in Reluctant Gangsters, (2008). In such cases the ability to move with a group of friends may allow new freedom of movement:

‘OMG I can go anywhere, I can do anything now I have joined the Gang’ (Latino Female Younger).

Fears of victimisation are also addressed by arming themselves with a weapon, usually a knife: a protection narrative widely articulated by Youngers. Non-gang-affiliated youth similarly carry weapons for protection from attack. Examples were provided of non gang-affiliated young people buying protection by paying a ‘passport tax’ to young gang members to allow them to move through an area or to access a facility or visit family. This might be a few pounds cash or small bag of weed or useful information.

Living, ‘off-the-hood’

Some parents recognise their offspring are increasingly caught up in gang life and seek to mitigate risks by moving the family far away from the neighbourhood. However it is possible for young people to be affiliated to a certain street gang but live away from the designated area or estate. Having moved away they remain loyal to their original gang. Such affiliations may change over time. Others have affiliated through friends/family to key groups based on a distant estates, e.g. they live in West Norwood, SE27, but affiliate to GAS in SW9. This presents logistical problems for local agencies trying to manage the attendance of young people. Members living off the territory are more at risk of fluctuating tensions and sudden rule changes within the social field. They will be intermittent visitors and thus less well known and recognised. They may be less well connected and must strive to keep open good channels of information and communication.
Multiple membership

Young people living ‘off-the-hood’ may adopt a survival strategy and ‘hedge their bets’ by affiliating to two or three different gangs as a logical response belonging to one gang but living outside their neighbourhood. However problems can arise if these different gangs separate or start to beef. These individual will then be caught short and have to decide which gang they support.

Switching allegiance

One survival mechanism within the landscape of risk is to facilitate the rule change yourself – by switching allegiance and aligning with those on the rise. Others may be strategising independently. Some Youngers view gang membership as fun and do not fully appreciate the potential dangers they are putting themselves in:

‘The worst thing is you will see someone in GAS gang today and he’ll be with PDC tomorrow then he’ll be with OC the next day’.

(African Caribbean Professional, Male YOT worker)

As always there are independent operators in the social field moving between gangs conducting business with all gangs. This reflects their own individual agency and strategy:

‘I deliberately didn’t join up in a gang so that I could walk around free. But then all those other people can’t.’ (African Caribbean Female Independent Operator)

Temporary allegiance and confederation

A further survival response, one undertaken by the group or gang, is to shift allegiance or to ‘merge’ with another existing gang. This has recently been reported in SW9 by the police. The police report that ‘all the gangs in Brixton are coming together slowly’ in response to the incursions from Peckham. They cite the local Loughborough Bois, (based at Loughborough Junction) merging with the GAS gang and MZ, (Murder Zone gang from Morelands Estate) also seem to be regularly hanging around Angell Town. The motivation for co-joining being to protect GAS gang from multiple rival gangs. Besides the main ‘war’ with Peckham, GAS gang have ‘beef’ with rival gangs from Tulse Hill and ABM (Stockwell) and are thus ‘surrounded’. Many suggest the current escalation of tensions results from the current GAS gang leader upsetting rivals by openly disrespecting them on YouTube.

‘Oh it’s real. That’s real Now. Now it’s getting even more stupid. Cos Brixton was one place and now you’ve got several estates and lots of young people on these estates can’t come
from one estate to another. It's getting MAD'. (African Caribbean Male Older)

The police report this as a ‘coming together’ into a single coherent group for protection. They acknowledge that gangs normally start off big before breaking up into smaller gangs. This contra-movement is therefore both confusing and unexplained.

To some extent gang ‘confederations’ already take place with gangs from far away New Cross (Lewisham) undertaking incursions into SW9, which requires affiliation with Peckham gangs to undertake ‘smash and grab’ raids. However gang rivalries now expand across London and it is not uncommon for one gang member to telephone another to request assistance in an ongoing beef. Thus a gang totally unconnected to the original beef may well act as part-time members for one side of the beef. This presents quite a different scenario for the police as gangs outside the borough group up to attack GAS, and GAS themselves respond by creating loose affiliations within SW9. GAS have thus attracted several different smaller gangs who may retain their own identity whilst supporting GAS.

There also exist a range of smaller gangs in SW9, e.g. TN1, TBlock etc in Tulse Hill; Acre Lane Campaign; Frontline Bangers. These are smaller gangs where membership is restricted to those living on the estate. Local tensions and incursions often require these small spatially localised or nascent gangs to co-join larger groups. This picture is constantly evolving and difficult to map for both police and local young people. How such mergers play out over time will have to be subject of further research.

‘Visualness’ & Physicality

Building street capital is not solely reliant upon violence and ability to defend your reputation. Visual look and physicality are important factors in themselves, though they both significantly reinforce the potential ability to defend your reputation, (Winlow 2001). They may also be ways of mitigating risk of victimisation as they act as a visual signal that ‘you are not to be messed with’. In this social field physical build is important, acting, as Wacquant said, as ‘crude bodily capital’ (Wacquant 1992). Someone who is overweight and not in good physical shape will not command the same respect as someone who is fit and muscular.

One ex-gang member described himself as a Staffie – short and stocky. This is for many a perfect street build for street physicality and will include speed, strength, pounce, power, aggression and courage. Such attributes are matched with mentality to win along with stamina.
One ex-gang member suggested that another reason for increased use of weapons amongst some gangs is the slimmer physicality of some new arrivals has led them to an increased reliance upon firearms. There is no evidence to suggest this was true or his view widespread.

**Inability to Code Switch**

The social field of the gang operates only within its own boundaries, i.e. most adults move around SW9 unhindered or unmolested with no need to give account or recognition to the gang. Young people moving beyond this social field traditionally were able to 'Code Switch' (Anderson 1999), i.e. they dropped the mannerisms, attitudes, language and behaviour associated with Street Life and temporarily adopted those of the wider community, including deference to adults or those in authority.

Some gang-affiliated individuals can play different social fields effectively, only entering the social field of the gang as required, e.g. to buy drugs, and sell stolen goods, what Vigil calls ‘flexible identity’ (Vigil 2010:162). Meanwhile, many residents remain unaware of the gang or of their child’s involvement in it. Gang-affiliated young people may live in one social field and attend church every Sunday, but affiliate to the gang and run drugs in the evening or hide guns at home. This parallel world may be obscured (even from researchers) and can lead residents to conclude the neighbourhood does not experience gang related issues.

Recently however fewer young people are either able or prepared to switch their codes of behaviour. Several professionals working with gang-affiliated young people reported monosyllabic speech by young people and claim it is indicative of no longer showing deference for adults in a professional setting. Whilst true for some, it also reflects the habitus of the individual, illustrating how embedded they are in world of the Street Code. Others find constantly moving from a Street persona to a deferential persona is too stressful and they find it ‘safer’ to remain enveloped in their Street world where issues of lack of trust and perceived lack of respect are easily compartmentalised and addressed. Some never learned to adjust or adapt to adults. This way of speaking is therefore uncompromised ‘Street’.

Many young people now stay fully immersed in ‘Street’ language as they are fully immersed in the social field. This occurs because gaining and maintaining a ‘Rep’ is now so critical for many young people, gang-affiliated or not, that it is almost impossible for them to adapt to other social fields, i.e. they carry over their expectations and demands for respect to adults. Should they fail to be accorded this respect they fail to provide it back. In the gang social field respect has such overwhelming centrality it cannot easily be set aside or discounted. Interactions with adults external to their social field are now frequently ‘read’ by young people within the context of their gang social field, which they have effectively ‘ported’ with them. This is not altogether surprising as it is the rules and context of their own social field which are paramount in determining their survival. It is dangerous for them to drop this, even
temporarily whilst visiting a YOT office or probationer. Overtime, many seem no longer willing or able to drop their Street persona or temporarily shed their social field.

Monosyllabic responses are not taken seriously by teachers or professionals unfamiliar with the pressures and imperatives of avoiding victimisation. They dismiss this style as ‘limited vocabulary’, experiences as ‘not real’ or young people ‘trying to skive off the issue’. Some professionals view gang-affiliated individuals as having more individual agency and craft suggesting they exaggerate the fears or sensationalise territorial issues as a means to get resources, avoid statutory obligations or to denigrate rivals. For others however such lack of communication is a survival strategy.

Developing dual personas

Agency professionals working with gang-affiliated young people often refer to the two personas of young people; the Street persona and the ‘real’ persona. The Street persona will show no fear, be full of bravado and cheek. The ‘real’ persona however may often be scared and intimidated. This is perhaps unsurprising as a Younger may only be 12 or 13 years of age. Often in their early induction to the gang they may be presented with an Older who has several stab wounds, who has stabbed several different people, or who has undertaken serious or well reported robberies. He may also show them and allow them to handle a firearm. However when invited to ‘run with us bruv’ the same young people are similarly conflicted, too scared to say no, but also excited. Youth workers also report young boys crying for their mothers when stabbed or trapped in a violent life or death situation.

This is contrasted with the Street persona which can instigate violence or follow through on a leader’s instruction to, ‘Stab dem yout’ dere’ which can be done without hesitation or deliberation: ‘Because they are just 13, they don’t know any better. They don’t have no fear’, (West African Male Younger). For an Older, being able to control Youngers in this way provides reputation by proxy.

For some this development of a dual persona compartmentalises their experience ‘On Road’ allowing them to rationalise their behaviours and involvement in violence.

Territory and the landscape of risk

Territorial disputes or the so-called ‘postcode beefs’ (see chapter 4) are created and sustained by Youngers in Elementary gang tiers. The creation of such disputes is central to the creation of the landscape of risk for all those in the social field, including non-gang-affiliated young people. Being spatially defined it also makes the metaphorical Landscape of Risk a physical reality. This landscape must be negotiated daily by all actors or Players in the social field and each Playa needs to learn quickly how to do this. In a social field ‘of organised striving’ (Martin 2003:20) the manufacture of territorial disputes brings important outcomes:
• It creates new rules for The Game. This permits Players to influence the rules of The Game (possibly to their advantage)
• It upsets the ‘Game Board’ thereby wrong-footing others, permitting individual ascension in the field.
• It creates new Players in ‘the Game’ allowing gangs to strategise against new rivals. This permits inter-group bonding within the gang. It also gives the impression of temporarily relieving the pressure/ shifting focus from peers to new enemies. This is however illusory.
• It permits Youngers to generate street capital quickly
• It creates opportunities for generating instant ‘gang history’. This has two benefits: generating oral narratives which valorising key players: permitting Youngers to quickly acquire the mantle of an Older as they advise others how to survive.
• It permits Youngers and individuals to act wildly and to test new elements of the Gang Repertoire

As a strategy territorial disputes are supremely suited to the habitus as it relates to personal knowledge of the built environment. Possessing this knowledge then generates its own street capital: sharing it, generates yet more; whilst using it effectively maximises street capital. As a result the landscape of risk is highly localised to immediate estates or blocks.

Viewed through social field analysis, the term ‘postcode beef’ is clearly a misleading misnomer. This was evidenced recently by an exercise undertaken by youth workers from the Brathay Trust who took young people to the top of a Brixton tower block and invited them to point out areas they believed were restricted to them. Several young people from Lambeth noted restrictions even within central Brixton: ‘I can’t go past the tube station’. Such perceptions were relational to each individual and varied considerably suggesting the landscape of risk is individually and relationally determined.

As boundaries are relational, variable and not firmly established, several problems arise within the landscape of risk:

• Fluctuating tensions and perceptions of ‘boundaries’
  Movements of many young people, not just those gang-affiliated, within this landscape are determined by current tensions between gangs. Gang members are particularly aware that tensions vary hourly or daily, rising and falling quickly. However it takes time to communicate these fluctuations to others who must then verify this new information. In social field analysis, this amounts to sudden rule changes. Within the social field ‘regularity’ can be viewed as ‘assumptions which can be overturned’, (Martin 2003:33). Each change is the result of a player strategising to achieve advantage. Each change achieves advantage for one or more Player in the
field, whilst disadvantaging others. All will be affected by these changes and some will be 'caught out'.

- Contested boundaries
The boundaries of social fields are themselves areas of conflict. As virtual boundaries they are unseen, highly variable and dependent upon the vagaries of inter-personal relationships. Some central neighbourhood areas, e.g. parks, High streets, leisure centres may be designated as neutral/contested. Entering these areas is often dependent upon the current tensions or active beefs. Thus they can be safe one week only to be highly dangerous to visit the following week. Access can be negotiated, though the granting of access is a further variable and subject to change. These daily or weekly variations place considerable strain on Youngers and also occasionally on Olders who may be required to undertake negotiations.

- Through-routes
Territories are often separated by commonly established 'through-routes' which themselves become flashpoints. Although gang-affiliated young people are highly knowledgeable of local gang boundaries, (SW9 has a unique and iconic identity and gang members will have SW9 on tee-shirts), any imposed court restrictions may prevent them using key routes and push them into disputed territory. Some members use Satnavs to monitor any local beefs and court restrictions.

- The imperative of good communication
In this landscape of risk, safety is determined by keeping your knowledge of tensions and rule changes current. Ability to communicate any changing circumstances to all concerned is both a field rule and imperative. For example if an Older is off the estate and negotiates with a rival gang for two of their members to enter the estate to visit family, he must instruct his Youngers to let them pass. If he forgets to phone his Youngers to make this arrangement, the visitors will be attacked. Such a common occurrence has multiple repercussions. There are also examples of where this has been information has been purposefully withheld in order to cause harm to an individual.

- Responding to new rules
Gangs make constant minor adjustment to their affiliations and alliances, as do individuals. The presence of an external renegade in their territory instigates new alliances or helps bind together previously estranged friends. Some smaller gangs may no longer need to function and new alignments can be enacted. The Elders will
shift the pieces on the board, so that when a gang member next returns to his Endz, things have been slightly adjusted. This is both a natural progression of new relationships and power dynamics, however it can also be a deliberate tactic to keep things moving and not to stay the same.

Only occasionally do Olders become involved in such disputes as they mostly move easily across boroughs and rival territory. Olders have gradually pulled away from ‘defending territory’ to focus on making money. This new focus requires ability to travel to neighbouring territories; these practicalities of easy movement easily trump fights about territory. For some Olders, territorial issues fade into the past: for others it remains. This view often depends upon how quickly a Younger becomes an Older, their personal and gang relationships and loyalties.

For an Older, moving from the social reality of daily constricted movements to one of relative freedom must also be learnt and negotiated carefully over time. This new freedom is earned and negotiated as opposed to simply granted by dint of age in the field. This new reality needs careful testing and assessment over time within the constantly changing dynamics of the social field. Olders are aware that danger and possible attack persist and thus remain vigilant or negotiate access via their contacts. This new social reality can bring a lack of clarity and is even more confusing. Some Olders believe that these issues can be downplayed by agencies. Despite this view most professionals consider territorial issues equally dangerous for Olders as for Youngers:

'It’s just so serious. Sometimes cos of that age group we miss it, we think everything is not that bad, but is bad, it’s very bad'. (White Female Professional Charity Worker).

This fluctuating landscape of risk with its temporary truces and negotiated ‘hood passes’ are further reasons for increased neighbourhood violence. Disputes both intra-gang and inter-gang create a complex topology with violence a constant threat. It is this topology which Players in the social field must navigate and survive. Two key survival techniques are:

Avoiding Slippin

‘Slippin’ is being in the wrong place at the wrong time and is derived from taking a chance and ‘slippin down a back alley’. If the person is spotted, this results in pursuits, challenges and confrontation. The person caught then tries to return to their group/ Endz. Slippin is more serious when involving groups. If the person caught Slippin reaches their group quickly, this can result in an instant retaliation against those offering confrontation. Such incidents happen frequently on public transport or in through-routes, e.g. During the fieldwork one popular local
boy (aged 15) was isolated on a through-route passing rival territory. Following confrontation he was shot in the leg with a shotgun. He survived and the family were re-housed outside the area.

Young people fearing victimisation may be too frightened to leave their estate after having a ‘mix up’ with someone from another area. Fear of traversing another area impacts significantly upon their life, severely restricting movements. Youth workers and probation workers report it as a major reason for non-attendance at meetings. Such fears are not however unfounded as recently a gang member arriving for his appointment at the YOT was spotted by a rival who later turned up with a car full of rival gang members.

**Self-restricting movements**

Many young people, including non-gang-affiliated young people living in the neighbourhood, self-restrict their movements to mitigate risks of victimisation. For many, these restrictions are life-changing. Survival strategies are adopted and may include Youngers seeking ‘permission’ to pass through an area. Calls and requests may be put through to rival areas for permission. As one Older put it upon hearing such a request, if they have credibility then I will say, “I allow you”.

Others only move around the estate with family or friends, staying indoors or wearing protective clothing, e.g. several young people are reported to wear Kevlar vests or bullet proof vests. Some choose not to traverse certain locations and carefully monitor timings as they walk through areas or catch public transport. Some change their appearance and dress differently to avoid being victimised. Those most at risk are those considered to be ‘Waste Man’, those with ‘little names’ or those who have appeared on social networking sites. Public transport then become danger hotspots for many young people, as do chicken shops and take-aways.

Restrictions may include not moving outside the borough through fear of reprisals or targeting from other gangs. Students moving from south London to attend college in north London report this as problematic. Wider family members may be able to help ‘squash’ any beef and make any transition easier. Those who fail to mitigate the risks of victimisation in these ways often unwittingly fall victim to rival gangs. These risks are greatly heightened for New Arrivals, however they also relate to non-gang-affiliated young people moving through territory claimed by or associated with certain gangs.
Fear of victimisation also affects attending job interviews, new schools, colleges, Youth Offending Services, youth clubs and Probation services. Statutory services professionals report some young people suddenly become sullen or withdrawn when told to attend offices or locations in areas they realise are deemed, 'out of bounds' for them, e.g. ‘They won’t talk but just say “Can’t go Peckham man, Can’t go Peckham”.

Risks at the Boundary of the social field

The social field is bounded by the point at which its influence ends. Bourdieu notes that field boundaries are themselves objects of struggle and he argues against positivist approaches which attempt to delineate precise boundaries instead referring to boundaries are more ‘relational’, (Swartz 1997:121).

However, the question of the boundary of the social field is worthy of further research as it posits many interesting questions, as to how it might be recognised, e.g. if a mother recognises gang members blocking a stairwell and takes another route, her social activities are effectively moderated by the social field of the gang. Whilst it is possible for many people in SW9 to continue their lives without influence from gangs, police intelligence acknowledges that in general local communities are cognisant of the gangs and their activities. Taking forward Bourdieu's argument of 'relational' boundaries, it is individual's relationship with the gang over time that determines their own personal boundaries. It is likely that for both individuals and for communities these boundaries vary and remain in a state of constant flux.

Agencies risk further blurring these boundaries by crossing into the social field of the gang from their wider community habitat and interacting with gang members in a variety of ways. The agencies of course have statutory powers and legitimate reasons for engaging the gang members. However, when entering the social field of the gang they often impinge upon critical aspects of respect, reputation, territory and street capital. In the recent past such interloping was excused as the legislative powers of the statutory authorities to; stop and search, arrest, detain, imprison and license. Through their activities, these agencies now play an unwitting role in the social field, notably in the campaign for respect, reputation and the maintenance of street capital. Entering the social field of the gang is viewed by gang members as 'legal violation' of their social field. This disrespect must be challenged and met head on, e.g. being stopped and searched by police equals instant street capital deflation and suspicion of informing. As they interface with gang members in their social field, the agencies unwittingly provide opportunities for young people to challenge this legalised disrespect and by so doing raise their street capital. Thus gang members pursue strategies of talking back, giving cheek, making threats, failing to attend appointments; or more seriously, physical
assault, intimidation, lying in court, getting arrested. Each provides an opportunity for increasing their street capital. This can be undertaken on an individual basis but street capital is maximised if such ‘attitude’ or behaviour is ‘performed’ in front of other peers who will then report back to others how ‘you held your own’ and how funny it was to watch. Again this can be considered by some as ‘doing masculinity’ (Messerschmidt 1993).

One key example of how strategising interacts with the boundary of the social field is through the intimidation of professionals. When professionals enter the social field there are differences as to how they are viewed by the gang members and the interactions that follows. As a result some become targeted whilst others do not. Fluctuations in tension and rule changes within the field will also determine the nature and level of interactions with the gang. Similar opportunities occur when the police interact in their social field by coming onto the estate and disrespecting members. This often leads to confrontations as members retaliate, physically or verbally to maintain their respect and ‘Rep’ which they see as being undermined and diminished.

The role of Information

A social field characteristic of central importance is information, specifically the flow and use of information, its exchange and transmission as a commodity and its subsequent impact upon all actors in the social field:

‘To operate, you have to know what is what’

(African Male Older)

Information exchange is linked to the other key component of the social field: Trust. Both Putnam (2000) and Coleman (1993) identify trust as a key component of social capital and Fukuyama sees trust as a basic source of social capital (Fukuyama 1995:26). Field (2008:71) citing Dasgupta (2000:333) notes that trust is an attribute of groups and institutions and is often based upon reputations which are themselves mediated by third parties. This certainly applies to the social field of the gang. Fukuyama further notes that if members have a wide radius of trust then any externalities arising from this are more likely to be ‘positive and benign’. Conversely a narrow radius of trust signifies potentially ‘negative externalities’, (Fukuyama 2001: 8-10). This too appears to apply to the social field of the gang where trust may be in short supply. In the social field of the gang, trust is tested daily, via relationships and instincts, but most importantly in sending and receiving information.
Community engagement in the social field.

In the social field of SW9 dealing and trading in information is a central tenet of enormous importance. Described as the first direct benefit of social capital, it facilitates access to broader sources of information and improving quality, relevance and timeliness (Adler & Kwon 2002:29). It is a method of community engagement and social control. For Elders, information equates to ‘informational capital’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:19) This extends to knowing your community, what they fear, want, need, or are prepared to do. It also extends to knowing the social norms of permissible actions and sanctions. To know this is to know the social field. Key holders of information become ‘Community Operatives’, providing a valuable social service to the community or the gang through the Network. Access to the Network places one in a powerful position.

‘Your group will tell you who is in the gang so you can then recognise them. You must find out which gang controls which space or area, who deals drugs, where to go and not go’. (New Immigrant Latino Male Younger)

Others disadvantaged through poor connectivity experience what Perri 6 calls ‘Network Poverty’, (6: 1997) As information is shared both vertically and horizontally the ability to trade in information is both community engagement and an opportunity for developing social capital.

Holding this knowledge and the authority to have it collated, sifted, sorted and overseen, brings power and opportunities for control. Such an authority can contribute to the community voice, or be the community voice. It confers power to correct misunderstandings, fix things, arrange things, mend or break reputations; to become a conduit or siphon through which knowledge and information must pass; to develop a broad reach across different communities or a ‘deep reach’ into silent and hidden communities; to contact prisoners and act as ‘virtual manager’ for their business. In this social field where innumerable people have criminal interests or affiliations, both past and present, the importance of this knowledge and information is amplified. Possession allows you to operate at the interface of legal and illegal and this is a powerful place to be.

Brixton and its environs has a long tradition of criminal cartel families Sanders (2005). It also has inter-generational transference of information and knowledge, (Sutherland 1947). Often this is just schooling kids in street life. For some, it is about how crime works and local criminal contacts. Any young person coming from or linked to these cartel families has a head start and
easy passage into the gang. Thus operating successfully in this social field requires knowledge of local history. Failure to know or how to use information results in ‘blind moves’.

How is information used?

Beyond the obvious value of ‘knowledge is power’, information allows gang members to employ individual or gang strategies to increase their street capital. The motivation for obtaining information and the method by which it is obtained requires further strategising in the social field. Three principle strategies or motivations are evident:

Appraisal and monitoring

Information is required by gang members at all levels, though specifically at higher ranks or in the mature tiers to appraise the skills, ability and capacities of members. Knowledge of rivals, statutory agencies, authorities and key individuals outside the social field is acquired through local intelligence.

Prior to affiliation peers and Olders assess the potential benefits of the individual’s qualities and attributes, e.g. ‘What information can they provide to us? Who do they know and what is their offending history or criminal tendencies? Can we trust him?’ Leaders request feedback on performance, skill or level of violence employed to appraise skills. If the informal appraisal is positive, their skills are now more desirable.

Neighbourhood intelligence is required daily by all levels of the gang to monitor business, members, the social field, wider community and the Network. This includes accessing the latest details, news of incidents, activities, business progress: also which individual relationships have formed or broken down, short and long term developments, movements of goods and services, etc.

Thus gang affiliates and those on its periphery undertake tension monitoring constantly assess levels of threat and manage risk and self-regulate their own movements. As this varies over time, is highly localised and determined by other external factors, there is a need to constantly update.

Marketing - Giving out information

A second principle motivation for requiring information is proactive marketing to advertise or market an individual brand or the gang. This is done informally through conversations or
formally through SNSs. Marketing takes two forms, internal and external. Internal marketing provides information to existing members, including advice on social norms, how to act, what is and is not permissible. Gang history (and mythology) is shared/divulged by peers and Olders. Such mechanisms set boundaries and aim to establish a shared sense of belonging. It is also important for existing gang members to learn the boundaries of the social field as this allows them to strategise.

External marketing targets information to those outside the gang ensuring the right message and images of the gang are presented. This differentiates the gang from rivals, clarifying roles, leadership, history and establishing a brand identity. It signifies operational procedures and expectations of members. It clarifies how sanctions are employed and how members access economic capital. This information is shared informally in peer groups; sifted and absorbed by prospective members. It allows outsiders to differentiate the unique superior qualities of a gang. The right messages will persuade new joiners.

Trading and exchange.

Thirdly, information as a commodity can be traded and exchanged with others in the social field or beyond. Holding information builds reputation and confirms your position as holder of an important asset and tradable stock. In the social field of the gang this equates to a formidable local currency or social capital which elevates your street capital and reputation. You will be assumed to have strong internal links to the Network and trusted knowledge of the social field. Anyone who recognises that this information is valuable, demonstrates knowledge of the workings of the social field and is therefore useful and important. In contested arenas and disadvantaged communities where collective efficacy is low, transmitting information is one way (along with fencing stolen goods) of building trust.

Members at all tiers of the gang will trade and exchange information. Girls often trade information as their sole function. Any transaction of information involves one actor collating intelligence or information then sourcing another actor to whom information is transmitted. This recipient may be known or the agent may just choose to divulge it. Either way it constitutes a strategy as the informant retains an objective, e.g. seeking favour, building trust, profile or increasing proximity to the gang. It constitutes a play for increased social capital which is traded reciprocally for information. The greater the value, authenticity and uniqueness of information, the greater the transactional cost. Any strategy naturally indicates alignment with one individual or group above another. This builds trust and increases potential for gleaning further information. In Networks that are both dense and local it is important to keep networks fresh and with new blood information (Gee 2002).
Using information in such a way is a human trait in all social fields. However, in the context of the social field of the gang, trading and transmitting information impacts upon the social field in different ways. Under the Code of the Street (Anderson 1999) grassing may lead to wider reverberations (Evans et al 1996; Yates 2006) or ‘negative externalities (Fukuyama 2001: 8-10)) in the field. In the contested arena of the gang the transmission of specific information involves a strategic move with explicit implications and possible consequences for several actors. For example trading information may:-

- raise or quell tensions
- be more significant for some individuals
- have wider repercussions back into the group
- have unforeseen and uncontrollable consequences
- impact upon a wider range of agents – increasing potential outcomes
- be misread by a greater number of ‘interested parties’
- place individuals in danger

Transmission is done consciously or unconsciously (dry snitching). It may also be done over time in order to bank knowledge which can be traded at a later date. Gangs seek new recruits to access their connections and networks and then build upon their affiliations. For young person affiliations build protection and reduce risks.

‘It’s all people who are in trouble: people are being looked for. Basically people are either in or out of the gang - a lot of that goes on. You become persona non grata very quickly and the word goes around both within the gang and outside it. Information comes from abroad as well with links to the Caribbean and Africa’. (White Male Resident)

As information is received members informally grade it by quality and importance. Poor quality information is passed to Youngers: as they trade in rumour and gossip the quality of their information is often questioned. If information is more credible then it may go up to the next level which trades in better quality information or intelligence. If accurate and confirmed it rises to top levels. Members transmitting high grade intelligence are rewarded in kind and are allocated Street Capital.

The Network

A Network, alongside social norms and sanctions, forms one of the triumvirate components of social capital, (Halpern 2000:10). As Putnam noted, ‘networks of community engagement foster sturdy norms of reciprocity’ (Putnam 2000:20). It is a social network of connections,
either the gang itself and their affiliates, or the wider neighbourhood. In SW9 both such networks are ‘high density’ (most people know each other) and also ‘high closure’ (mostly intra-community links as opposed to inter-community) (Halpern 2005:10). A Successful street gang has a network of sources providing information to them. This network is wider than those who are gang-affiliated and stretches deep into the community to include lovers, kin and extended family, school, college or work colleagues, church and social connections (Putnam 2000:21). Putnam notes networks may benefit those within the network but have negative effects for those external to it, (Putnam 2000:21). In disadvantaged communities networks support each other through altruism and obligation to overcome disadvantage (Stack, C. 1974). This helps move stolen goods and trading information - making any network more durable and inward looking. A ‘durable network’ (Bourdieu 1980:2, 1986: 248) represents a substantial form of social capital, which can be accessed and utilised. Bridging networks improve links to external assets and improve information transmission (Putnam 2000:22).

Family or extended family is linked into the Network alongside acquaintances, connections, friends and lovers providing the hidden backdrop and wallpaper to the neighbourhood. It is both extensive and all encompassing. Many local people are well connected and long established in the community with connections strengthened through religion or prison. The Network works for you and against you at all times, acting as commentator, judge and arbiter of behaviours. It also operates as a strong communication channels like an underground network of fibre optic cables reaching deep into the community. This information network is well known, well used and sits above and separate to the smaller gang network. Information is fed into the Network and retrieved daily from the Network. As broadband varies in band width, so too does the inter-connecting virtual cables of the Network. Hearsay operates as the thinnest and least respected virtual cable. Family, and in particular blood family, communications operate at the widest and most respect band width. Links to professionals are also highly prized broadband links.

This Network also performs a social control role where dominant views, opinions and behaviours of the Network act as a positive social restraint upon individual behaviours, e.g. pressure may come from family members not to affiliate. It may also assist those seeking to exit the gang. In gang terms the Network underscores and strengthens the direction given by older siblings. Directions can even come from the Network links to prison:

"My nephew got stabbed. I've got other nephews in jail too. I got a call from a prison before I heard it from the family. That's the Network!"

(African Caribbean Male YOT Officer)

The Network may at times allow some individuals to be absented from the gang, e.g. if the young person displays or is recognised for a key talent which could be a passport out of the neighbourhood to a better life. The gang Network is used to access intelligence and information for appraisal, monitoring, marketing and trading. The wider community Network
provides details on family ties, relationships, addresses, business links, schooling, and so forth. Both gang-affiliated and peripheral members provide details of criminal activities; who is dealing, where the stash is hidden, which is transmitted upline. Two key requirements now exist: the need for constant updating, and to sift or grade information.

To stay abreast of recent developments, maintain reputation and reduce risk, young people network constantly often sounding people out to build a picture of activity: separating fact from fiction.

Whilst the subject matter is of interest to all, members understand information management is a challenge they will never be on top of,

'It's all about your crew; about what's happening in Peckham; about your cousins in Gas gang, business deals. It's everyday changing. It's impossible to keep on top of it. Otherwise the shootings won't be happening, the robbings wouldn't be happening. You will never be on top, never, never, NEVER!' (African Caribbean Male Older)

Actors in the Network include everyone in the social field of the gang, and its periphery and many who have relational involvement with the gang in the wider community. Within the social field network two key elements are worthy of closer attention: girls and young women and New Arrivals (often immigrants). The role of women relates to the gendered roles within the social field and new arrivals relates to issues of ethnicity. Both these groups are discussed later in this chapter.

The Challenges of trading information

All participants in the social field are involved in trading and exchanging information. Transmitting information across the social field presents multiple challenges/potential difficulties which if not addressed by proactive action or strategy leads to serious consequences for the information-trader. These are shown below in Table 15.
Table 15 The Challenges of trading information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>Breaking confidentiality generates victimisation. Ex-friends may share private confidences or phone numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False bravado</td>
<td>Young people directly provoke/challenge rivals by phone; “I done it bruv, you know I done it. So come on bruv, come on we’ll sort it out. I’m waiting”. (ex Younger). This (often false) bravado increases street capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eroding Trust</td>
<td>Swapping information can easily erode trust, threatening personal safety in a way that would not happen in other social fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification of connections</td>
<td>At times, e.g. if caught ‘slippin’ it is important to quickly establish connections using key inquisitive questions. Answers determine if violence is used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>To verify information, multiple opinions are sought. This often confuses rather than clarifies. Information is thus tagged against rank – ‘I heard this from so and so and he’s an Older’. Higher rank information is more credible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies using information

In addition to presenting challenges in its usage, transmitting information may be undertaken by way of a specific strategy, as shown below in Table 16.

Table 16 Strategies for using information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disinformation and misinformation</td>
<td>A member strategises to increase their own street capital by embellishing details. Alternate versions of events may be circulated – internally/ externally – possibly claiming dis-association and offering dis-information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being ‘Snakey’ (double-dealing)</td>
<td>Passing information behind the back of a member, despite being trusted to hold this information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry snitching</td>
<td>Information traded by mistake or where a member fails to recognise they are trading information with implications for others. Experienced members employ this strategy getting Youngers to ‘volunteer’ information by mistake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>Information is acquired by members preparing to employ a Sanction, e.g. for tactical advantage in a revenge robbery. This may be gradual if the sanction is delayed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Girls are used to glean information from mobile phones dropped during altercations. This increases risks as victims can no longer access critical info for monitoring personal safety. Stealing a phone may be a strategy to severe a member from his vital information networks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent operators</td>
<td>Most independents have risk assessed their own position and developing strategies to preserve their safety, e.g. not sharing or trading information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

Currently in the social field of SW9 social networking sites have taken over from tagging walls. This shift has taken place over the last five years and is relatively new. Whereas tagging was until recently the prime way of marketing your brand name, i.e. a ‘Tag’, and building reputation through ‘face image’, this is now facilitated and widened by using SNSs. Tagging is greatly reduced as a result. Youngers who once employed tagging as an Expressive Repertoire strategy now mostly use SNSs. This also offers opportunities to create a virtual life and socialise in an unpoliced world where members can raise their profile and hype their brand names. Older gang members will not use SNSs.

In this social field things move quickly with information traded in a variety of different locations, both real and virtual: Phone and text; Schools; Groups. This is exacerbated by new IT developments and technology. Facebook allows for a conversation to several people simultaneously. Approaches are made hourly to young people and accepted by phone. New alliances are made and personal maps of territory are re-drawn with new boundaries or later communicated by phone. Not having this information can be dangerous for a young person. Facebook and YouTube therefore act as a constant messenger keeping them abreast of ever-changing developments.

Gender in the social field

Capital within the social field is unevenly distributed (Bourdieu 1984). For Bourdieu, gender is viewed as a stratifying feature secondary to the basic forms of capital; economic, cultural, social and symbolic. He views the male/female binary as a form of domination evident in all social hierarchies, (Swartz 1997: 156). In this way the hierarchical power relations of the social field dictate that capital allocation is weighted towards men. The social field of the gang is thus highly gendered, replicating the gendered social construction of the wider community. The role of both men and women and their social aspirations being determined by the habitus and the social norms operating within the field.

As a ‘structured arena of conflict’, (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) the social field is also defined by its internal struggle for power and dominance. This internalised hierarchical structure replicates opportunities for patriarchy, male privilege and male violence. Indeed male violence dominates as a key strategy for advancement. In this way the hierarchy again favours males over females. As a result the Gang Repertoire is largely gendered in favour of men. This includes the tried and tested opportunities for generating street capital. This has the potential for creating subordinate roles for women in the social field and the possibility of permanently relegating them to these roles.
This however is not the case. Instead girls and young women operate and strategise differently within the social field to locate positions of power and influence which allow them to manufacture their own street capital and to advance.

Undoubtedly the gang acts as a location for ‘doing masculinity’ (Messerschmidt 1993) as other opportunities are blocked off (Taylor Gibbs and Merighi in Newburn and Stanko 1994). Messerschmidt (1993) argues that masculinity is not performed but has to be made and that criminality is one means of production. It is therefore structured action (Messerschmidt 2000). The gang therefore provides a social arena for men to demonstrate ‘manly’ qualities, albeit what Connell describes as ‘subordinated masculinity’ (Connell in Mullins 2006).

How masculinity is made depends upon one’s social field. In the social field of the gang there are few opportunities to develop a plausible gendered self other than crime and violence. Traditional working class opportunities of paid employment (Hegemonic masculinity) are largely unavailable, (Pitts 2008; Winlow, 2001), to young black men in this social field. Sartre (1963:95) calls this ‘subjective impoverishment’. Barker (2005) contends these reduced opportunities for men precipitates such an imperative upon actors in the social field, that they are prepared to face potential injury or fatality to achieve their goal of constructing a plausible gendered self. In addition the habitus will determine what structured actions are effective for ‘doing masculinity’.

Sartre (1963) argues that gangs are cogniscent of a future where hegemonic masculinity is denied them and thus street life becomes a ‘field of possibilities’, (Sartre 1963) through which gender can be accomplished and the bounds of race and class can similarly be transcended. For example, ‘robbery provides a public ceremony of domination and humiliation of others’, (Messerschmidt 1993:107). Katz (1988:225) refers to this public masculinity as ‘Hardmen’ – in SW9 this translates well into ‘Badman’. Messerschmidt acknowledges that under some circumstances criminal activity becomes a resource for enacting ‘street masculinity’, (Mullins 2006). Street masculinity is embodied in the militaristic concept of gang ‘solja’.

The imperative to generate street capital for men is further underpinned by concepts of fragile masculinity and the normative values of the social field. This gender imbalance within the social field leaves girls and young men in capital deficit from the beginning. However to survive in the social field, girls and young women are expected to struggle for status and domination in much the same way as young men, (Cobbina 2010). Acting under the conditions of the social field they must build street capital and their own reputation. Opportunities to achieve this are more limited than for boys and young men further confirming the gendered relationships within the social field, (Firmen 2010)
Female gang-affiliates report that they strategise to achieve ‘recognition’. This suggests a strong competitive struggle for recognition within the social field both amongst girls and in competition with boys. Girls may find it harder to build street capital and therefore strategise by identifying both advantages and disadvantages of situations and making adjustments accordingly (Cobbina 2010).

However for many, street capital in the social field validates patriarchal components, e.g. physicality and violence. The strategies available within the Gang Repertoire are gender-biased towards males. Girls and young women have therefore sought to create their own way to become Playa’s. They do this by creating their own ways into the hierarchy, finding their own ways to manufacture or generate street capital and by strategically positioning themselves within the field to their own advantage. Many girls and young women will favour strategies which do not directly involve violence.

Girls also operate their own agency to acquire street capital and build reputations, seek and secure partners, obtain goods and services, move up in social rank and obtain protection. Like the boys, levels of agency vary, from those who are active, intuitive and self determined to others that are fragile, vulnerable and nascent. Some girls choose not to completely enter the gang’s social field, only its periphery and they adjust their proximity accordingly. Due to the specific role played by girls, e.g. transmitting information, it is also entirely possible that girls may become unwittingly intertwined with a gang or at least fail to fully comprehend the level of their own involvement.

Agencies report a rise in girl’s involvement in gangs, but the level of girl’s involvement remains unknown as involvement is not manifested in the same way as for young men. Their involvement connects to all tiers of the gang and all age groups, operating at the core and the periphery connecting the gang to the wider community Network. In this way girls and young women are an important element to gang operations, working for the gang, part of the gang, but seldom ‘running’ with the gang. They operate/ provide a range of ‘back-office’ services for the gang, often acting as a front, assisting by providing daily intelligence. By providing these services they try to increase their own street capital. Sometimes acting under duress and sometimes acting under independent or individual agency, they are the girlfriends, baby-mothers, honey-traps, intermediaries and spectators at ‘the Game’.

**Girls’ Strategies**

Roles played by girls and women in the urban street gang vary depending by age, status and agency. Each role represents employment of an active strategy to advance status and street capital. Strategies vary depending upon the age-bands, rank and tier of the gang with whom
they are involved. Whilst a few achieve equal status with male peers in the gang, more often
status is subordinate.

Girls or young women are less likely to be involved with the firearms and violence, preferring
instead to provide functional roles e.g. holding money or drugs or administrative or ‘back-
office’ tasks, e.g. banking, transferring money, laundering money. Olders use girlfriends’ credit
cards to pay for their car insurance or rentals. Such actions, undertaken by coercion or
willingly, are expected elements of inter-personal relationships with male members or
affirmative strategies within the Sanctions Repertoire.

In the social field of gang girls largely sit alongside the boys as a group. Only a few are actively
located within the gang itself and such positions tend to be privileged and uncommon. The
boys ‘run in a pack and take care of business’ while the girls ‘do their own thing but they are
behind the boys’, (African Caribbean Male Elder). This gendered differentiation of roles,
(Campbell, 1984; Cobbina 2010; Firmen 2010; J. Miller 2001) brings a number of clear
advantages. Girls are used as conduits or to perform specific tasks. They can be distanced
from gang violence allowing them to operate their own sub-social field of respect and
reputation along gendered lines. They can be called upon to access the Network or to address
any confrontations the gang may experience with another girl. They are the fixers, the mixers
and the PR agents of the gang.

Key strategies employed by girls and young women are:

- **Risk Mitigation - Protection**

  Girls may enact a strategy of risk management by seeking a certain element of protection
  from the gang. This ‘protection’ may be real, inferred or assumed. It may allow them to
  move around SW9 unmolested. Crucially, it may allow for greater safety at school and
  college. Individual agency may motivate a girl to seek help from the gang if she is having
  relationship problems with a rival boy.

  Through association with the gang, girls obtain various potential benefits, e.g. piggy
  backing local brand names to accelerate their street capital, (see Chapter 2). Girls also self-
  impose sanctions of exclusion to minimises risks.

- **Demonstrating knowledge of the Game**

  This is evidenced through personal contacts but also through ‘minding one’s place’, and
  ‘not grassing’ will elevate status.
• **Staying off the radar**

This involves maintaining a low profile or going ‘unseen’. This permits unrestricted movement within the social field and across postcodes. It further allows girls to maintain and claim distance from the core of the gang or from the social field – this permits them to stay safer slightly outside the spiral of violence as they can claim no, or limited involvement. This advantage is then maximised by both males and females as the females are used to hide weapons, drugs and money.

• **Hiders**

Girls are involved in hiding important items, notably weapons of all types for the gang. It is widely accepted that girls are less likely to be suspected or stopped by the police. If stopped then they can claim duress. Those exercising individual agency are motivated into action by expectation of a deferred favour. This will build trust and respect with the gang. Those who are trusted with such operations are more likely to be linked to the gang through local or close family connections.

Others are motivated by seeking protection from the gang, access to senior ranking members, information or to covet attention. Many are implementing a strategy to raise their profile, seeking recognition as a Playa. By hiding weapons she is acknowledged and recognised, brought closer to the gang and held in some confidence. This however may be temporary or even illusory. For those new to the gang, this request to hide a weapon may be thrilling; an opportunity to affiliate more closely. Some girls are thought to be drawn into offering their services to hide weapons as they have little else to offer the gang. Once the weapon has been hidden and retrieved, word will be passed around and she will be talked about. Her reputation will increase but only for a short while.

Those acting as soloists may find it a safer strategy never to get involved in concealing a weapon. Similar levels of respect may be achieved by refusing to hide weapons or drugs. It is both difficult and unusual for girls to act with such independent agency as there is often an emotional relationship involved. Alternatively she may fear violence if she refuses. Alongside carrying weapons girls and young women will be involved in carrying drug stashes to and from safe houses. They may also be involved in moving smaller amounts of cash around the estate.

• **Fixers and Mixers**

Girls are heavily involved in fixing spectators for any forthcoming fight; facilitating attendance by texting details to friends, passing on messages and increasing the hype of
the ‘fixture’. This may result in a large en masse spectacle. Such is the normative nature of these events and the pack mentality which follows, the assembling groups, often in school uniforms, usually pay scant attention to the presence of CCTV or responsible guardians. Several fights have occurred outside the Youth Offending Services and Brixton police station.

In addition to this girls and young women are involved in obtaining stolen goods and re-selling them throughout the Network. These strategies will increase their links to and connections with the gang and the wider Network.

- **Monitors**

Girls and young women act as ‘touchstones’ responsible for monitoring activity, especially reputations, i.e. who is being talked about and what are they saying. This provides a passive activity as a ‘Listening station’. More pro-active roles include operating sanctions by proxy, e.g. spreading rumour and gossip, then monitoring effects. Girls act as the eyes and ears of the gang, picking up information and intelligence, e.g. who is moving around today, where are they going, who was seen and seen where. This activity is facilitated by ability to change appearance and move more freely between various estates and neighbourhoods. Intelligence is gleaned from notable locations, e.g. nail and beauty parlours. This role may include brokering deals and acting as sounding boards for members. They may be required to check and re-check information or situations or validate incidents or gain access to key people across rival gangs.

- **Generating sanctions**

Proximity and centrality to the Network permits girls and young women to operate highly effectively through manipulation of the network, i.e. through the use of gossip and rumour.

- **Violence**

In the social field of the gang there are always options for girls to advance their status and street capital through physical violence, though some choose not to do so. Local professionals increasingly report physical violence being more frequently displayed between girls, (Cobbina 2010). It is unclear if this suggests that some strategies are becoming gender neutral or whether girls and young women are restricted in their current strategies and seeking to move beyond them. Some girls and young men develop a reputation for using violence and this becomes a significant generator of street capital, elevating status.
Schools often experience a certain level of assaults and fights. However these are not incidents of gangs of girls targeting rival gangs of girls.

At large scale disturbances girls will associate with the boys, hyping up the situation generating considerable excitement. When things ‘kick off’ they pick up phones, jewellery and ‘clean’ the area of evidence, later often claim to be part of the event and part of the gang.

- **Network connectivity and Network control**

This is achieved through multiple contacts into the Network and by effectively operating and maintaining the Network they play the central role in ensuring the Network functions effectively and extensively. This includes maintaining connectivity to the Network for those in custody.

- **Information Traders**

Network connectivity and control within the social field effectively positions girls as Information Traders collating and distributing information, transmitting messages, ultimatums, rumour and local community knowledge. This strategic role is seldom formalised but raises their profile placing them in a pivotal position within the gang and between gangs. Their ability to play both sides of rival gangs gives them a further privileged role, accessing and holding information otherwise impossible to obtain. Issues of trust and veracity are always central to what is being traded with higher quality information traded for a higher price. Information obtained by putting themselves at risk comes with a high price. This reputation as information conduits leads boys to often be very wary around girls: ‘Rule of the Road – never trust a girl’

In this role they are contacted regularly by gang members and they will link back into the wider community Network. Early knowledge and information provides advantage. Some strategise deliberately in relation to their informational role, e.g. building a reputation for always being the first to know, or always having a truthful account. Others may build a reputation on not saying anything to anybody. Having widespread, accessible contacts demonstrates formidable links to the Network - valuable social capital in its own right. This represents a form of capital that can be achieved without violence. It is tradable and recognised by all as a useful currency in the social field. Engaging in such a strategy may provide the opportunity of closer association with a gang member.
If an event or serious incident occurs, members commonly telephone the girls for details, which are then traded: a function complicated by natural human relationships developing and breaking up over time.

Boys believe girls are careless with information, seek to impress others with personal titbits and often dry snitch. They are also used to set up boys for attack by rivals.

‘Girls will set you up. They will sleep with you and then go through your pockets. They will phone guys who will be waiting for you when you leave the flat. That’s how people run up this information, they will get girls in. Boys are clowns when it comes to girls’. (African Caribbean Male Older)

Girls are used to add a reputational caveat behind certain brand names, like a logo. Normally this acts as advance warning, e.g. “My Man lives there – but be careful cos he will ...”

Girls are often used for early alerts for incursions and proposed gang activities as they pass on information from girlfriends on other estates. This allows a gang to prepare for an incursion or ‘group up’ or hide weapons nearby. Such tip offs often lead rivals to change plans and employ a surprise attack the following week.

• Sexual strategies

This includes trying to access the gang hierarchy directly and strategically by becoming the girlfriend or sexual partner of the ‘Alpha male’. Strategies might include long term relationships, ‘linking’ or offering regular sexual contact. Some strategise to deliberately become pregnant to maintain that access and to maximise their street capital. Other sexual strategies include developing a hyper-sexualised physicality. Thomson, (2000:425) argues young women can gain respect and authority from motherhood. By evidencing a hyper-sexualised form (as visualised through manicured hair and nails, clothing, dancing and feminised physique) girls and young women seek to maximise their street capital in the same way as a young man who amplifies his muscular physique. By enhancing physical attributes girls and young women will raise their profile for selection, evidence they are Playa’s, or use this strategy to evidence that they are being treated well by their partner.

Exposure to risk

When viewed holistically within the social field, the role of girls and young women becomes more significant. As Network controllers they are key arbiters of reputation; making or breaking reputations easily, making them often responsible for fluctuations in street capital. In the social field of the gang, this makes them Playa’s. Overtime, they may even become
powerful Playa’s. Although not visually evident in all situations, girls and young women have created a pivotal role which elevates them from the traditionally gendered perspective of secondary Playa’s. It is more accurate to say, they operate differently within the gendered social field.

Such roles make girls and young women strategic Playa’s, but generate challenges. Firstly men understand their strategic importance and their role as reputation-makers. This places them in potentially dangerous situations in the social field. Thus men try to ‘manage’ their reputations through sanctions.

Other women are similarly engaged in generating street capital and the process of advancement within the social field for women can be as equally brutalising as it is for men. This dynamic is perhaps best illustrated by considering their exposure to risk.

In the landscape of risk for young people that is the social field of the gang and its periphery, girls and young women are at risk, by nature of their gender, their relationships with the gang, the social field and the roles and strategies they employ. They are equally subject to the Sanctions Repertoire - either summary or regular, by way of ‘controlling the girls’ movements and mouth’. This includes punishments for minor/major infringements, failing in business transactions. Punishment can be meted out for others misdemeanours, e.g. a recent incident involved a gang girl raped as a punishment to the boyfriend for not paying his drug debts. She may also be expected to bail him out of debt and may be at risk if she doesn’t.

Casual violence and gendered male violence is also present, however sometimes boys may request a sanction is administered by proxy by his own girls, e.g. ‘when you see this girl – ’Punch her up! This sanction would only be low level violence. Levels of violence used will be measured by how serious a Playa she is: ‘She might get mashed up but it’s not that people want to kill her’, (West African Female Older).

Girls and young women are also collateral casualties in events where drug dealers have had their premises raided by another gang. In such circumstances she may be pistol-whipped or assaulted.

Recently gang members seriously injured a member’s girlfriend, as she visited his house, as revenge for his refusing to leave the house and confront them. For some gang members and for some transgressions, girlfriends are fair game and easily targeted for sanctions. If sisters or girlfriends are subject to a sanction, this is considered a huge disrespect to other male members, i.e. a challenge to their reputation, respect and male dignity.

Violent sanctions can occur where rumours surface that a girl has slept with a rival. In such circumstances it is not uncommon for her to be ‘Slapped up to keep her in line’. Indiscriminate ‘slapings’ occur by way of controlling her overall actions. Alternatively she may have infringed a hidden code or gang rule, not performed her role or failed to deliver, e.g.
recent police intelligence reported a young girl being beaten up outside school because she owned £1,000 to a gang member.

**Sexual violence**

Exposure to increased sanctions is clearly a downside to any association with a gang. For many young women, it is a risk worth taking. Sanctions may on occasion mean sexual violence or rape. Most girls and young women believe this sanction only happens to ‘slags’ and not to them. Rape and sexual violence towards girls and young women is, according to all respondents, both overstated by the media and underreported by victims. Levels of reporting are even lower than for single assailant rape. Female respondents consider rape a reality, whilst some males believed it an urban myth. Agency workers/professionals agree it happens. Some police acknowledge it as unreported, whilst others deny it occurs. Group rape was generally acknowledged to occur on occasion but is not peculiar to Lambeth. Images of group rape have been found on gang member’s mobile phones. Young male gang members note it is not cool to do this. Some denied any gang involvement ‘If that’s going on its separate. That’s not cool. You don’t get stripes for that’. Two separate narratives were evident: a) that sexual violence and rape is used as a sanction, b) that most rapes are consensual as girls misrecognise signs and gang norms.

Sexual violence is most often reported towards girls whose self esteem, personal or individual agency is low/limited. They are more likely to be coerced, intimidated or forced into situations where sexual violence might be used as a sanction. Alternatively they may be new to the gang and unskilled in reading signals and situations. Agencies reported some quite young school children involved in such sexual activity.

**Gendered perceptions and gendered narratives**

Two distinctly gendered narratives on girls’ relationships to the gang and sexual activity was evident. The female narrative on girls’ relationship to the gang is that three types of girls are involved with varying degrees of affiliation. These are broadly termed:

- Spectators and facilitators
- Tomboy girls
- Elders exclusive girlfriends

Those acting as mixers and fixers and who ‘hype up’ or champion key males in the gang, operate largely as the front-face of the gang. They are prominent with gang leaders. Girls who are well connected into the gang attend ‘good’ schools, live in respectable areas and are not seen on the estate, and if so, pass unnoticed. They are not ‘Street girls’ or ‘on Road’. Their
parents will have no idea that their daughter is involved or even knows the gang. Such girls are considered safe and have no criminal record. ‘They can walk in and out without anyone realising. Those are the ones watch’, (White Female Professional).

Girls with considerable individual agency who hang out with the gang may believe they can count on the support of male members. However this may not really be real. If they live ‘decently’ (Anderson 1999), they are unlikely to get involved in anything requiring gang help.

Strategies for girls and young women to earn respect differ depending on the person and their level of independent agency. Girls are put under more pressure than boys or men to act out roles determined by gender politics. Girls are pressurised to be respectable and are aware sanctions of verbal abuse and labels will attach to their reputations and be damaging to their street capital.

Men claim that most girls affiliating with the gang know the outcomes they seek and follow their own individual agency or strategy. Men know the role for girls within the gang is limited, e.g. they do not control buying/selling drugs. Girls bringing in money are protected by Olders. Some girls or young women use sexual favours as their strategy for accessing the gang and raising their profile, seeking access to the dominant males and power brokers. They seldom realise this strategy will fundamentally alter their relationship with the gang, changing how they are perceived and treated by gang members.

**Gendered perceptions**

A girl regularly having sex with gang members is considered ‘available’. She may believe that she is employing agency and strategising using free choice but men believe she has mis-read the group dynamics and social norms, perceiving her to be freely available as most boys already have their own girlfriend or ‘personal girl’. Personal girls are not be assaulted. These other girls are thus assumed to be ‘group girls’.

Perception of this role is effectively gendered with two different perceptions now playing out:- She believes any sexual encounter is between her and her ‘boyfriend’. Conversely however as he perceives her to be a ‘group girl’, he thinks he will have sex first before inviting in his friends. Boys felt girls needed to have a better understanding of this dynamic. Boys believe girls have mis-read the group dynamics and accessed the gang for the wrong reasons, believing girls are searching for something which they will not achieve or obtain via this route, i.e. profile, respect and status. The boys recognise she lacks individual agency which makes her appear vulnerable, weak, emotionally vulnerable or romantically deluded. She may already be being victimised. Her aim - trying to link into a top male with power and authority -
is not validated by the boys. Some suggest such girls have domestic issues, low esteem and
don’t wish to attach to anyone. How she is now treated depends upon how she fits in within
her peer group. If she does not have many female friends and an active social group then it is
likely that she will affiliate to a group of boys. This way she will try and find her feet and then
get access up the ranks.

The boys assume the girl is approaching the gang in this way because a Leader will not seek her
out for her charms. Through such assessments she is labelled ‘street’ and not ‘decent’
(Anderson 1999). Boys have concluded that ‘decent’ girls would not act this way, thus
confirming her subordinate status as a potential group girl, (a ‘Ho’ or a ‘Jezzy’) and ensuring
she is ‘passed around’. During this time she is increasingly mistrusted and isolated as boys
attempt to keep information from her to mitigate their own risks. Initially she may not be fully
aware she is being passed around until later, nor may she be aware of how she is viewed and
labelled. This process is well understood by the boys. Girls who are vulnerable or of low self
esteem are particularly vulnerable to being played in this way. In such circumstances sexual
violence is a possible or likely outcome.

In another scenario, recounted by male gang members, girls seek access to the top rank or
leader by offering sexual favours. This may or may not lead to a relationship. However he will
soon tire of her or she will fall pregnant. In either case she is dropped and then relegated
down the ranks as he moves on to another girl. By sleeping with the leader she employed a
strategy of trying to co-opt onto the reputation and protection of the leader. This strategy is
now failing as she falls down the ranks. At this point her reputation declines and she too is
now viewed as a group girl. She may then try to reclaim her status and maintain her
connections by sleeping with the second ranking male but this strategy is also doomed to
failure. As she moves down the ranks she is most likely aware of ‘falling’. But such is her
strong affiliation with this group she would probably prefer to put up with it, than to withdraw.
There may still be some advantage to her to put up with this. Overall she is likely to suffer a
diminished reputation and be called a ‘slut’, often shunned by other girls.

There may be an alternative ending depending upon how she carries herself within the gang.
For example, if she has become a ‘BAD girl’, her reputation need not suffer. She will need to
engage in violence in order to raise her street capital.

Reaching the alpha-male is no guarantee of his protection and a fall down the ranks could
happen anytime. A girl with a strong local history will not necessarily have to ‘use’ sex to
approach the gang. However, if she is only getting started ‘On Road’ and becoming sexually
active then mistakes can be easily made e.g. getting attached to a group for the wrong reasons
or to one other person without realising they view her as a group girl. It is said all boys understand that if you are an 'exclusive partner', it is recognised that you would not go into a gang by 'using sex'.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity also generates its own risks within the landscape of risk. The ethnicity of the gang affiliation is a direct reflection of the ethnicity of the local neighbourhood or estate. This finding was also affirmed by Aldridge in her work in Manchester (Aldridge et al. 2007). SW9 (essentially Brixton and Stockwell in Lambeth borough) are long established residential locations for black African Caribbean populations. The State of the Borough Report 2011 (Lambeth First 2011) reports Brixton as the most populated area of the borough and also the heart of Lambeth's black community. Lambeth itself hosts the third largest proportion of black Caribbean people in London at 9.8%. Whilst Stockwell is reported as ethnically and socially mixed.

The Lambeth wards in SW9 are listed as amongst the 10% most deprived wards in the UK. African Caribbean and Black African populations are disproportionately represented in these neighbourhoods, (Lambeth First 2011). Thus black African and black Caribbean young men are over represented in gang membership in SW9. The Black African population (largely West African), at 11.5%, has recently overtaken the Black Caribbean population of Lambeth which stands at 9.8%, (Lambeth First 2011). In addition there are a few White British and White Portuguese gang members. Whilst this reflects the borough population as a whole, some wards will experience a higher concentration of different ethnicities. Moreover, some estates will evidence even further concentrations of ethnic minorities, though such data are hard to obtain. Many estates are known to house both long-term residents and many new arrivals.

New immigrants into the social field experience enhanced difficulties and dangers. The distribution of capital in the social field is unequal and odds are usually stacked against them. In the Landscape of Risk they are aware they are at high risk of victimisation. Within this landscape, accessing information about the social field and the community is critical. This includes learning the bewildering range of individuals, new rules of the Road, interpretation of meaning, localised street language, idioms, and individuals to be avoided and overcoming language difficulties. This information is exchanged, amongst new arrivals. For many this is a considerable pressure which can lead to either total withdrawal from the social field or total immersion.

Many new arrivals experience 'Network Poverty' (6: 1997). They learn quickly to maintain the rule of no grassing. New arrival families are not sure how to play the area, how to adjust or
ask the right questions to get the right information and often put themselves at risk, e.g. not knowing that a gang operates in their local pub or that stolen goods are sold openly there.

‘Connections and knowledge re the information supplier is the key – ‘can I milk this situation for my own ends and advantage?’ is always being asked. Who I know might protect me or get me out of trouble, so I need to know who I need to know. As I am Coming Up, I need to know who is who. If I call an Older he can then intervene and ‘squash’ any trouble for me’. (African Caribbean Male Older)

It is not at this point easy to determine the role of ethnicity in the levels of violence experienced in this social field. There does however appear to be a lower threshold in this social field as regards the dosage of violence meted out as part of the Sanctions Repertoire. Reasons for this cannot be elucidated here and will require further research.

Police recognise that all gangs in SW9 are ethnically mixed and no single ethnicity dominates. White ethnicity exists in gangs, but to a much lower extent. Around Brixton the gang membership could be 30-50 strong, with only 2-3 white members.

The police also reported that their in-house research, which includes reviewing offending patterns and arrest history, indicates some gang offending patterns are ethnically specific:

‘you can have Black British, black African, black Jamaican and they will all be in the same gang and will all have distinct responsibilities’. (White Male Police Officer)

This evidence however was unavailable for this thesis. Without further research it is not possible to verify that ethnic groups within a gang differentiate or specialise in certain types of offending. However, at least one gang retains this way of operating as its signature style. Several respondents, (not all police) suggested that frequently the key Jamaican influence is cannabis and drug dealing whilst Africans take care of the violence. Black British members allegedly operate a bit of both. Such reports demand further scrutiny, however the police research indicated this was an emerging pattern. Such patterns may potentially be short lived and not particularly surprising depending upon the ethnic composition of the gang, offending history and family connections. Higher forms of particularised trust amongst groups of members sharing cultural or ethnic origins may also provide an explanation. Toy (2009:35) notes that ‘some gangs use cultural connectivity as part of the recruitment process’ and cites the DFA gang in Southwark (primarily Nigerian) or the Woolwich Boys in Greenwich (Somalian). I would caution that such examples represent gangs established through shared ethnicity
(most likely as they are new arrivals, seeking group cohesion, shared protection and experiencing Network Poverty) as opposed to ethnically oriented offending or specialisation. The links between the Caribbean community and drug dealing is covered in Chapter 4.

This chapter has revealed how the social field of the gang has become a landscape of risk for young people who must strategise daily to mitigate perceived or real risks. This chapter also considered the characteristics of information in the social field and how it is used to provide advantage but also minimise risk. Lastly this chapter considered the gendered roles in the social field noting that girls and young women undertake different roles and strategise differently. In the next chapter I explore the gang hierarchy and the social order of the social field.
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In the last chapter I looked at how actors joined the social field of the gang and found themselves having to navigate a landscape of risk. I now wish to consider the social order of the social field and in particular how gangs in SW9 are structured and organised. This involves considering relevant gang strategies as reported by participants in the social field. I then present evidence to support my theory that gangs in SW9 are organised, with varying degrees of organisation depending on the tier of the gang.

I then consider the Sanction Repertoire – the list of strategies available to gang affiliates through which order is maintained within the social field.

A timeline of known active gangs in Lambeth is available in Table 21. A visual map of gang locations as they relate to SW9 is available in Figure 4 and a brief overview of the profiles of the high profile or dominate gangs in SW9 is presented in Appendix 10.

The structure of the social field

As identified in Chapter One there are several different theories regarding gang organisation and structure. Several different narratives exist for UK gangs, (they are not organised: Hallsworth and Young 2008; Hallsworth and Duffy 2010; Aldridge et al 2008) or they are organised: (Pitts 2008; Toy 2010).

Field theory, (Bourdieu 1969; Bourdieu 1984; Martin 2003) dictates the social field is structured with actors in the field placed by their ‘relative location in the hierarchy of positions’, (Swartz 1997:120). This internal field hierarchy relates to and reflects capital distribution. My findings conclude that the social field of the gang in SW9 is hierarchically structured reflecting capital distribution within the field: a structure that is visible as levels of gang organisation. Organisational levels, where perceptible, relate not to age as some believe, but to capital distribution. However, clearly younger people starting out in the social field of the gang will possess lower levels of capital than those already established.

My findings also conclude that in SW9 gangs are moderately organised at the lower level and more organised at the higher level in a common organisational structure which I have termed ‘tiers’. These tiers represent more than capital distribution, they represent differences in use of the Repertoires, strategising, types of criminal behaviour, levels of anti-social behaviour, ways of thinking, aspirations and group dynamics. Before considering further the nature of
gang organisation, it’s important to consider other organising concepts for the maintenance of social order in the social field.

Reconstruction of social order

Social order in the social field relates to the internal field structure and mechanisms for its maintenance. In the social field of the gang in SW9, the evident social order is maintained for one overarching reason: there is no plausible alternative.

Returning to Bourdieu (1991: 22-25), we are reminded that the social field retains two key ordering principles; the doxa – the field’s deep structure which dictates the forms of struggle, and the illusio – the tacit understanding of a dominant establishment and subordinate challengers, along with an internal logic that confirms it is all worth the struggle. This organising principle is self-evident to all actors in the field. In this way actors understand the rules, the routes or progression to distinction, how to evidence abilities and skills, how to acquire street capital and the fact they will be tested and auditioned by Olders.

The logic of the field has been passed down to Younger by Older and Elders who, by virtue of their dominant field positions, employ strategies to conserve the status quo. This they believe will be good for business. This established field hierarchy also provides clearly established routes for progression for all actors to advance to distinction. Were no such routing evident, chaos would ensue. The Succession strategies, (Swartz 1997: 124) of new entrants to the social field can also now be pursued with clear goals.

In addition to the doxa, illusio and field logic, the maintenance of social order in this field relates to several components each of which will be examined in detail. These are:

- Organising meta-narratives
- Field Rules
- Gang organisation and hierarchy
- The Sanctions Repertoire

Organising meta-narratives

Several different organising meta-narratives in SW9 were identified: Gang as Shield, as Family, as Protector, as Business, and as Employer. Youngers often refer to gang life as ‘a Game’, associating the key dynamic of fun and drama. Olders refer to it as ‘The Game’, i.e. a cynical recognition of predetermined roles played by themselves and the criminal justice agencies in the social field.

Two principle narratives emerged, internal to gang-affiliates and often reiterated by researchers and youth workers alike, represent the gang as ‘not a gang’ but just a group of
friends. Here the gang is presented as Protector for young people, serving the community and protecting their territory from incursions. All narratives provide permissions and legitimisation (Sykes and Matza 1957), e.g. muggings are excused as undertaken by visitors and rivals not locals; the ability of young members to protect the estate then gives them license to be loud and engage in ASB.

This narrative is often used alongside that of ‘the gang as a family’ or ‘Street Family’, (see Chapter 5). The street family narrative allows for language use which is positive and reinforcing whilst again excusing behaviours. It suggests an organisng principle in which social order is maintained through allegiance to the family and family ideals. Common amongst Youngers, it can be a way of rationalising their actions with strong elements of excuse and denial. Behaviours are often rationalised through nostalgic perspectives underplaying the reality of actions, the views of other residents and actual outcomes. It also permits members to process illegal activity and assume a moral high ground for righteous actions. For young affiliates the concept of social order maintained within the street family is perhaps an understandable metaphor and rationale way of digesting the complex rules and sanctions operating within this highly bonded social group and social field.

Co-joined with both narratives are concepts of poverty and legitimisation,( Sykes & Matza 1957) e.g. young people are poor and do what is necessary to get by. Some Youngers talked of pressure from their family to ‘bring something to the table’. Robbing is thus considered understandable and even permissible, and those stabbed or killed either provoked or deserved it:

Such narratives are common amongst youth workers and professionals. However they often deny the increased risks of affiliation or internecine fighting for young people. They also fail to acknowledge that whilst a gang may initially emerge organically through friends and peer groups, it may still evolve into a structured or organised body. They therefore suggest a positive bias towards gang affiliation rather a more sober reflective perspective which considers the totality of the social field and the dynamics within it. The persistence of these two key narratives often underpins debates of definition. It is these debates which then underpin discussion on gang organisation.

Field Rules

In every social field, social action is governed by both the habitus (see Chapter 2) and the filed rules. Social order is maintained both by the logic of the social field and by the rules. The predominant social order in the social field is the Code of the Street (Anderson 1999). Supplementary to this are the rules for the gang. The rules are a source of conflict and struggle between members, (Martin 2003:31) and as such are subject to variation and change. The
gang rules operate as a general backdrop to actions and are orally transmitted from Olders to Youngers. Some individuals or gang subsets (pods) retain their own rules or codes of action which act as shibbloeths. Essentially, ‘rules’ set limits on the use of variables or provide boundaries to strategies, e.g. not to rob black people or pensioners. Rules, in so far as they exist, are codes for operating and implementing the Gang Repertoire. Should a member refer to Gang Rules these are likely to be generalised credos for the gang which supplement the ethos of Street Life, e.g.

- ‘If someone troubles you, we deal with it’.
- ‘we’ll stand together, we’ve got your back?

Such statements are often repeated as affirmations and used as taglines in recruitment. They also send messages to members who view them support and license, e.g.

‘That was appealing and meant I could do anything to anyone and I know that my boys have got my back’. (African Caribbean Male Older)

The foundation for evidence of organisation begins with discussion of the structured tiers of the urban street gang.

Gang organisation and hierarchy

The third component for the maintenance of social order in the field is the field hierarchy, identifiable as gang organisation. It is useful to note there is no consensus amongst professionals as to whether gangs in SW9 are organised or not, with often conflicting views and perspectives, notably within the police. In Street Boys, (Pritchard 2008:255) an Elder of the PDC gang known as Ja Ja (Elijah Kerr), argues that ‘gang’ is a pejorative term used by the media to trivialise and sensationalise, making them sound amateurish. He referred to the PDC as a ‘crew, a loose affiliation of young black men like himself, almost like an umbrella organisation’. He notes that the PDC ‘was much more sophisticated and complicated than that’, often working freelance and together as a ‘social network’.

Some professionals suggest a links exist between lower and higher end criminality:

‘In general the Lambeth street gangs are ‘chaotic’ in their organisation and ability, but very violent. If the police can’t catch them with evidence for higher end crimes they will try and target them for lower end ASB’. (White Male, Trident Police Officer)

Others suggest a greater level of organisation but struggle to articulate it:
‘If you look at the make-up of the gangs and what the gangs do without looking at any research then on the face of it – you’d think these people are disorganised, a lot of ASB, bit of cannabis dealing and random violence but it seems, especially the violence all has a purpose – it’s all linked to something else’. (White Male Police Officer)

Residents on one estate argued gangs are narrowly focussed but effectively managed and better organised than the local authority:

‘It organises almost entirely by word of mouth and mobile phones. That’s as effective as any paper organisation. But they keep track of things. There’s a lot of brave and thought goes into things. Gangs are better managed than Lambeth council’ (White Male Resident)

Crime Professionals working more closely with gangs claim that gangs appear disorganised because of their involvement in anti-social behaviour, (ASB), but they are actually quite organised. Moreover, in this often confusing picture the voice of the Soloist has seldom, if ever, been captured.

Police staff working directly with gangs, identify a more structured level of organisation within gangs in SW9. There is a similar lack of consensus about numbers of young people involved in urban street gangs in SW9. It is important to acknowledge that the majority of young people in Lambeth are non gang-affiliated. All professionals do however agree that numbers of young people affiliated to gangs are increasing, alongside levels of violence.

In general gangs in SW9 present moderate organisation at the Elementary Tier and higher levels of organisation at the Mature Tier. Taken as a whole, gangs in SW9 are organised. At the Elementary Tier, the search for street capital through employment of the Expressive Repertoire results in highly visible territorial violence and ASB. This may appear chaotic but is undertaken as part of a specific strategy. It is only the visible face and junior tier of a more structured organisation which retains ranks, levels of entry, differentiated roles, group and gang strategies, a series of repertoires for engaging in both Expressive and Instrumental crime, marketing and publicity strategies, recruitment, tactical manoeuvres, change, negotiation and adaptation, branding, opportunities for advancement, communication and information channels, networking possibilities and links to criminal business ventures. Those involved display intelligence and cunning which clearly benefit them as they operate within their social field.

This evidence is often difficult to reconcile with the views of senior police officers;
'When the police talk about gang problems in Lambeth they are really talking about young people aged between 13 – 20. Most of these guys are on bikes'. (White Male Trident Police Officer)

The above points are however evident in all gangs reviewed in SW9. In addition, there will be variations within each different gang. To substantiate the claim for gangs in SW9 being organised I shall now consider the elements of organisation:-

- Gang Tiers
- Transitioning
- Functional differentiation
- Auditioning and testing
- Fracturing
- Planning and managing

Tiers

Gangs in SW9 exhibited similar characteristics in terms of their organisational structure. The gangs comprised broad age bands which I have called Tiers. These age bands also relate to the broad range of activities, actions and levels of criminal activity along with use of Repertoires. For some they represent ‘terms’ of affiliation to the gang. Three tiers were identified (as shown in Table 17):

- Elementary tier – Youngers aged 13 – 16
- Mature tier – Olders aged 16 – 21
- Advanced tier – Elders aged 22 - 30

Table 17 Gang tiers operating in gangs in SW9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1990 - 2005</th>
<th>2006-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olders aged 16-19</td>
<td>(Advanced tier)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elders aged 22 plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Mature tier)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Olders aged 16 - 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngers aged 13-16</td>
<td>(Elementary tier)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youngers aged 13 – 16</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Elementary tier)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tinnies aged 10-13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I shall now consider each tier separately.
Elementary Tier

The focus and motivations for gang affiliation change over time. For Youngers, the Elementary tier provides opportunities to affiliate and begin building reputations and manufacturing and accumulating street capital. This is largely done by employing components of the Expressive Repertoire. They thus present in the neighbourhood as anti-social, highly visible and violent. They are often fiercely loyal to the gang and seek to build its brand name alongside their own. This loyalty extends to their local territory or Endz. They employ strategies, both individual and group to maximise their street capital and status, seeking advancement within the social field. They are primarily brought into the gang via family, peers and Olders for their skills, abilities, connections or because they seek opportunities for fun, money and protection. Their behaviour can appear chaotic and random.

Below Youngers, sit a new group of young people aged 11-13 called Tinnies. These young people are either gang Wannabees or younger siblings and neighbours. They undertake short-term limited roles for Youngers and provide Youngers with the opportunity of developing leadership skills and building their Rep. For both groups, social networking sites and the flow of information is crucial to permit them to navigate this new landscape of risk. Whilst Youngers may affiliate with expectations of minimising risk or potential victimhood, for fun, drama or money, they may find the social field they enter is different from the one they thought they were joining.

Youngers operate to limited local boundaries. They are thus caught up in largely estate-based ‘beefs’ or ‘postcode wars’ unlike Older/Elders who travel more widely. For Youngers, both their networks and mental maps are highly localised. For this tier, personal individual strategies are paramount – i.e. revenge, reputation, respect. Fighting and for some, a quest for violence is key.

Peer pressure and potential violence is escalated rather than reduced, opportunities for accessing economic capital are at times remote and yields smaller than anticipated. The social field is violent and threatening demanding constant vigilance of peers both within the gang and outwith the gang.

Affiliation demands loyalty and the expectation that you will act in concert with others without question. This may require isolation from local social agencies or authorities.

‘the smaller gangs that are trying to make a name for themselves won’t work together and we have major incidents of violence or murder and it becomes impossible for them to work together’. (White Male Police Officer)
At the Elementary tier one is expected to buy into the narrative of the gang already orally transmitted by Olders before they joined. Gangs believe more affiliations bring greater protection and use SNSs to try and widen their Network. Increased exposure to the ‘virtual’ gang Network however often leads to increased risk of exposure to sanctions of disrespect and a possible downward trajectory of entanglement and gang interaction. For many then this social field is less collegiate with much back-stabbing and immaturity with volatile, every-changing friendships. There presents a constant dilemma between individual and group strategies.

Olders offer inducements and guidance but often use Youngers to advance their own business deals or personal strategies. Youngers are tested for loyalty and skill with success in any test generating advanced street capital. Relationships between Youngers and Olders are both symbiotic and mutually exploitative. Recently the balance of power, which favoured Olders is being questioned and challenged by Youngers keen to access economic capital more quickly than earlier generations with some Youngers believing it is they who are, ‘Running the Road’. Some professionals claim increased level of challenge contributes to the increased level of violence in the social field. Recently the Sanctions Repertoire employed by some Olders to keep Youngers in line have shifted to affirmative sanctions to reflect this new dynamic.

‘Half of them Youngers didn’t know how much these Brixton Olders are affiliated with these Peckham Olders but it’s a money thing. The Youngers in Brixton see that as wrong’. (African Caribbean Female Independent Operator)

Olders recognise and accept that Youngers cause localised anti social behaviour on estates. This is either ignored or used to the advantage of Olders and Elders. Some Olders will themselves get involved to demonstrate they are still one of the boys. Olders and Elders may get irritated with the activities of Youngers which often bring police attention. If the activity of Youngers gets out of hand, Olders may enact controls or sanctions, either affirmative or negative. By and large Olders accept this as the social norm and if possible try to capitalise upon such situations. They too have only recently progressed from this Elementary tier and they recognise Youngers provide critical functions to Olders wishing to advance: information, stolen goods, specified tasks, drug shotting, and access to the Network.

Failure to understand the social norms or a lack of sophistication in the social field, e.g. the use of information places many Youngers at risk. Many operate in a world of myth, anecdote, suspicion, rumour and gossip. For some the gang is a concept mis-sold where the small print remains unread.
Others advance through violence or a reputation for ‘madness’ raising their street capital and reputation, building networks and specialising in elements of the Repertoire. Fed up with not making much money, they are now ready to ‘upgrade’ membership to that of an Older.

**Mature tier**

Olders may in fact only be a year or two in age above the Youngers but they are considered established in terms of reputation and now more interested in money. They school Youngers in the social norms and the social field, setting tasks and testing both loyalty and candidacy for bigger jobs by using them as gofers and run-arounds. This essentially exploitative relationship is reciprocated by Olders schooling Youngers in the social norms, gang history, tips on how to succeed, the actors, the Playa’s, and ‘life on Road’.

Crucially Olders are in a position of influence above Youngers regarding their ability to develop and build their reputation and street capital. Olders keep Youngers in line, and preside over the affirmative Sanction Repertoire of privilege, reward, inducement and advancement. Olders are needed and respected but increasingly recognised by Youngers as a potential barrier, or sometimes as braggers who ‘over-claim’ their ability and success. Whereas previously sanctions were largely negative, increasingly Olders use affirmative sanctions towards Youngers who are now no longer afraid to attack an Older should they be disrespected:

> ‘Most Youngers would not be afraid to stab an Older. They are realising if you cheat them and keep *boi-ing* them (treating them as a boy), it is safer and easier to take you out than continue to be treated like this’ (West African Male Older).

As members reach age 16 or 17, life around them changes. They may have left school; started college; parented a child. They are able to access pubs and clubs. Personal, social and relationship boundaries are expanded. During this transition some take the opportunity to drop out of the gang or reduce their involvement. For others it is a natural progression, as they move into the Mature tier increasingly employing the Instrumental Repertoire and becoming more focussed on raising economic capital. Reputations by now are largely cast, though they must be maintained with vigilance.

For many Olders, individual strategies are more tolerated – i.e. having a family, going to college, etc. If still gang-involved, their strategies become more collegiate: thus gang strategies are more harmonised. A decrease in use of the Expressive Repertoire results in decreased daily violence both within the gang and against rivals, creating more opportunities for socialising or making money. Those still acting within the gang strategy become more self selective as to their involvement often choosing to specialise in strategies that match their skill
set. Some now choose to link in with others as a specialist pod or group. They may even be nominated by Elders for specific roles or tasks based upon their reputation and skill.

Olders now operate to wider personal, social and business boundaries and some may move home beyond the immediate neighbourhood. Despite being spatially dispersed they remain within the social field of the gang. As their involvement with the Instrumental Repertoire expands they develop business partnerships with peers, possibly with hitherto rivals in other gangs in other estates or boroughs. This is achievable by tapping into contacts and the Network and identifying joint business opportunities, e.g. Brixton Olders liaising with Peckham Olders. Many Youngers view this connectivity from their Elementary level and consider it as wrong, and increasingly disrespect Olders, distrusting them or challenging them for leadership. Moreover, not all Olders will be making money. Youngers are often disappointed when this fact is revealed.

At this level violence is now largely deemed aberrant and unproductive, except in unusual circumstances when the violence becomes more extreme. Violence is now used strategically designed to be a one-off, aimed to end the opposition once and for all: to draw a line.

At age 18/19 Olders are either usually fully in the gang or negotiating withdrawal as other life chances present themselves. By age 20/21 a member is considered a serious operator and able to start making bigger money. With street level gang violence behind them, they can focus on networks and potential and opportunities to move from bonding social capital to bridging social capital. Territoriality, often important in Elementary tiers, is now less important and can at least be minimised, increasing their ability to traverse estates and neighbourhoods. Those returning from YOI or prison can pick up ex-‘birded’ colleagues and put new strategies into action which are higher level, less frequent and higher yield.

If the Olders are connected to drug dealing then they will now manage a group of Youngers on an estate. They will also develop links to upline supply, including Elders operating drugs on other estates in other neighbourhoods. It is these business links, networks and family links that allow Olders and those above them to interact with others in mature levels. Thus deals are brokered and even ceasefires can be arranged.

In this tier levels of organisation have increased alongside quality and effectiveness. Olders are increasingly involved in criminal activity such as Cash in Transit robberies which were once the preserve of organised crime groups. However it is the slightly chaotic and amateurish nature of these CIT robberies that sets this apart from organised crime.
Further evidence of organisation is evident through the growing stratification and management of the drug dealing side of business. Much energy goes into locating the market, finding the product, mixing it up and purchasing the product, on site packaging and distribution, creating partnerships to sell it and distribute it, sourcing customers and travelling up country if necessary. Whilst some of these tasks will be off the estate and organised by Elders, the Older are a key link in this business model.

Advanced tier

Progression from an Older to an Elder is not a given: ‘Only two or three hard and Bad boys progress into the top element’. Nor is it achieved simply by age and ‘staying the course’, though both of these provide a starting point for acceptance. Elders have an established reputation having gone through the transition, possibly involving prison. They are the street power brokers often feared and admired in equal measure. They have leadership qualities and strong network connections. Overtime these qualities and connections have become more important. Only 2 or 3 hard and bad gang-boy’s progress to Elders either through madness, badness, contacts, stealth, availability and hard work.

The Elder may be seen only rarely in the neighbourhood. Aloofness will add to his mystique. Others may be more involved in drug dealing locally and play a role of orchestrating and managing others from a safe house on the estate.

Police profiles identify Elders as having garnered an impressive array of previous convictions from robbery and violence to drug possession, domestic violence and threats. The age of the Elder will be from mid 20s to mid 30s however this varies across gangs. This will also depend upon their longevity outside the police radar. Peckham gang Elders are older than average, suggesting a higher level of organisation and a slight variation on the situation of SW9. Longevity suggests fewer internal fractures in a gang. Peckham gangs are also larger in actual gang numbers and it is possible that a more mature group of leaders is required to maintain operations.

Reputations are maintained by Elders in different ways. They may for example seek to evidence success by splashing out at night clubs, e.g. one SW9 Elder reputedly spent £100K in 2010 celebrating his birthday at a West End champagne bar. Such stories excite Youngers and maintain reputations more than stories of violence. Whereas for Older money comes and goes quickly, some Elders will shift higher quantities of cash. Some may be invested in small
localised businesses such as barber shops and Nail shops to assist with laundering money. Others will have little to show and no evidence of any lavish lifestyle.

A gang Elder is a position of distinction as you can dictate movement in a member’s Street capital. Youngers and Olders are cogniscent of this and desire a direct link which brings advantages and give you an edge:-

- Ability to access higher level information more quickly allowing you to tap into higher quality first hand information rather than fourth hand.
- Ability to develop deeper knowledge re rivals within the gang and in other gangs
- To gain higher levels of respect by having your name circulated
- To build trust
- To develop bragging rights
- To be nominated for strategies

Vigil (2010) refers to this group as ‘veteranos’ who, as ‘developmentally delayed adults’ have never matured out of the gang. A less pejorative perspective of Elders therefore appears to exist in SW9.

Table 17 illustrates the gang tiers identified in this research. The figure also shows how this situation has evolved since the previous structures which operated from 1990 – approximately 2005.

**Transitioning between tiers**

Within much academic gang research and amongst professionals, there is an assumption that movement through the tiers of a gang relies on age. This is not the case. The period between tiers is effectively a transitioning period for young people where a range of internal and external factors impact upon forward movement to the next level.

**First tier transition**

The first transition period is from being a Younger to an Older. This takes places around age 16. For those active in the social field of the gang the opportunities, networks, and relationships mostly prevail creating a bias towards continuing to run with the gang, especially as one has invested so much time and energy in raising one’s reputation and status. Becoming an Older presents opportunities for greater access to economic capital. For many, this is a seamless transition occurring over time. As Olders, their street capital will rise and they get involved in higher yield activities, e.g. by possibly having Youngers running or shotting for them.
Other social factors however impinge upon their individual strategies around this time. In this social field it is not uncommon to have a child at age 15/16. Some use this experience to adjust their strategies or develop a part-time affiliation as others will not care and continue as before.

Most gang-affiliated young people leave school at 16 and may move on to college often retaining full gang affiliation. Whereas school provided a choice of one or two 'resident' gangs, colleges may offer several. To reduce their risk of victimisation, young people may maintain affiliation with their original gang brand or dominant local gang. In college this may also change as a different gang may be dominant. Often gang-affiliated young people will not go to college alone but go with peers further supporting gang cohesion and continuation. After two years college finishes and further choices are made. For many however the transition from Younger to Older is normative, expected and easy. The second transition from Older to Elder presents greater challenges.

Second tier transition

Most of those involved as Youngers do not move onto the over 21 stage. Individual strategies become foregrounded as other options are presented, and taken, which may not include the gang. Those who remain fully affiliated do not do so overnight or simply because of age: a great deal of work is required. Only two or three individuals will move up to this level, or only one in 10 Youngers.

A Younger who was extensively engaged in street robbery by age 15/16 and who remains in the gang will have moved on to bigger things by age 19/20, e.g. robbery of cash in Transit vans, Turf Accountants or small businesses.

Many Youngers and Olders have already entered the criminal justice system by age 18, receiving multiple low tariff sentences or NFAs. Others have spent time in Youth Offender Institutes (YOIs) where they have met peers, expanding their networks, before returning to the gang. As courts take a more serious view of Olders offending, heavier sentences are allocated. Long offending histories and higher yield criminal activities direct many to adult prison. Here they meet a range of people, many with serious criminal backgrounds and high tariff sentences. For some, this presents a dilemma re their future gang involvement. They may decide to leave the gang, gain employment and have stability in their life, whilst others will retain and increase their criminal associations and stay on as an Elder. Those seeking to leave
often have to move out of the area and sever connections to the Network: a decision usually occurring as a continual process over time.

From age 14 – 21 the majority of active gang members have either been stabbed, had a baby or gone to prison: Shanked, Shelved or Shackled. Being stabbed or having a baby is often a ‘wake-up call’ leading some to ‘come off Road’, (Decker and Lauritsen 2002:66). Vigil noted the mostly negative effects of constant violence accelerates this ‘maturing out’ process, (Vigil 1988). For those going to prison, the decision to continue depends upon the mentality you entered with. Increased respect is awarded for ‘doing bird’ and connections made in prison can facilitate your return to the gang. In this way the ‘hardcore’ element is often retained within the gang. Others may now lessen or loosen their affiliations to focus on girlfriends or the music business. Others may just be a spent force after several years ‘On Road’. It may be possible to re-negotiate their roles, firstly into part-time affiliates, then occasional affiliates. Finally they will cease to run with the gang but remain linked to the Network through family associations. Leaving the gang altogether will require significant changes to your network.

For those still involved in selling drugs at the age of 21, business is now more serious. As Olders some have achieved extra shotting through clever use of Youngers to expand their patch. Others may have failed to make their targets and been dropped from the business. The ‘postcode beef’ is now no longer an issue. To maintain business at higher yields it is necessary to hit other postcodes to make it big. Thus it makes sense for Elders to be able to move across boundaries, keep a lower profile and not get involved in postcode beefs. Despite the enduring postcode beef between Peckham and Brixton, Elders in the Advanced Tier will regularly move drugs across both locations. Interestingly a few Peckham Elders live with Elders from Brixton. Thus connections and a strong Network may also assist in elevation to an Elder.

It is possible to reach the Advanced Tier by age 25/26. All gangs in SW9 have someone in this position, with extensive Network contacts, acting as overseer of activities. They also adapt gang rules creating variations to the Repertoire to boost cash flow. This role is covert, often conducted via telephone calls and oriented towards building business partnerships to raise economic capital. Such a role may require particularised characteristics.

As with leadership qualities (at any tier of the gang), achieving the distinction of being an Elder depends upon personal qualities and characteristics, e.g. ruthlessness or ability to direct and motivate. It will also depend upon business ability and hard work alongside a determination to follow one’s own individual strategy or agency:

‘I could tell you which of these Youngers will make it to an Elder - very few. (African Caribbean Female Independent Operator)
Auditioning and Testing

A key aspect of permitting members to transition or to acquire street capital is undertaken by Older and elders in the form of auditioning and testing. This mechanism is employed by way of a Conservation Strategy by those in positions of field seniority and also as a way of maintaining social order. There are many instances where Olders have set up the Younger ones to get involved in violence to test them or to exert pressure on them. This further helps to test the workings of the social field. Initially testing by Olders is centered on developing particularised trust, (Field 2008:96) loyalty, capacity to advance or emotional intelligence.

'Reputation? It goes back to when it's tested. So, it's either tested like, say, in a fight or tested by going to court and winning and tested by the fact that you keep schtumm. So if you can hold on to those three, the word will spread. It won’t take long for the word to spread'. (African Caribbean Male Elder)

These same criteria were recognised by W.F Whyte in his seminal study of Italian corner boys in Street Corner Society (1943:107). Vigil reports that engaging in violent and destructive behaviour generates respect which ultimately gives ‘recognition as a dependable gang member with huevos (balls), (Vigil 2010: 160)

Eventually, through testing, the level of work increases and becomes more important, ‘cause it’s not about the crime, it’s about how you manage under pressure. So they want to see me under pressure’. Or they are given work and asked, ‘Can you handle that? Deliver this parcel for me!’

‘You are really being tested by these Elders to make sure you can step up to the mark. It’s not about how you do it, it’s you’ve got to get away with it’. (African Caribbean Male Elder)

This testing process takes places across all tiers of the gang and illustrates both the structural functionalism of the gang. At the Elementary tier young people engage in the Expressive Repertoire. The manifest function (Parsons 1937) of the Repertoire components employed, (fighting, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour) are fun, drama and excitement. However the latent function is that such actions generate opportunities for Youngers to compete in the social arena, building Street Capital. This competition is both observed and tested internally, within this tier, by peers. It is also observed and tested externally, by the tier above. Here Olders test Youngers to establish their competence in the social field, assessing skills, loyalty, trust and emerging characteristics.
Having proven their ability to act within the social field of the gang, and established reputation and Street Capital, Youngers now increasingly move into the Instrumental Repertoire. Here the manifest function is to generate economic capital. Senior Olders and Elders will now observe and test members on their ability to maintain their reputation and Street Capital against increased challenges whilst assessing skill and capacity to operate effectively in the business world chasing money.

Although these two stages may merge for some participants the overall latent function is to audition members for later higher level involvement at the Advanced tier. Both the Expressive and Instrumental Repertoires representing two stages of the auditioning process. The Sanction Repertoire represents a form of social control allowing participants to familiarise themselves with the rules and boundaries of the social norms. This concept has been aired before in the 1920s by Zorbaugh (1929) and more recently by Hagedorn (2008). The drug business is by no means the only example. A member aged 21 who remains affiliated has established Street Capital, a pedigree, an extensive Network, knowledge of Life On the Road, a specialism from the Repertoire, a Brand Signature. Such a process suggests winners and losers over time: inducements and mentoring for some as long-term investments and collateral damage for others as they fall at the hurdles.

**Leading and mentoring**

The role of the leader is key in determining advancement within the social field and also in maintaining order. Leadership within the social field of the gang takes a number of different forms at each tier of the gang. At the Elementary tier leadership often comes through popularity or craft. Others however rise to the top through a capacity for violence or fearlessness.

Leaders seldom identify themselves as such, and tiers often talk as a unit, however they will be recognised as the leading members. Advertising this fact on Facebook will only bring police attention. Some members shy from admitting leadership and are careful not to inadvertently create evidence. They often cite useful discussions with their solicitors following arrest as the source of this helpful advice.

By the Mature tier leaders are respected, a Named Brand, well connected and making money. By this time they may be approached or nominated to undertake serious high value crime, e.g. armed commercial robberies.

Olders may mentor Youngers in street socialisation, social norms, the Network, the Repertoire. This position strengthens trust whilst securing the Older, building his Street Capital as the Younger now actively markets his reputation for him. For the Younger, this is often the only adult who has ever taken an active interest in their life, offering guidance, direction, support, discipline, leadership and parental advice. This advice is meaningful and useful.
Elders demonstrate ability to judge situations and guide actions and responses. He uses chances to expand his Network and link into families offering support/protection. As Whyte noted, ‘His capacity for social movement is greater’, (Whyte, 1943:259-260) By designating an individual or a family as ‘my people’ a protective arm will be extended. This in return gives him rights of invitations to dinner and family reunions, meeting the family and stash items.

Adaptability

The leader is also central to ensuring social order is also maintained by adaptability and reflexiveness within the social field, e.g. switching mobile phones or using discardable Pay as You Go phones and changing SIM cards regularly. One Older questioned by police on his estate was able to quote in detail aspects of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE 1983). He also claimed to teach his Youngers PACE so that they know the Law and their rights. Alongside structural and functional organisation many police and professionals alike identified examples of strategising which they identified a signifiers of intelligence, organisation and skill. The police reported that it is a ‘very dynamic situation with these boys’.

ABM gang orchestrate their movements to tie up police resources in one part of the estate to distract from gang activity elsewhere on the estate, i.e. Youngers employ the Expressive Repertoire, (ASB) which draws in uniformed police resources. Older then shift drugs, cash or weapons. This suggests strong links between Older and Youngers. Continual ASB ensures residents are worn out and demoralised, permitting constant flows of people to and from estates so drug buyers blend in. Following a murder or shooting police flood an area with resources. The gang responds by laying low for several days. If the police alter their policing strategy, the gang alters theirs.

Harmonising and dialogue

It should be recognised that not everything that occurs in the neighbourhood happens because of the strategies or desires of the gang. In addition, different individual strategies are in motion at the same time as gang strategies. Both these facts make the neighbourhood environment more chaotic.

Elders may therefore seek to maintaining social order in the field through harmonising members personal strategies with that of the gang, e.g. in a Mature tier gang. This permits things to settle down for the Elders. An example of this is when an individual strategises to move from the family home to rented accommodation. This individual strategy might alter as the member has to raise funds for rent or college. This need to access money may harmonise with the gangs desire to sell drugs. Thus he is able to harmonise his individual strategy with that of the gang and offer his services.

The efficacy of an employed strategy is contingent upon:
Strategies are thus often employed in a constant state of flux. This has the potential to weaken social order and possibly create chaos.

To address this potential for their strategies to go awry, the gang need to continually:

- re-evaluate all current activity via constant (informal) meetings
- monitor their street capital and brand profile – how big is their name? Is there a buzz? Is their street capital rising or falling?
- build durability of the gang ensuring the gang brand remains attractive, fresh and alluring to new recruits. To offer opportunities for distinction. A strong gang history and connection to local history and culture helps as does Brand recognition, strong leadership, opportunities for individual strategies, ability to change direction, flexibility, adaptability.
- reconsider alliances, gang/ individual strategies by grading and assessing incoming information. This process may lead to re-alignment of alliances with an individual or group of gang
- maintain close links into the Network and maintain constant communication
- update their knowledge banks with new information re members, incidents, other gangs, events

This requires constant planning, strategising and dialogue through regular meetings. As one police officer put it, ‘A lot of dynamic movements here on a daily basis’.

**Functional organisation (Roles)**

At any time within a gang a member may choose to specialise in a Repertoire strategy that matches his skills or opportunities. On occasion Olders or Elders either designate or nominate a member to undertake a task. Table 18 illustrates how functional roles can be allocated within a gang. Task separation or role differentiation suggests a greater degree of gang organisation.

In Elementary tiers, Youngers may self select strategies to maximise financial returns or engage in fun and anti-social behaviour. He may align or group with others already employing such
strategies, street robbery, working in pairs or small groups. This represents a self-selected functional group.

Table 18 Functional roles within a Gang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Functional group</th>
<th>Gang Tier</th>
<th>Activity example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designated</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Younger chosen/told by Peers/Older/Elder to do a task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self selected</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Younger chooses to employ robbery as a strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated</td>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>Older chooses to employ robbery as a strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Older chosen by Elder or other Olders to join them in a robbing group</td>
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</table>

As members move into the Mature tier of the gang they increasingly employ the Instrumental Repertoire. They may then self select a strategy to match their skill, network or present opportunities or they may specialise in one component, e.g. Robbing. They may employ this strategy acting alone, or join others and develop into pods or groups specialising in robbing, burglary, drugs, handling, etc, grouping together to make money as one. Such groups may run for several months or until a new strategy is employed. Successful pods or groups attract more members. Others change pod if they do not like what they are doing or are unsuccessful.

Other roles may be ‘designated’ where a Younger is directed by an Older or Elder to undertake a strategy from the Repertoire. This designation allows for Olders or Elders to ‘test’ performance, skill, ability and loyalty. Designated tasks may also involve allocation based on skill or personal characteristics, e.g. Wildness, emotional detachment. One SW9 reputedly retain a Younger as a Designated Killer. Though murder may not be the outcome at each event, he will be used for serious violence, including murder. When in the street this young person is chaperoned by Olders. Youngers maximise their street capital moving beyond designation to self selection functional roles.

Olders in a Mature or Advanced tier gang are nominated for joining a specific group. Names are put forward and selected based on reputation, skill and proven ability. Offers can be declined. Allocation of roles may be medium term or short term. Ability to functionally differentiate roles depends upon gang numbers and the extent of gang repertoires. The Muslim Boys (Mature tier) often chose key players for key tasks. Gangs may also have regular meetings and de-briefs after an event as to why a strategy failed, e.g. why a getaway was not quicker or why a car was parked in the wrong place.
The Sanctions Repertoire

Alongside the Expressive and the Instrumental Repertoires, sits the Sanctions Repertoire. This acts as the key mechanism by which those in the social field of the gang reinforce social norms and maintain social order within the social field of the gang.

The range of sanctions available in the Sanctions Repertoire operate as a component of social capital and act as a formal or informal mechanism to maintain social norms and social order, (Luzetti as cited in Halpern, 2005) Whilst some are indirect and subtle, in this social field there is a latitude for sanctions to be both overt and severe. More so than in other social fields where reputation and street capital are less important, sanctions also operate as a mechanism for making minor adjustments to interpersonal relationships. This includes expressing and reasserting power dynamics and rank.

In the social field of the gang, sanctions are oriented towards building trust and addressing issues of social capital and street capital. Employing a component of the Sanctions Repertoire will affect either a rise or a fall in a person’s stock of street capital, e.g. praise for job well done from an Elder to a Younger, or, a severe beating for getting it wrong. As such it is the accepted social norm for maintaining social order within the social field.

Affirmative sanctions

As Halpern (2005) notes, sanctions can include positive or affirmative strategies such as praise. In the social field of the gang, gifts, rewards and praise are frequently a strategy to bind the recipient to the giver:

Favours and gifting

These positive sanctions are used within the social field to build trust and demonstrate reciprocity (Putnam 2000: 20-21: 134-148). They bond or link members more closely or provide bonds to those outside the social field, e.g. family or the wider network. Used for reward, they are granted privately or publicly. Gang members who are building street capital must build trust and develop mutual obligations. Favours can be specific (an action undertaken for a specified action in return) or generalised (I do this for you without expecting a return, as I’m confident you will do something for me down the line) (Putnam 2000: 20-21). In this social field specific favours are more common; those appearing ‘generalised’ are often ‘called in’.
Negative sanctions

The range of negative sanctions is wider than the affirmative range, which in the social field of the gang appear limited. Negative sanctions range from rumour, though bullying and intimidation to abduction, rape and murder.

Fear of sanction (retribution)

The fear of sanction (retribution) is a powerful controlling influence in this social field and is thus a separate component of the Sanctions Repertoire. Fear is situational and difficult to generalise, however it sits mostly with Youngers, new arrivals and those solitary entrants with no older siblings or family in the gang.

Many gang members have little evident or reputed fear of sanctions. Research indicates most gang members believed that values relating to fear of sanction have recently changed and significantly evaporated. It is more likely that such fears are deeply hidden and not openly expressed lest this invite humiliation. The much lauded ‘Badman’ image holds no place for displaying a fear of sanctions. Members recognise that in this social field, Street sanctions are swift, sudden and very violent and as a member you must ‘dish it out and take it’.

The reputational pressures within the social field dictate that it is important not to show fear. Some members have a low recognition of potential or future consequences and cannot foresee future consequences. Thus in an altercation they may challenge an opponent to bring their back-up. ‘Bring your Bruva, I ain’t feared’. Such a challenge may later be regretted.

Fear of sanction aligns strongly with bullying and expectations of violence. For those newly affiliated such expectations are high. Youngers fully expect sanctions from both peers and Olders unless they demonstrate their role in employing the Expressive Repertoire, e.g. fights, theft and criminal damage. Failure to do so results in summary sanctions of physical violence and casual punishment. This is carried out in full public view of others. This fulfils the following objectives, demonstrating that:-

- Olders largely employ sanctions
- that sanctions reinforce both social norms and social order in the field
- anyone with a diminished reputation can regain street capital through swiftly imposed sanctions
- public admonishment increases victim’s humiliation and diminishes their street capital. (He will later strategise to regain his street capital).
Clearly some young people choose not to join a gang. Some fear the sanction of the gang, others the sanctions of their current social field, i.e. community and family, police. Others who have not yet joined a gang may fear the sanction of exclusion and rejection. Fear of gang imposed sanctions may prevent a young person from ceasing their involvement in an illegal activity, e.g. Lambeth police recently stopped some gang members during which time one unknown associate begged to be arrested. It transpired he’d been coerced to commit robberies and was reluctant to get involved.

Other members hide their fear of sanctions by involving others to act as their proxy, e.g. using Youngers to deliver drugs to an area where he expects to be attacked. If they refuse to do so, they themselves will be attacked. Thus the fear of sanction is transmitted to others whilst being reduced for the Older.

A gang member may well expect retribution but not necessarily fear it, e.g. if a gang undertook an incursion and attacked a rival gang there may be retribution from the rival gang. Preparations will be made to protect members through ‘grouping up’, increased visual presence or use of weapons.

Olders/Elders reported values have changed with many people claiming to no longer fear retribution. As one Older put it, ‘They have no fear, they carry no fear’. Youngers now see the fear element as part of ‘the Game’, a natural way that life plays out and so they retain a bleak outlook on life in general. Ten years ago a stolen chain might be returned at the request of an Elder. Nowadays this will not happen. Basic principles within the social field remain the same however the life and death scenarios now facing young people have engendered a re-focusing of parameters. Now there is no guarantee of anyone carrying out the Elders wishes, and threats of intervention are very much reduced.

'It’s not like that anymore. It doesn’t work like that no more. You’ve got to have that Rep, know what I mean. You’ve gotta have a Rep. So people would say oh, he used to be the hardest man in town and he still runs things neatly give it back to him. That’s the only fear of retribution, otherwise they will have no fear’. (African Caribbean Professional ex Elder).

Religion

A more subtle component of the Sanctions Repertoire is the use of faith, belief or religion to control, sanction or influence their behaviour. Invoking an interpretation of a faith is a powerful incentive for a young person, attached to that belief, to act in particular way.
Religion and faith belief can be used as affirmative enticements, e.g. presenting the gang as Islamic and thus the preferred choice for believers. From 2001 onwards Lambeth police reported gang members were told by Olders to attend the mosque and contribute monetarily, e.g. by 2005 there were increasing reports of gang members being ‘obliged’ to join the Muslim gang under threat of physical attack. Media stories appeared about the Muslim Boys. The book Street Boys (Pritchard 2008) recounts this process, claiming the term a police invention. Nevertheless during this time ‘the vast majority of PDC had adopted Islam as their religion’ (Pritchard 2008:232) and the Muslim Boys (allegedly an off-shoot of the PDC) received national notoriety. The original Muslim Boy members are now known to be operating within gangs under different names. From 2003 – 2009 the issue of young black African Caribbean men converting to Islam was very popular. Local anecdote suggests this process of conversion started in Brixton prison. It is thought that gang member’s conversions to Islam peaked about 2006/7 and some young people now report such moves are openly mocked.

There is no evidence to suggest religious views are in any way a cause of gang violence. The majority of gang members are Christians and it is not uncommon for them to attend church on Sunday with their families. A small minority are fundamentalist evangelicals.

Youth workers report some young people showing an interest in Voodoo (or West African Vodun) which already has an established presence in some African churches in south London. However young people are very secretive about such aspects and no research exists. Some refer to gang members connected to priests with the power of ‘collecting souls’. Myths about this circulate amongst impressionable young people. Some reference Santeria, (a belief system which merges Yoruba religion with Roman Catholicism and native beliefs, popular in Cuba). Knowledge of voodoo is used to enhance a young person’s reputation. Recently one African Caribbean young person enhanced his reputation for being ‘crazy’ or ‘loco’ through his knowledge of Black Magic. He is also known to be extremely violent. In a separate example one young person was recently stabbed nine times attributing his fast recovery to witchcraft.

Rumour

A common sanction within the Sanctions Repertoire is rumour or gossip. In most social fields this acts as a mild sanction aimed as questioning someone’s competence, sincerity, veracity, loyalty, commitment or ability. In the social field of the gang, it is a strategic action aimed at raising one’s own Street Capital and diminishing that of a rival.

‘Rumours and gossip are central to the way things work now. They play out on mobile phones, and social networking sites. A large percentage of communication at street level concerns rumour and gossip’. (West African Male Professional)
In the social field of the gang this brings analogies with a Premier league football team—rumours abound as to who is in and who is out, problems with the coach or fitness, who is not on their game and who has been dropped and who is transferring.

The Significance and value of information

In this social field, hourly informational updates have centrality in the lives of young people. It has also brought an imperative to obtain information and to get involved—if only by forwarding the information on to others. This designates you are a Network Playa. Moreover, young people utilise information to gauge their own safety and those of family and friends; to ascertain the proximity of incidents to their lives; to assess risks and plan future group, gang or individual strategies. It is important to be in the loop and not left out. Some young people can send or receive 300 texts a day or more. It is possible to find out 30 seconds later what someone has said about you. Many struggle to assess this information overload:

‘So many things have been put into your head you can’t remember it all. So your head is running marathons!’ (West African Female Older)

Rumours and gossip are transmitted from a huge number of sources. While some have a vested interest in the excitement of news and seek to embellish the information, ‘You are not going to tell anyone a rubbish story—you want it to be exciting’, others use rumour and gossip to strategise building Street Capital. As seen below in Table 16 several different variables determine how this can be done.

Information trails are also potentially dangerous. In an incident in 2010 one Younger had his phone stolen. The phone retained a conversation with another Younger from Peckham in which he is being pressured into setting up another member, which he agrees to do. This conversation then went round the Network ‘like wildfire’. Although this was extremely dangerous for him, he was protected by his reputation for being crazy. Although rumour/gossip are pernicious in all communities, in the social field of the gang it can be particularly dangerous. This fact is amplified by the advent of SNSs - here, images and conversations can be recorded and played again in perpetuity. Visual images are deemed authentic but are seldom contextualised. They become highly prized as credible and verifiable. The content, image or rumour is spread across the network immediately, increasing emotional proximity to the event and thus its ‘realness’, (see Table 19 below). Rumour and gossip are not flagged in these transmissions. Communications are purported to be accurate and thus important. Young people, knowing the possibilities of the social field, and those involved, often believe them. Veracity and credibility of communicators is assessed daily. Young people use this information to assess risks - specifically, a threat is deemed real.
### Table 19  Variables used in strategising using rumour and gossip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hype &amp; exaggeration</td>
<td>Many young people involved enjoy the hype and knowledge that someone is talking about them. It validates them as a player.</td>
<td>‘Something can be very minor, like something really stupid. But it gathers momentum and gets exaggerated, ‘someone got stabbed!’ etc, - but really it was just a scratch’. (Professional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach</td>
<td>In networks with a high degree of ‘closure’ everybody knows everybody. Mention any name in the community or beyond and there is invariably someone networked to them. This can be claustrophobic and difficult to escape from.</td>
<td>The social field also extends into prison. Those connected to the gang or the network are contacted early if something happens and then contribute to the texting, e.g. senior elders giving directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distortion and extension</td>
<td>Malicious gossip is deliberately reported to the authorities. Distortion and extenuation contributes to tensions between gangs. Once this occurs within a thread of information, truth becomes elusive. Accurate or truthful accounts are then often discounted as fake. There are only a few actors with sufficient seniority to challenge such accounts.</td>
<td>Information is often passed on 2nd, 3rd, 4th hand, getting more distorted, glamorised and exaggerated. Potential conflict is hyped up and sensationalised. Thus people arm themselves believing they will be met with heavy weaponry. Street names, not real names, are used, e.g. ‘Sneaky stabbed someone or Deaky has been stabbed or Man F has got a weapon’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed and immediacy</td>
<td>Information is transmitted in seconds, circulating the whole network within hours. This allows a high emotional content to be transmitted with no room for reflection. Recipients feel ‘closer’ to incidents unfolding now than to past incidents. The immediacy of the transmitted information demands a high emotional response that is often knee-jerk, ill-thought through and violent.</td>
<td>Ubiquitous mobile phones and blackberries ensure a ready market for transmitting and receiving information. Broadcasting ability is a high status factor of street capital. Second rate telephony is ridiculed and mocked, compelling individuals to upgrade handsets, service providers and rates. SNSs are used and these uploads can be intercepted on mobile phones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Elders need to know what information is circulating. The route by which information is fed to him helps determine veracity and importance.</td>
<td>Upon hearing rumour and gossip individuals decide whether or not to add/get involved or stand back. Rumour content and authors determine credibility. High ranking Elders hear everything, though not all is deemed credible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are several objectives which might be achieved by a member strategising using rumour/gossip. In the social field of the gang, habitus allows actors to employ actions/behaviours they believe will serve to distinguish them from peers and bring advancement. Actors strategise to use rumour/gossip to influence views/opinions about others then diminish their street capital. Use of rumour is thus largely negative rather than affirmative. Higher ranked members carry more credibility and communications from them carry more weight, providing compelling influence or a semblance of truth. Thus as a story unfolds members rush to influence them.

Influence is then directed towards specific desired outcomes by getting others to act in a particular way. Action is guaranteed upon receipt of information, even if the strategy for action is to do nothing. Alternatively it may instigate a confrontation or a violent incident.

'(Rumour/gossip) Yes, it’s very influential. It can do a lot for you or a lot against you. And you need it. You need it. Actually, the more the better, ‘cos the more rumours about you, the more gossip, it’s easier for your name to spread. So less chance that you’re gonna get fronted up. But also, you have [to] watch what it is. So, for example, if it’s a negative rumour, someone said they robbed you then you gotta have a quick reaction on that as soon as you can’. (African Caribbean Male Younger).

Rumour may be strategically used to induce fatality, i.e. claiming someone is an Informer. An Elder noted 20 years ago a member might have released a copy of a police statement to demonstrate veracity but now doubts such statements would be given any weight today as an Informer could easily access such documents. These statements are now discredited and even naming a person in a statement would become ‘credible’ gossip.

Strategising by false rumour may establish a premise that allows challenge to a rival, i.e. instigate a fight. This device is also used on SNSs towards other gangs.

Gossip and rumour can act as verbal advertising; an affirmative sanction for marketing and publicising themselves or their gang. Individuals circulate rumour to build their own reputations, or Brand Names, or Street Capital. As one professional noted,

'I keep thinking of the analogy of a football team and football, you get your rumours, your gossips all the time that will your enhance your teams reputation, who’s in, who’s out, problems with the coach, who is not on his game, etc’. (White Male Police Officer)
Others use rumour to enhance reputations for violence via a ‘Badman’ version. As one African Caribbean Male Older noted: ‘There’s so many fake people out there. He’ll tell his badman version of events. It’ll make you be approved’.

Gangs can also act as a group to ensure the viral assassination of rival individuals or gangs using gossip/rumour. This provides a sense of control over future movements of rivals as reactions are planned for. One recent incident, arising from a web-posting that a male gang member had been stabbed and killed, generated a large violent incident between two rival gangs, whilst the named individual was well and at home. A similar incident a few years ago in Birmingham triggered riots in Handsworth. If tension exists, gossip or rumour can amplify and overheat events leading to almost spontaneous retaliation.

‘Negative rumours where someone said that you were robbed will have to be dealt with promptly. This is to address those above or below me who are looking for weakness’. (African Caribbean Male Younger)

The immediate transmission of information, including rumour and gossip, can lead to ‘viral contagion’, i.e. where news is networked quickly and uncontrollably causing minor arguments to escalate into huge events. In an incident in 2001, a rumoured fight between two individuals on Streatham Common was widely transmitted, leading to upwards of 300 young people turning up as spectators. Girls can be central to the ‘texting storm’.

All young people in the social field are active participants in transmitting information and in pursuing actions from the Sanction Repertoire. They are all networked and as part of this network they are producers and consumers as well as amplifiers. Girls and young women play a central role in transmitting information of all kinds including rumour and gossip, (see Chapter 5). Those who seek to curry favour with peers for personal advancement may unwittingly offer up information without understanding the ramifications of this action. Young children (and girls) who may have few other options to build street capital, can sometimes be unwittingly pulled into acting as information traders and transmitters as they may be less familiar with the boundaries of the social field. Those who act outside the norms of the social field will themselves suffer another sanction, i.e. ‘slapped up’. In describing how girls react to rumour and gossip one female Younger noted, ‘I think they see it as everyday life now’.

**Bullying and Intimidation**

Social order is also maintained by bullying and intimidation. These strategies are employed at all times and at all tiers and are frequently used to supplement all Repertoires. They are used as a strategy to advance/diminish street capital and are employed by the protagonist to
demonstrate superior status/rank in the social field. It may be a short-term strategy to recoup diminished street capital and recover ‘lost face’. It may be based on structural ranking, e.g. Olders bullying Youngers. It may be an easy option for a peer to build reputation, e.g. by bullying another gang member; or it may be a gang strategy whereby the gang intimidate local residents in order to build their gang brand. It may be employed towards those outside the social field of the gang, e.g. local shopkeepers. It may be a long-term strategy played out over several months or even years. It may be used to exert control and pressure over subordinates and pull individuals into line.

Under the Sanctions Repertoire, bullying and intimidation becomes a strategy of rebuke and punishment. This is often where the protagonist perceives an infringement of social norms which diminish reputations, expectations or trust. This can be a mild, almost imperceptible slight or a series of wayward misdemeanours which anticipates a diminution of personal or gang street capital. To maintain social order such actions must be checked and reversed by employing a sanction. In the Sanctions Repertoire, bullying and intimidation are placed at the milder end of the spectrum. If this strategy continues overtime it becomes harassment and the impact can be serious. Beyond short/long-term trauma, this strategy will constantly strip victims of remaining Street Capital creating a dangerous downward trajectory (Falling) leading to further victimisation at random by others.

Finally, this strategy is used so frequently because it is uniquely effective in this social field. It works, and all members of the social field know it works. It can be spontaneous or planned. It can be conjoined to any other component of the Repertoire and can be a pre-cursor of worse to come. It is a reminder, a cue, a signal and a signifier. It is determined by the habitus and bounded by the Code of the Street, tapping into the key social norms of the social field, e.g. threats, physical violence, silence, street justice, challenge and retort. It allows for cruel and inventive testing of repertoire variables to an extent whereby the subjugation of the victim can become the ultimate objective long after the initial punishment is served or the lost street capital regained. The variables employed here alter over time and account for voguish behaviours, e.g. stabbing young people in the leg was favoured until the death of Damilola Taylor. Stabbing in the buttocks is now favoured. Olders may strategise this sanction by the proxy use of Youngers, e.g. getting boys on bikes to ride constantly past the home of a potential new recruit whilst mocking him; rushing doors and steaming inside to cause terror in a household was recently favoured. Sometimes variables end with the presentation of a request, ‘favour’ or gift/inducement which cannot be refused. This strategy is effective as it is not spatially or time bound. It can now also be undertaken virtually or outwith the boundaries of the social field.
What makes this strategy both effective and frightening is not just the inventiveness of protagonists, it is the knowledge that within this social field home invasion or violence to family members can occur with impunity. This reality is widely acknowledged.

This strategy is also employed for anyone witnessing/reporting crimes or attending court. Here in particular witnesses/informers can be easily identified. Court testimony will also reveal identities. At an Old Bailey trial in March 2011 a ‘cracked trial’ results when key witnesses failed to attend. This demonstrates how the social field of the gang remains the key consideration for those within it. Bullock and Tilley (2008) identified similar findings.

All in the social field recognise that bullying and intimidation is only a precursor to the predominant sanction of physical violence. Physical violence along with group violence are covered in chapter 4. Both are fully accepted elements of the Sanctions Repertoire.

Set ups / Honey Traps

A further tactic of corrective action as a sanction is the targeted set up. As voiced by many and articulated by one individual, ‘Revenge is sweet, it’s better than sex or money for some people’, (African Caribbean Male Younger). This involves planning a revenge attack or robbery against an individual. The ‘set up’ or ‘honey trap’ usually exploit a girl’s relationship with a male gang member, the target of the sanction. He is texted and invited to meet with her at a specified location. Upon arrival, or en route, he is ambushed by peers from his own gang or by rival gang members. Set ups may be small and involve only a fight or it may be much more dangerous and involve a stabbing or lead to murder. Such events are motivated by breakdown of relationships, shifting allegiances, revenge, forced pressure and bullying of girls, and by individuals or groups acting strategically to diminish someone’s street capital. Decisions to set someone up can be motivated by who an individual favours more and who they choose to get more involved with. One recent example in Croydon is the ‘honey-trap case’ involving 15 yr old Samantha Joseph luring her 17 yr old boyfriend to quiet street where he was beaten and stabbed to death by five rivals.

Set ups are known to place girls, (all girls not just those who act in this way) in a potentially dangerous situation, both at the time and over time. These activities are referred to regularly as a ‘huge problem’ by male gang members, agency workers and professionals alike. As girls talk to rivals in a dispute, then take sides, they place themselves in great danger. There are also reports of girls using the sanction of rape and sexual violence against each other, by way of setting each other up. Sanctions may include rape, sexual abuse and humiliation. This strategy permits the instigator to negate the rival’s Street Capital, possibly in perpetuity, whilst elevating her own ruthless reputation and achieving control and dominance over her rival.
Threats and violence to family

It is widely acknowledged that threats to family are only undertaken if the situation is very serious. However the knowledge that this scenario might take place is a powerful controlling mechanism for maintaining social order. Many gang members still believe matters should stay within the gang. However many respondents noted that this social norm was changing and this strategy was becoming more common place. Several respondents reported that the level of respect traditionally shown towards Mothers, fathers and grandmothers in the neighbourhood had declined significantly in the last five years. If used at all as a strategy, this component of the Sanctions Repertoire was used by Older. Increasingly however it is being used by Youngers acting out of frustration or to maximise their street capital. Whilst such tactics are apparently not unknown in the garrison communities of Kingston, Jamaica, it is interesting to note that Aldridge et al (2009) in their work in Manchester report parents interviewed commonly reported ‘stories of harassment, threats and actual violence’.

If the situation is deemed serious enough then parents or siblings will now be targeted. Any gang member employing this component of the Sanctions Repertoire seeks to send a powerful message to the subject of the sanction. It demonstrates ability to access and reach the family, illustrating power, knowledge and intent. This is recognised by the parent of the gang member along with the implicit message for them to take control and sort out the situation, e.g. pay the debt for example.

Targeting family members may also come as a form of challenge. This occurs when one member is actively seeking another and cannot locate him. Typically this is verbalised as,

“Come and find me Bruv. I can’t get you so I got her. But I’ll get you as well. I’ll get you but I can’t see you. But I saw your sister so I mashed her up.’ (African Caribbean Male Younger)

Male family members of the same age, e.g. brothers and cousins, are at most immediate risk, followed by female family members of the same age. Mothers remain targets of the last resort and Grandmothers are out of bounds. In the social field it is however the originating assailant who remains the key target, i.e. an assault on a gang member’s sister would bring retaliation on the assailant rather than the assailant’s sister, (at least in the first instance). It is often beneficial for the assailant to make himself available for retaliation and thus prevent any family involvement. The level of approach would relate to the incident, e.g. a perceived slight or issue of disrespect might only mean a vague threat to the family or grafittied walls. Failing to repay a loan/debt requires escalated action.

The second level of targeting is harassment and threats of violence to the family members, e.g. if the son is threatened for not initially joining up to the gang. The boy may then inform his mother and she then confronts the gang, only to be threatened with physical violence herself.

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For Youngers being pressed to join a gang, threats of violence may be made against the young person’s family. Young people believe such threats are real and gang history examples are cited for emphasis. Youngers know gang members know their domestic arrangements and are capable of executing threats. This is a powerful message which must be taken seriously. It also is very stressful for a young person. At this point a young person usually falls in line in order to prevent the threats from being realised. Threats may also be passed to a mother if their son is in jail. At other times gang members will appear in front of the family home, threatening: ‘when your son comes out he’s gonna get it’, was reported as common place by police.

The next level of escalation is assault or violence. It is possible for parents or siblings to be attacked violently. Recently the Code of the Street which deemed mothers ‘untouchable’ had changed and a new benchmark exists. This occurred following the fatal shooting of a young mother in front of her two year old daughter in north London. Elders believe such drastic moves would only be sanctioned at the top level in order to protect ‘Mr Big’ from informers. It is commonly assumed police are increasingly using informers and this has made the top ranks nervous. This new precedent which assumes family members as legitimate targets suggests a shift in the social norms of the social field. This is paralleled by another new social norm – that those seeking revenge will do whatever it takes.

Lastly if a family member intervenes in any ongoing dispute or incidents, e.g. following the stabbing of his son, this may leave the family member open to be personally targeted or even a longer family feud.

Abductions

The abduction of young people from the estate or from their homes by the gang is an alarming new element of the Sanctions Repertoire. Over the past three years this strategy has increased in its frequency and violence and is now a well established. Threats of abduction are commonplace and must be taken seriously. This represents a significant escalation in method and violence which some gangs will employ. For some in the social field it is a worrying new development redolent of techniques used in Somalia or by serious high-end gangsters.

As a component of the Sanctions Repertoire it represents an opportunity to reclaim lost reputation and street capital. Usually employed as a gang strategy, it requires planning. It is usually undertaken to address more serious issues related to economic capital, e.g. theft of drug money. Young people are held in the boot of cars or at an address until the sanction, usually money is provided. Alternatively house keys may be demanded. The gang then use the keys to search or ransack the relevant flat. If a debt is to be repaid, the gang requires the
family to deliver money before the person is released. On occasion, a young person may have had provide details of where his drug stash is located. These incidents are violent and frightening and reporting is low. This sanction is attractive to those seeking to extinguish the street capital of the victim. Abductions may be filmed and shown privately to other peers. Video may be bluetoothed to friends or family, or kept secretly for future shaming.

Use of Firearms

In the social field of the gang firearms increasingly play a wider role. This is because firearms are now used in all three Repertoires, a fact which contributes to the increased violence in the social field. Use of firearms is often evident on video films posted on SNSs. This high profile usage has led many to believe guns are more prolific and widely available. Their use by Youngers in the Expressive Repertoire is however largely confined to raising their street capital through marketing strategies.

Hallsworth and Silverstone (2009: 366;371) argue ‘Gun-use “on road” is much less instrumental and planned and far more erratic and situational’. They then suggest gun violence is indeed instrumental and central to drug retailing, which includes a ‘business logic’ to punish those stealing from you’. Neither position accurately describes how and why firearms are used in the social field. Bullock and Tilley (2002) found that ‘gang members carried firearms for different reasons that were partly symbolic and partly instrumental’. Marshall et all (2005) noted that ‘gang members committed more crime than non-gang members, (and) are more likely to deal drugs, (and) carry weapons’.

The traditional use of firearms has been for instrumental offending where Olders use weapons to protect and secure business transactions and obtain economic capital, i.e. protecting drugs deals and stashes, conducting robberies, etc.

All respondents reported a dramatic increase in the use of weapons by Youngers. Presently in SW9, firearms are actively sought and used by all tiers of the gang across all Repertoires. In 2005 Sanders (2005) noted rising levels of violence following a Lambeth Gun Amnesty in 1997, (none of his sample of 31 young people had used a gun or had knowledge of anyone who had one). This dramatic change in local circumstances remains unexplained by Hallsworth and Silverstone. Meanwhile, Hallsworth and Duffy (2010:11) argue that while access to reactivated guns is possible, ‘it is unlikely that gang members will know how to use these nor have knowledge of their origin’. On the contrary, I found a high degree of such knowledge.
Raising a firearm

Guns are available to Youngers but availability is regulated by Olders. Olders or Elders have guns. All members make it their business to know someone who owns or can access one. Such information is available via Olders. If trust exists between the requester and the holder then it might be possible to obtain it. Members have to higher ranking to own a gun and well connected to get one.

A member’s main aim is not to be caught in possession of the firearm. To avoid this guns are passed around or ‘pooled’ as a group resource. Pooled guns are harder to trace and may be used multiple times. Youngers may approach an Older with the request, ‘Can you hook me up with a gun for a few days?’

As Youngers move into the Instrumental Repertoire, they are instructed by Olders to use a knife. If trust improves, overtime they are given a gun that may not work. Only when trust is established are they given a firearm. At this point an Older may invite the person out on a job. Those operating as individual agents either have their own firearm or they may refuse to carry one to avoid being targeted by police and rivals.

Raising a gun is not done on a whim, it is more serious. Challenge is offered to the requester as to whether this issue might be more easily resolved via a stabbing. In the Sanctions Repertoire firearms are only used for something worthy of personal attention. This usually means a serious depletion of personal Rep or street capital where strategising includes serious violence. An Elder/Older authorises the release of a gun but requires its return (with the ammo) post event.

Firearms are controlled by Elders (though this may be delegated to Olders). Members who ‘loose’ a firearm will be chased down and must answer to the gang. Using a firearm without authorisation results in consequences. Getting a gun is not as easy as having it. A gang may have 20 core members but only four or five are trusted to use a gun. Gang members advise that accessing a gun requires planning, effort and contacts. However this sober account of restricted access discounts the impact of high emotions circulating within the social field. In 2010, following an assault on a gang member, several Olders from Stockwell Park Estate loaded a car with Mac 10 firearms and cruised the estate to locate the assailants. Police tracked the car and give chase during which the guns were dumped on the estate.

Youngers may be intimidated by Olders into holding firearms at gun point. The gun is produced and held to the young person’s head. They have now seen the gun and seen the person holding the gun. Demands for silence are thus emphasised. The threat posed includes...
returning with the gun to kill the individual should they grass or fail to comply. This threat is now real and evident. The threat of death is only negated by the young person agreeing to hide the gun. Once they do, they have given a promise they cannot break and this binds them to the favour. At this point they often feel as if they will die if they don’t take the gun and agree to the terms put to them, even though they know they are breaking the law. Sometimes guns are dismantled or the barrels are emptied.

**Holding, Hiding and Hits**

Girls and younger men unknown to the police will hold the firearms for the gang. If they have no previous convictions, they are considered to be a ‘clean skin’, unknown to the ‘Feds’. A recent police operation in 2009 on known gang members homes found none had any drugs, guns or ammunition in the house. Following a shooting incident soon after, two young gang associates were found to have guns hidden in their homes. They claimed to have been forced by the gang to hold them. Younger and new members can be threatened with violence if they refuse to hold or hide weapons, ammunition or drugs. Such items don’t sit for any amount of time with the gang members.

Others hold firearms to accrue benefits of trust, respect, money or security offered by the gang. For some Youngers, holding firearms is a thrill that brings them further into the gang. Some Tinnies (aged 10-13) are offered inducements to hold or hide a weapon for the gang for very limited time period. Holding a weapon brings the threat of police activity alongside gang requests to provide the weapon. It becomes ‘assumed ownership’. Losing the weapon incurs a physical beating.

Gangs assume they tracked by the police including interception of phone texts. To risk manage this, they use girl’s names for guns, e.g. ‘who’s looking after Tenesha tonight? This refers to a Tec 9 or ‘Who is looking after Barbara tonight? This may be a Baretta. Coded referencing permits them to talk freely. Ammunition is often kept separately as it is difficult to obtain compared to firearms. In SW9 shotguns are currently the weapon of choice as ammunition is easier to purchase from farming shops. As firearms however, they are more difficult to conceal. Bird shot may also be used if the corrective sanction employed permits for a lower level of violence.

If a ‘hit’ is sanctioned by Elders then this is assigned to a trusted member. A specific individual will be assigned to this tasks and retained on call, e.g., ‘can you go and shoot so and so?’. They are not normally visible in the neighbourhood. Most gangs have their ‘Hitters’, - those with ready access to firearms. However they may not always do the hit. Firearms may be hidden with Youngers until he retrieves his gun.
Guns are mostly purchased by Olders for several hundred pounds, though some members club together to buy a firearm. If someone else then wants to borrow it for personal use (an unsanctioned Hit) they rent the gun for £200. Guns are returned post event, but if someone is shot members may be required to ditch it or sell it on. If it’s been used to threaten or to rob, it will be taken back if not discharged.

When social order is not maintained - Gang Fracturing

It is in the interest of Elders to maintain social order and the status quo. Doing so protects their investment and generates effective business conditions. However the social field remains a field of struggle for power and dominance. New entrants seeking to reach dominant positions within the field pursue Succession strategies, (Swartz 1997: 124). In addition, those who believe they have little to gain from dominant groups or those in seniority will employ Subversion strategies. Often an aspirant young leader breaks away to form a new gang which may or may not retain close links to the maternal gang. In this event the individual strategy of a forceful and dominant Younger has superseded the gang strategy.

‘Probably in a lot of gangs, there is always the main guy and under him, his best friend. There’s always someone who wants to be the main guy. So this person will try and be the main guy but the main guy has too much respect. So he will try and form his own gang. A lot of arguments happen, a lot of falling out so they will set up their own gang and do their own thing. There is a lot of falling out within the gang’. (West African Male Older)

Despite attempts to maintain social order, the social field is in a permanent state of flux. The pursuit of such ‘investment strategies’ (Swartz 1997:124) may lead to gang fracturing (Whyte 1943: 78-86). This is a notable feature of gangs in SW9. Gang fracturing has occurred in SW9 throughout 2005-2010. Fracturing occurs when a gang, usually at Elementary Tier breaks up into a collection of smaller newer gangs. Allegiances are tested as some members decide to create a new gang. This leaves others to continue a depleted version of the original gang, join in the newly created gang or merge with gangs already established. Three key factors appear to be involved: a Trigger incident, a transition, or challenge.

The established neighbourhood gang fractures if the leadership is not able to harmonise individual strategies to a common purpose. A Trigger incident is usually an action taken by or against a leader or leadership group. W. F. Whyte noted that ‘abrupt and drastic changes destroy the equilibrium’ of the gang, (Whyte 1943:263), e.g. the leadership is ‘decapitated’ by key leaders going into custody, a significant death or an action undertaken by the gang or
leadership which went wrong with dramatically unexpected outcomes, e.g. killing the wrong person. This then impacts significantly upon the established gang and there will be a ‘general realignment’, (Whyte 1943:41).

Following the event a challenge will arise. Again in his study of gangs in Italian Slums, W. F. Whyte noted that ‘the positions of members are interdependent, and one position cannot change without causing some adjustments in other position’, (Whyte 1943:263). This certainly relates to top ranking positions. This may be a short term response to the specifics of the event, e.g. blame or failing to agree how or why it happened. A challenge could be triggered by a Rising Star who now sees this as his moment to shine: a charismatic and ‘wild’ Younger who has the support of several Youngers.

A third possibility is this event opens up the floodgates to generalised group dissent. Youngers are increasingly looking to make fast economic returns and may view the Olders as unsuccessful or having failed to deliver. Sanctions of rumour, gossip and disrespect may be evident or ongoing. At this volatile Younger level it is easy for gangs to split. Internal disputes, disappointments and disagreements generate alternative strategies which some Youngers believe they can employ.

A new leader or group of leaders will emerge marketing a new brand, developing their own gang strategy with their own moniker, signature style and network. This ‘New Improved Brand’ often claims to be ‘Bigger, Bolder and Badder’ than before. Indeed they may well quickly strategise to prove this point thus contributing to a possible further increase in localised violence.

A Trigger event may also occur during periods of transition when a key individual or ‘head’ may create an event through a decision or by failing to make a decision. Either way others within the gang may seize the opportunity to create something over which they will have more control.

Following a fracture the new gang may negotiate with the original gang possibly now acting as their Youngers. There are possible benefits to both tiers here. This split allows Youngers to engage actively in the Expressive Repertoire building their own businesses and networks. At the Mature / Advanced tier Elders may now seek to alter direction for the established gang or to merge with another brand. If the police now focus on a newly established younger version of the gang then this permits the Mature/Advanced tier to recede into shadow. Alternatively, as has reputedly occurred with Roadside Gs, this Mature/Advanced tier consolidates their older aged members and specialises in higher end activity, which is less visible but more violent.

During such periods of change, uncertainty or transition, gangs may appear to go into abeyance or decline. This for some is temporary until a new direction and energy is found.
This may involve building a new critical mass and gang recruitment will assist this. New gangs or 'splinter groups' may appear and can quickly develop a reputation. If the gang is having 'downtime' it may successfully continue to promote itself via SNSs. Figure 3 below presents a schematic diagram of how one local SW9, Organised Crime, (The OC), has evolved and fractured over time, (see figure 4 for gang locations in SW9; Appendix 10 for summary profiles on active street gangs in SW9; for a timeline of known gangs in SW9 see Table 20).

Interestingly, fragmentation is a recognised downside to social capital’s solidarity benefits. Brass, Butterfield and Skaggs (1998) writing on social networks have observed that overly strong identification with a focal or sub group can split the broader grouping as subgroup members become over embedded in these relationships. In terms of gang dynamics, once such a sub-group has formed, loyalty is generated to this subgroup allowing for potential break away or fracturing.

**Fluidity**

Alongside fracturing and the creation of a new gang brand, there is also fluidity between gangs and for gang members. Fluidity occurs when gang members leave to pursue their strategies elsewhere, perhaps believing they can no longer advance in their current gang or prompted by a move to a new area of London. Some young people move around as a result of being 'snaked' or having sold out their friends. They may believe that their individual strategy is best progressed through new allegiances in a different gang. They may have been 'rollin on a job' on a couple of occasions and found they fit with the way their new peers employ the Gang Repertoire. The most common reason for changing gang is falling out over a personal 'beef'. Normally this occurs when one member disrespects another who then mitigates his risk of victimisation by moving to another gang.

Some gangs will share members on a regular basis. The Muslim Boys, OC and PDC were fluid even when they operated as separate groups. This suggests that members were loaned out and shared on a more affirmative basis. Fluidity give the appearance of disorganisation and this is often misread by casual observers of gangs. It is however in fact a logical pursuit of personal interest and represents a trackable investment strategy.
Fig 3  Example of Gang Evolution and Fracturing: The Organised Crime (OC)

Key
Affiliations at the time
Fracture leading to new group forming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>The 28s</th>
<th>Nastie Squad</th>
<th>Younger OC</th>
<th>Organised Crime</th>
<th>Tiny Nastie Squad</th>
<th>Tiny OC</th>
<th>GAS</th>
<th>South Man Syndicate</th>
<th>ABM</th>
<th>Peckham Boys</th>
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Figure 4  Approximate gang locations in SW9 (July 2011)

1. Wooly Hood
2. 031 Bloods known as O-tray One (ABS/G-street/Union Block)
3. Organised Criminals
4. All Bout Money (Hotspot/ SPE/DDC)
5. PDC (PIF/CFR/GAS)
6. CFR/GAS
7. Roadside Gs (YRS/TRC/C-Block)
8. Acre Lane Campaign
9. Murderzone
10. GAS
11. Brixton Hill Bangers (NPG/P10)

The attached map is reproduced with kind permission by www.londonstreetgangs.com.

The dominant neighbourhood gang is listed (followed in brackets by subordinate groups or alternative names). The map show all areas claimed by gangs and also all housing estates that are either part of larger gang territories. NB. These areas are approximations only and are intended to give the reader an indication of approximate localities and proximities of gangs.

Map Data (c) 2011 Tele Atlas. Downloaded 15th July 2011.
Table 20  Timeline of known Gangs in SW9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Known gangs</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985 - 1990</td>
<td>various Yardie gangs inc- Killerman Gold Posse; Young Raiders; The Untouchables; the Wackers; the Punishers; the 28s</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991 - 1995</td>
<td>The 28s; Kennington Posse</td>
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<td>1996 - 2000</td>
<td>PDC; New Park Gunnahs; Brixton Hill Bangers; Nastie Squad; South Man Syndicate</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001 - 2005</td>
<td>Organised Criminals; PDC; Firehouse Posse; Cartel Crew; Kennington Black Mob; Nastie Squad; South Man Syndicate; Young Nastie Squad</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>ABM; Acre Lane Campaign; Alligator Crew; Bloodset Criminals; Brixton yard Manz; Cartel Crew; Clapham Park Dred; The Crypts; Dipset Muslim; Fully Equipped; Gipset Taliban; G Street; Hanna Town; Herne Hill Man Dem; Hot spots; Junction Boys; K Town Crew; Loughborough soldiers; Man Dem Crew; Marcus Garvey Boys; Mash Force; Murder Zone; Myatts Fields Posse; Organised Criminals; 031 Bloods; Pain in Full; PDC; Real Somali Soldiers; RSS; Rema Crew; SMN Heathset; Southmandem; Stick em up Kidz; Stockwell Park Crew; S. Unit; Superstar Gang; Surrey Lane Soldiers; Surrey Lane Soldiers; SW2 Boys; Thugz 4 life; Pulse Hill man Dem; Pulse Hill Thugz; Valley Crew; VMD; Young Thugz 4 Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Murder Zone; Organised Criminals; GAS; ABM; Roadside Gangsters ;PDC/PIF (Peel Dem Crew/ Poverty Driven Children; D Block; Pepys; 031 Bloods– O-Tray; Acre Lane Campaign; Pulse Hill Thugs; TN1 (Youngers to T Block); Ghost Town; Gipset Crew; New Park Gunnerz; Brixton Hill bullies; South Man Syndicate; Front Line Bangers; Corleone Family Riders; Blenheim Gardens Squad; St. Mathews Boys</td>
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Caveat: this is not an exhaustive list. It represents the key groups which have come to the attention of statutory authorities. The groups listed in 1985-1990 are thought to be exclusive Yardie Posses and not necessarily urban street gangs.

Those who wish to leave

One further necessity of maintaining social order is to manage those seeking to exit the gang. It is important to ensure confidences and trust are maintained and damage to the gang brand and reputation is minimised. This is best achieved by ensuring allegiance to the gang is enduring. Thus those declaring they wish to leave will probably not be able to do so. This is partly because of threats from peers but mostly because if they do wish to leave, and are successful in following this strategy, there are many centripetal forces pulling them back in: ‘A lot of people are still stuck in it. It’s hard to come out’. (African Caribbean Male Older)

Leaving, can be a difficult concept for other gang members to understand and it instantly breeds suspicion. Thus many members experience ‘forced retention’, unless they leave the city altogether. Network contacts and connections are deeply intertwined and ingrained making leaving not only difficult but for some a practical impossibility. Most who do wish to leave do so by negotiating a
different relationship with the gang or different boundaries making clear what they are prepared to
do and when. This can develop into a part-time approach to gang involvement which ultimately may
allow them to ‘leave’ by inactivity.

‘I’ve got a mate driving buses if he’s not got enough money, he’ll go back in
short term to get money then go back in legit. He’d go back in just to get the
money he needs or when he’s struggling’. (West African Male Older)

As some members grow older their individual strategy overtakes their gang strategy as they now
focus on other aspects of adult life. Here they re-evaluate their current situation, risk-assessing their
safety, their life trajectory, brining a realisation they must refocus and reduce or sever bonds to the
gang. Those able to maintain this new strategy often have family support or are promising
developers in sports or college.

In Gang Life or ‘On Road’, friends become a very central element to your life, not least for the
importance of providing information which is critical to risk management. Thus leaving them is both
complex and difficult. This position differs wholly from Aldridge and Medina (2008) who found that
‘generally, gangs did not oppose desistance from members’.

Others find leaving almost impossible and get asked, often deliberately, to do something or are
given some knowledge, which hooks them back in. Some gang members see an exit route via youth
work though police report some youth workers walk ‘a fine line’ between exited and still affiliated:

‘I saw one youth worker with his arm round a 12 yr old saying can you sort
this deal out for me? - even though he’s training’, (White Male Police
Officer).

Some police officers claim to know youth workers who remain strongly linked to dealing drugs.
However there was no evidence to suggest that this was an organised attempt by gangs to ‘play both
sides’ rather it appeared to be an individual strategy where one previous gang member was having
trouble letting go a life that could supplement his income.

Clearly many young people do try to move on from the gang but are drawn back in by a Hook
Incident. Youth workers struggling to address desistence often tell young people to cease all
connectivity with the gang. This is unrealistic as one youth worker noted, ‘Even though they want
out there’s often too much pulling them back in’. A Hook Incident is an issue of importance,
sometimes serious, relating to their current or recent friendships and Bredrin, emotional ties,
feelings of honour or duty, family or extended family links. Residency on the same estate as the
gang makes negotiating different boundaries very problematic and sometimes impossible. Even
those negotiating a different boundary will stay part of the Network and in close communication
with remaining members. Whilst some aim to leave or re-negotiate their involvement, there are
others from the social field who will become late joiners or re-joiner.
Ex-gang Olders acknowledged that previous background was little clue to present activity. Some had tried hard to be in a gang but never made it and were now accepted as Olders. Others performed well at school and obtained top grades and some who had been tipped for success, yet had proven to be unsuccessful, were also now gang-affiliated. Whilst those leaving prison may find it an easy decision to return to the gang, others take a decision to return to gang, e.g. former members who moved away, gone to college, taken up employment. If such moves fail to raise economic capital, the gang again becomes attractive. Return depends upon the contacts they retained and prospective opportunities. Ex-gang-affiliates returning from prison seldom find resettlement effective and struggle to reorganise: the Network acting as the adhesive to the social field. They may capitalise upon their previous, (now seriously depleted) street capital but will need to increase this quickly by choosing specialist elements of the Repertoire, possibly resorting to violence. They will not resort to lower level ASB and street violence which proved a viable route for raising street capital as a Younger.

Some develop a part-time relationship with the gang, e.g. when strategising to move out via education or employment. If this strategy is interrupted or money dries up, the gang again becomes an option. Throughout this period they remain networked to the gang retaining links to the centre. Returning routes include: selling drugs, buying and selling stolen goods, hiding weapons.

Getting stuck

The social field of the gang is not only dangerous; it is seductive and highly adhesive. As the age of getting involved becomes ever younger and young men segueway from Youngers to Olders and then to Elders there is the increasing chance that they become ‘stuck’ or ‘embedded (Hagedorn 2008).

‘Changing to something different, it’s hard to do you know. I know a lot who have tried to leave it but they get drawn back in. You’ve gotta have a strong head’. (West African Male Older)

Several aspects act as potential adhesives to the gang:

- in the social field of SW9 – there is no plausible alternative
- By 19/20 many young men know nothing else but the gang
- Peers, and friends remain in the gang
- It is possible to go part-time in the gang
- Getting older means fewer fights and ASB, so less hassle
- All network connections can be retained
- Stronger links to prisoners are possible
- There is a constant need to fund an emerging social life
- Mobility is increased through age
- There are opportunities to specialise your skills through the key emergent routes of drugs, acquisitive crime or sex work.
Cumulative impact on young people of this social field

This adhesive and constantly shifting gang landscape with its physical, metaphorical and relational boundaries makes the social field a threatening and dangerous environment for young people, offering for most a life controlled by fear in a landscape of risk.

New IT technology has profoundly impacted upon the social field providing ubiquitous information, 24-hour news and an imperative to understand and interpret new developments and stay abreast of fast changing situations, including: monitoring personal reputations and street capital; risk assessments; tension monitoring; personal and gang strategising. As personal safety is paramount this involves continually sounding people out, using your networks to monitor activity, separating fact from fiction. Information once received must be transmitted immediately and the views of trusted friends, family and girlfriends retrieved and assessed. This requires constant monitoring of all information channels.

Information or Network poverty leads to members ‘slipping’ without knowing it. School teachers in gang-affiliated neighbourhoods report that one reason for low attainment is that information is constantly flowing into the classrooms via mobile phones and Blackberries. This, alongside the emotional reactions upon receipt of information leaves classrooms in constant churn and turmoil. As this information is shared, concentration wanes.

The fear of sanctions imposed by the gang, their peers, the police and others in authority brings enormous pressure. The universal street codes of not ‘grassing’ dictates they are unable to share this fear and anxiety with anyone. Accusations and rumours fly about what was done, was said, will be done. Rumours also fly about who is an informer. If young gang members are seen talking to the police this can be misconstrued as being an informer. Thus many young people do not want the police to use their street names. Getting into a police car is similarly risky and could be easily misread. This fear of having such interactions misread also leads many young people to run when approached by the police.

The range of sanctions and inventive variables are well understood by all. This could include physical violence, intimidation, exclusion or serious harm up to and including murder.

For many young people this necessitates and feeds their state of constant alertness and hyper vigilance. For some it is analogous to a war zone, (Sampson and Lauriston 1994) Indeed young people often refer to their environment as being ‘like a war zone’, referring to themselves as ‘soljas’. James Short (1997) refers to this as a ‘soldier mentality’ which they have acquired to survive in their ‘alternative cognitive landscape’. Those experiencing immediate risk remain in a state of constant readiness for physical violence, war-zone mentality, which is highly stressful and mentally exhausting. This echoes dispatches from the front in active war zones where soldiers talk of developing a thousand yard stare, i.e. the hyper vigilance needed to block out all unimportant sensations and focus solely upon the actions of the enemy. Such a view on the world must affect the daily lives of young people, their education, relationships and health.

In the final chapter I summarise the reasons for increased violence in the social field.
Conclusion

In this study I set out to investigate the question: how do we explain the increase in gang related violence in SW9? Statistics present a cogent case to suggest this question is the right one to ask. Academic research into gangs offered only limited insight and seldom related to my experience of how gangs operated in London SW9. Aside from older texts from the Chicago School, US research was mostly positivist, contextual and often inapplicable to the UK. The limited UK research into gangs proved to be either sub-culturally based, conceptualised through the correctionist stance of the risk factor paradigm, or overly influenced by labelling theory. Still others significantly underplay the risk and impact of gangs or even deny their existence. Only recently through the emergence of a left realist perspective incorporating the ‘on the ground’ realities of practitioners, (Pitts 2008, 2010) has the UK gang agenda moved forward. The Literature Review identified significant gaps in our understanding of UK gangs revealing new areas for exploration, a need for greater clarity and precision in our exposition. There was also a need to break out of traditional binaries and move away from retro-fitting theoretical paradigms for political expediency or grandstanding. The literature review also identified the contemporary relevance of some of the classic Chicago School ethnographies, e.g. Thrasher, whilst the works of Whyte, Miller, Yablonsky and more recently Hagedorn all offer insights which merit them both contemporary and relevant. Through such insights it became clear that we only had a partial or distorted view of the picture of gangs in the UK.

Using inductive ethnographic methodologies inspired by the Chicago School, this work sought to explore gangs as a space in which young men use violence to achieve power and control. This perspective borrowed from practitioner models developed to address domestic violence, (The Duluth Power and Control Wheel). Having conceptualised the gang as a domain of spaces where violence occurs, I then interpreted this space through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu and his theoretical perspective of field analysis (Bourdieu 1990) drawing upon the key sociological constructs of social field, habitus and agency as defined by Bourdieu; and concepts of social capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Putnam 2000).

The value of field analysis

The application of field analysis methodology provides a critical platform to analyse the gang in its own social field, acting as a theorising perspective which allows identification of new changes in the social field of the gang in SW9. This valuable methodology becomes a generative perspective offering the following advantages:

- The social field can be viewed holistically
- Inter and intra-gang relationships are exposed
- General theories of behaviour can be generated
- Underlying structures can be identified, e.g. the binding concepts of doxa and illusio

Field analysis therefore proves to be a useful diagnostic for investigating the gang domain and its internal dynamics. It facilitates deeper exploration of many assumptions commonly misrecognised or even erroneously made about gangs, e.g. that they have ‘messy structures’ (Aldridge et al 2008); they are disorganised, messy and rhyzomatic, (Hallsworth and Silverstone 2009); they are an obsessive media invention, moral panic or myth (Hallsworth & Duffy 2010; Hallsworth & Young 2006).
2008); they are not organised, (Hallsworth and Duffy 2010); that no recruitment takes place (Aldridge and Medina 2008); it’s all about drugs and minor disrespect, (Toy 2008); that there are ‘gang set spaces’, (Ralphs et al 2009); that guns are most often used within illegal drugs markets (Hallsworth & Silverstone 2009); that those involved are ‘psychologically unpredictable’, (Hallsworth & Silverstone 2009).

The findings provided in this study are a powerful counterpoint to contemporary views which argue that discussing gangs reinforces labelling theory (Aldridge et al 2008: Ralphs et al 2009) or defines the researcher as a ‘control agent’ of an ‘emergent gang industry’, (Hallsworth & Young 2008; Hallsworth 2011). In contrast, I argue that this study is a perspective firmly grounded in the reality of the social field as field analysis permits structural mapping of the gang as an arena of struggle over different types of capital, power and privilege, whilst simultaneously highlighting the opportunities and constraints that interface with the habitus.

This ethnographic methodology and extensive subsequent analysis of the social field provided vast quantities of data from which several clear narratives emerged illuminating key findings such as gender differentiation of roles, intra and inter-gang relationships and the relational interface or boundary of the social field.

Key findings

This unique approach to the study of gangs in the UK has therefore generated some unique findings:

The social field

The gang in London SW9 can be viewed as a social field: a contested arena within which actors are bound in constant conflict and convulsive struggle for distinction and advancement. Having advanced to Distinction, Playa’s in the social field can achieve what they have always wanted – A WAY OUT OF THE SOCIAL FIELD. All actors of the field share the doxa (the value of ‘the Game’) and illusio (a belief/acceptance of the worth of ‘the Game’).

Habitus

Within this social field actors and their actions are governed by their habitus. Habitus plus actors own experience in the social field determines which actions are likely to bring benefits or advancement. Habitus allows actors to employ actions/behaviours which serve to elevate or distinguish them from peers. This dynamic potential of the habitus confirms actors as strategists employing actions, not through conscious choice, but ‘as a tacit calculation of interest and pursuit of distinction’, (Swartz 1997:290).

The predisposed actions of the habitus relate to what is a credible or possible course of action within any given field. In this social field many of these actions formulate into a set of Rules of the field, sometimes expressed as the Code of the Street. This Code is all pervasive and seldom challenged.
Street Capital

Actors in the field employ strategies of capital accumulation to maintain or enhance their position within the social field. Capital (including social, cultural, symbolic and economic) is unevenly distributed leading to a vertical hierarchy of winners and losers. All actors desire economic capital but find it hard to obtain.

To relate Bourdieu’s theoretical debates on capital accumulation to the reality of life ‘on the Road’ and the social field of the gang, I developed the concept of Street Capital. Street Capital is an aggregate of cultural capital (street knowledge and street skills), habitus, local history, family connections, networks (social capital), relationships, reputation, status and symbolic capital (available assets of recognition, honour and prestige). Like other capital it can be acquired, traded and exchanged. Its currency functions exclusively within the boundaries of the social field. I contend this concept is formative in understanding the internal dynamics of the social field as it operates as the premium capital. Actors struggle to acquire Street Capital as an asset and they have to work hard to build this up and maintain it. This equates to Bourdieu’s concept of the social field as a casino. Here however actors have to stay in ‘the Game’ and keep playing.

The Imperative to build Street Capital

In an increasingly crowded social arena, Distinction becomes more elusive. Some overcome this through increased risk-taking, and Youngers often present as reckless and or ‘out of control’. Others develop a fatalistic ‘live for today’ attitude as they manage downward their expectations of survival in the social field. Dangerous and reckless actions include young boys aged 13 – 15 being stabbed by up to 20 people rushing them with knives. The imperative to build street capital suggests an ‘anything goes’ attitude. This has left many ex gang members in their mid twenties feeling out of touch with fast-moving developments.

Investment strategies

In London SW9, gangs are perhaps the most effective and productive way for young people to obtain economic capital, as often there exists no other plausible alternative. Actors within the field must strategise to raise their status and reputation and expand their networks and thus rise through the hierarchy. Doing so, they fight to maintain their position, e.g. through building reputations, names and brands for both individuals and gangs. At the top of the hierarchy there exist greater opportunities to convert social capital into economic capital.

Strategies may be either conservation, succession or subversion – utilised by actors at different levels within the field hierarchy. The application of Bourdieu’s succession strategies permits us to view the internal dynamics of the gang more keenly, permitting us to see when people are acting out of conservation, succession, or subversion strategies, e.g. it is often younger gang affiliates with little to gain from the dominant groups who initiate or pursue subversion strategies which often lead to gang fracturing; conservation strategies ensure new ‘blood’ is recruited at lower levels through family or peers, some seeking protection, others excitement.
The Gang Repertoire

Actors in the social field seek to manufacture and maintain street capital by employing tested techniques from an extensive Gang Repertoire. There is no cafeteria style offending as claimed by Klein (2006) and Aldridge et al (2008). The Gang Repertoire is a crafted list of tested techniques derived from the habitus and social field which is a shared menu for individual and collective actions. It reflects the move from Expressive to Instrumental crime followed by Youngers as they move to being Olders. Each Repertoire element is tested over years by members and is handed down through differential association within the field. Young gang affiliates are effectively auditioned for advancement by Olders as they use these techniques which themselves are tested and constantly updated. The boundaries of what is permissible and the variable used in implementation adapt over time and heavily influence outcomes.

As actors struggle within the arenas of the gang, they attempt to acquire Street Capital by diminishing that of others – rival gangs or individuals. This is achieved by employing elements of the Sanctions Repertoire, e.g. rumour, disrespect, territorial incursions, etc.

Power and dominance

As members struggle for distinction in this social field they seek to dominate rivals and extinguish their street capital. Reputations are diluted or diminished through calculated strategies. Where this aspect of ‘the Game’ endures overtime, it becomes a strategic encounter for power and dominance. The once inviolate Brixton reputation is likewise diluted as rivals exert dominance and power and strategise to diminish the neighbourhood reputation. Until recently, gang incursions into SW9 would have been unthinkable. They are now a regular feature and en masse events escalate with upwards of 30 armed young people storming onto estates. This decline in respect for SW9 is acknowledged by residents and young people alike. Violence in SW9 now includes drive-by shootings and machine gun attacks, often in broad daylight.

The social field structure

Importantly the field operates with a vertical structure. Furthermore all field positions are inter-related and a change in one position alters the boundaries of all other players. Position in the field is determined by the unequal distribution of capital, e.g. subordinate players, including new arrivals, are those who have yet to master the rules of the Game. The hierarchical structure of the field is mirrored in the structure of the urban street gang in three evident tiers: an Elementary Tier (including Tinnies aged 10 – 13 and Youngers aged 13-16); a Mature Tier (Older aged 16-21); an Advanced tier (Elders aged 22 plus). These tiers also indicate an evolution of organisation and structure since 2005 when only two tiers were evident; Youngers aged 14-16 and Olders aged 16-19. These clearly defined delineated internal structures offer a more sharply defined distinction between activity levels, visibility and criminal activity. As well as permitting differentiation these tiers indicate differentiated motivations and strategising for offending behaviours.
Characteristics of the social field

Field analysis has revealed several elements critically important to the field. Principally these include:

**The gendered nature of the field** – with different roles and narratives evident for girls and young women

**The centrality of information** – with social networks used, to build street capital and social networks used to build reputations, challenge rivals, diminish the street capital of rivals and to risk manage personal lives. Information is used at all tiers of the gang and within the wider network. This then becomes an exclusive world which is very difficult for adults to break into or understand.

**Social order is maintained through the Sanctions Repertoire** – this includes, rumour, gossip and also group rape and set-ups.

**Field is constantly changing** – i.e. the Game stays the same but the Playa’s change. Recruitment occurs in schools, colleges and through family and peer networks. Moreover in the social field old certainties and social norms are gone. Brixton, once considered inviolable, has lost its ‘reputation’. Some believe this change has accelerated and is further complicated by the arrival of new immigrants into SW9. In reality, the reasons behind this dynamic change are more complex and relate to the evolution of the urban street gang. Sanders (2005) found no evidence of young people using guns, gang hierarchies, colours or signs of ‘ganging’. As all these elements now exist it is evident there has been a significant evolution of gangs in Lambeth since his study.

These research findings present us with the key that effectively unlocks the answer to the question: **how do we explain the increase in gang related violence in SW9?** The increase in violence can be explained thus:

- **Normalisation of violence**

In the neighbourhoods of SW9 gangs are no longer the aberrant ‘other’. For many young people affiliation to a gang is a natural and logical progression. Having experienced violence at school, in the local neighbourhood, or even at home, gangs offer excitement, protection and fun – as well as ways of making money. The use of violence within the social field is wholly normalised, expected, required.

- **An Extended field**

As other plausible alternatives, e.g. employment, are increasingly unavailable, the logic of affiliating, becomes stronger and more convincing. More people enter the social field and then stay longer. Thus the social field is extended or stretched at either end of the age spectrum. Roles are now found for Tinnies (aged 11 – 13) who now employ the Gang Repertoire at an earlier age. By age 14/15 a young person has been in the social field for three or four years and new Tinnies now look up to him. The stretched spectrum at the lower end compels Youngers to employ the Instrumental Repertoire at an earlier age. At the older age range young people are also staying longer in the gang as other career opportunities are also reduced. This has implications for those who, upon reaching
adulthood usually ‘grow out of crime’, (Sampson and Laub 1993). As Graham and Bowling (1995) noted, many young people now perpetrate ‘youth crime’ into their early twenties and beyond. This extended social field of criminal opportunities offers a laboratory of potential opportunities to be tried and tested. Young people may therefore ‘grow deeper into crime’ rather than out of it.

- **Embeddeness**

Embeddeness works at two levels: actors increasingly embedded within the gang and the gang increasingly embedded within the neighbourhood.

Relationships between young people and the gang are in many ways solidifying. Beyond opportunities for fun or making economic capital, the complexity of this social field offers young people something more profound than simple transient pleasures. It has become a social field where many are becoming embedded, (Hagan 1993) often inextricably, with concepts of personal status, respect, reputation, levels of street capital, future aspirations, inter-personal relationships, networking and social capital. The extended field now offers continued membership and expanded age profiles. Not only are young people not ‘maturing out’ as previously thought; they are becoming embedded. This is compounded by difficulties experienced by those seeking to leave the gang. It is common for previous members to switch to being part-time members or to negotiate a reduced involvement rather than leave completely.

The gang’s gravitational force makes it increasingly difficult for people to leave. The gang can become for some, not something through which they pass, but somewhere they get stuck, (Hagedorn 2008). The tiered structure facilitates this by offering an increasingly settled and established route for young people. Each tier offering a complement of opportunities and trajectories, fitted to age bands, skill sets and dispositions. For those now entering this all-encompassing social field aged 11, this may well be the only world they know, and can survive in, by age 25. Moreover this embeddedness reinforces the authority of the gang as the principal agent of social control in their neighbourhood. This ensures gangs are increasingly embedded in the neighbourhoods of SW9.

- **Increased social competition**

The extended field means more people in the social field, and on its periphery. This social arena is now more crowded, more contested, more dynamic. There are more ways of being victimised, more ways to advance, more opportunities to diminish a rivals street capital, more variables with which to strategise, more Repertoire components to test, to employ evermore inventive ways to provoke and mock rivals, e.g. online.

In this more dynamic and contested field there is a need to stand out from the crowd, to fast-track strategies, to boost stalled reputations and gain advantage over others. Distinction in the field becomes more difficult. This engenders more competition and greater risk taking or the employment of random or extreme acts of violence which earn mega-street capital.

Increased social competition plays out in a variety of important ways:-
- Greater imperative to build and maintain Street Capital
- Increased tension across the field
- Increased challenges to those in dominant positions appearing to block advancement - this translates into decline of respect to Olders and adults
- Greater opportunity for adhesion and entanglement with the gang for those on its periphery
- A fraying of the social norms – this translates into more trigger incidents and a lowering of the benchmark regarding what is acceptable
- Increased violence

- The Imperative to maintain street capital

Once obtained, street capital must be maintained. Capital deflation is more likely to occur with more Playa’s in the field. The pressure to maintain Rep leads to reckless behaviour and hyper-vigilance leads to numerous small scale but increasingly vicious reprisals. When coupled with those seeking rapid advancement, nothing to lose and strategies of succession – risk taking and violence is increased. Danger is doubled as reputational deflation must be avoided at all costs by individuals, but by gangs.

- Altered social norms and new extremes

These new internal pressures in the social field have altered the social norms of what is acceptable. Those seeking revenge will do whatever it takes, e.g. attacking family members and mothers. This is also seen through the arrival of new elements of the Gang Repertoire, e.g. abductions and sexual violence.

The most noticeably altered social norm is intergenerational challenge. The ‘mentoring’ role of Olders for Youngers is now somewhat diluted. Youngers now challenge Olders at a younger age as they see Olders have failed to achieve distinction or success or they believe Olders are thwarting their ambition. Many aspirant Youngers believe they can do ‘ganging’ better than their predecessors. Depreciated street capital for Olders ensures an increased number of challenges by aspirant leaders. Increasingly Youngers seek their own direct links to Elders and serious drugs.

Moreover there is reduced respect for ‘old heads’ (Anderson 1999). Respect is now limited, even for adults who are known around the estate and that the young people grew up with. Previously a Younger accompanied by his mother was technically ‘out of bounds’ until he was alone; disrespecting the mother was considered unacceptable as a social norm. Now if the situation demands it both are fair game, he would be attacked and the mother openly challenged and disrespected.

- Sudden rule changes

Successful challenges, altered social norms and re-aligned relationships can all lead to rule changes within the social field. Sudden rule changes in ‘the Game’ mean that young people are often caught out unaware, e.g. those living ‘off the hood’ may in some cases be more at risk.
- **Incursions and group violence**

The role of maximising street capital through Group Violence and Group Incursion is a central factor in the increase in violence in SW9. Incursions are the supreme platform for generating street capital and provide a test-bed for the Gang Repertoire. Activity in a rival neighbourhood may be more permissive and extreme. With multiple actors involved, each wishing to generate street capital, such events are hard to control. Incursions are viewed as a violation and inflame high emotions and swift responses often leading to a ratchet effect of tit-for-tat violence.

- **New Arrivals**

New Arrivals within the field have few contacts and limited information and thus experience ‘network poverty’. SW9 has witnessed an influx of different nationalities in recent years, most noticeably from West Africa. As a result of ‘network poverty’, new arrivals are at increased risk of gang affiliation and victimisation, inadvertently disrespecting affiliated members, Slippin’, casual disrespect, and casual personal victimisation.

- **Use of Information and social networking sites**

The rapid movement of information across the social field by new IT technology has had a significant impact upon the social field in recent years. The immediacy of IT technology leads to increased proximity to events, leading to increased emotional investment in any incident. This immediacy causes increased violence with rapid violent responses and retaliation. In addition, social networking sites are used to generate street capital by providing platforms for individual and gang branding; and to diminish street capital through provocative challenge to rivals. Mockery or online humiliation is now played out in public view rather than in private. In the social field information may:-

- take on greater significance and have high emotional content
- have wider repercussions and ripple effects back into the social field
- may play out in a way that is unforeseen and cannot be controlled
- may impact upon a wider range of agents – leading to a greater number of potential outcomes
- can be misread by a greater number of ‘interested parties’
- can lead to potential fatal results

- **Firearms are now used across all three Gang Repertoires**

Physical violence is used as the prime strategy for gaining reputation and building street capital. It is thus used in all three Repertoires

- **Relational boundaries**

Whilst the social field of the gang does have boundaries, these are relational, and neither visible nor understood. They are also dynamic and in constant flux as intra-gang and inter-gang relationships
alter, break, start and end. As a result the social field boundary can be a dangerous place for some exposing them to risk of violence. For example:

- Non gang-affiliated residents interact continually on the gang periphery
- There is a widening acceptance of the characteristics of the social field and social norms of the gang (this also suggests embeddedness)
- Non gang-affiliated young people flirt with gang symbolism and manners
- Social networking sites have challenged boundaries and offer opportunities to develop extended virtual or reputational boundaries. This means that physical territorial boundaries may in the future hold less significance
- Wannabe gang affiliates are easily caught up in peripheral or boundary issues putting them at considerable risk
- The social field is increasingly portable into other fields

• External pressures - Increased Tensions

A number of external issues have also increased tension within the social field and in places led to increased violence. These include the increased use of police informers, multiple offenders appearing in court under the charge of joint enterprise and the legacy of unsolved murders. Each issue creates situations of diluted trust, suspicion, recrimination, revenge and intimidation.

Landscape of Risk

The factors listed above explain the increase in violence in London SW9. They also have a dramatic impact upon all young people in the social field, regardless of their gang affiliation, e.g. self-restricted movements; unwittingly entering the social field of the gang (or its periphery) via SNSs; violence arising from 'slippin'. Young people who move through territory associated with the gang are also at risk as they are automatically assumed to be involved in the social field of the gang: an assumption made by young people primarily but also by the police. It is paradoxical that the risk factor paradigm which identifies the risks associated with young people that lead them to affiliate to gangs, has so manifestly failed to assess the full range of risks to which they are then exposed upon affiliation. Thus the landscape of risk is left unchartered.

To manage this landscape young people make daily risk assessments and adjustments to minimise and mitigate potential victimisation. For new arrivals this is of critical importance. Young people become hyper-vigilant. To manage risks, weapons are carried.

Increasingly young people in the social field of the gang – and even on its periphery – have to stay in the moment, mentally embedded in the social field. Stepping out of this becomes too complex to consider; they are too involved; there is too much information to sift. They have no down time, no breathing space and no-one to talk to or to confide in. They increasingly inhabit an exclusive world.
This places young people under enormous daily stress and pressure; not to be victimised; to know what's going on; to obtain information; to know the shifting alliances; to know if it's safe to leave the classroom or the estate. This stress impacts upon on their education making them unable to focus. Some think the stress is overstated and that many enjoy 'the Game'. For others, the gang becomes a collective experience or shared perspective allowing young people to manage their stress.

Adult apathy, a lack of any early intervention, continuing estrangement from authority and immersion in a social field that adults do not understand, all act as centripetal forces for young people towards the gang. As adolescents, they seek support to address their experiences of lack of status and social capital, fears, humiliations, desire for distinction and celebrity, lack of power and to find an exit from poverty. If the gang provides this, it seems attractive.

Young people instinctively realise their lives are predestined by their habitus and their social field. They realise this may mean a live cut short. This inarguable fact leads some to fatalistic resignation, others to devote their existence to the short-lived 'Game'. As Bourdieu reminds us, sadly their social fate is all but assured by the 'role demands' and cumulative actions required by them as they operate within the social field of the gang.

Adults and parents largely fail to understand or recognise this social field; the media misrepresent it, and academics frequently mis-recognise it. The results for gang-affiliated young people are twofold:-

- **Adhesion to the gang**
- **Fatalism**

**Policy implications and the practical legacy**

The recent research undertaken and published in 'The management of gang issues among children and young people in prison custody and the community: a joint thematic review June 2010', by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, HM Chief Inspector of Probation and HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary makes some key observations. These observations noted that gangs and their impact remain widely contested; interventions are usually focussed on enforcement and not on prevention or victims; community initiatives are mostly for over -18s; gang-related safeguarding concerns are poorly understood; practice guidance, training and joint partnership working is insufficient with national and local initiatives uncoordinated.

It is hoped that my research will contribute towards addressing some of these criticisms by developing an improved understanding of the specifics as to how gangs operate in neighbourhoods, thereby providing a practical legacy to benefit practitioners, e.g. by ending the denial of gangs and any contestation of their presence; or by the exposition of gang hierarchies, including age bands and how young people transition from one tier to another. In specific it is anticipated will impact upon the following policy areas:
Develop a typology of gang activities and behaviours in local neighbourhoods

There is a dearth of applied research and localised understanding of how gangs influence and control UK neighbourhoods. The Gang Repertoire provides a typology of gang activities and behaviours which can be logged and mapped over time. It also allows for local variations to be added to the Repertoire. By analysing Gang Repertoires partners will build knowledge of the local gang context, permitting local verification and categorisation of gang behaviours, identification of activity patterns or local gang evolution, development of early warning or tension monitoring systems as well as opportunities for prevention or community intervention.

Safeguarding and victim centred approach

This study reveals the pressures and multiple victimisation of young people in the social field of the gang and how these are manifested. Notably this includes identifying the Landscape of Risk which young people must navigate daily, how young people try to mitigate these risks and minimise their victimisation. This research will assist in the creation of further tools to assess the cumulative victimisation of young people in gang settings. It will also help to identify how and when agencies should intervene.

It is hoped that this research will bring about a more empathetic understanding as to how and why young people get involved in gangs and why they act and present as they do. Importantly, the research shows gang affiliates are not aberrant ‘others’ acting in ‘messy structures’, but are part of the community. Thus my research indicates that success in addressing gangs will come from adopting a victim-centred approach based on prevention: where both people and communities are considered as victims. Adoption of a child safeguarding model will help identify the stresses and mental health issues arising from living in constant fear, thereby allowing agencies to better support young people. A safeguarding model would further assist in moving from enforcement to prevention. This study demonstrates that the support requirements for young people will be complex. However it also suggests that by generating more holistic and detailed reviews of the young person’s specific experiences within the context of the social field and its rules, e.g. how/when incidents happen, their frequency, their inter-relational circumstances and outcomes, then improved support packages can be made available.

Improved interventions and risk assessments for young people

This research provides practitioners with an improved understanding of how gangs function in London, SW9 and will hopefully lead to improvements in the quality and efficacy of interventions for young people. For example; understanding that certain activities and behaviours are linked to key age ranges within the gang will help target interventions to key ages; understanding the techniques used by gangs to influence, cajole and control young people into gang affiliation will assist in early identification of gang recruitment in schools; the insights into the critical importance of IT indicates the need for real-time intervention programmes; the different narratives and gendered roles identified in the research will assist in developing bespoke interventions for women; activities or behaviours which pose most risk to young people or to communities can now also be more accurately identified and more accurately risk assessed. In
this way police led and community interventions can be re-focused to those aged under 18 yrs and practice guidance, training and partnership working can be re-oriented.

- **Insight into community interventions**

Utilising a field analysis approach illustrates the wider roles of the community in the social field of the gang. This fresh perspective permits us to move away from the risk factor paradigm which often views the community and family as potential malignant influencers in gang affiliation to one where the family and the community are also victims, experiencing unforeseen and unexpected impacts and outcomes.

By identifying and detailing exactly local neighbourhoods experience gang behaviour, it is possible to identify opportunities for building community resilience and locating community interventions. In this way practitioners will gain new perspectives on how/why behaviours and activities occur; how these can be recognised and proactively tackled. For example, early identification of gang behaviours by a better informed group of partners might lead to improved proactive and coordinated response. In this way this research will improve understanding of the landscape within which young people, communities and practitioners have to operate.

- **Partnership Coordination**

My research made clear that gang activities, behaviours and actions are perceived and thus recorded (or not recorded) differently and separately by the different partners and agencies. Data sharing exists but is often nascent or its efficacy is curtailed by the practicalities of coordinating multi-layered partnerships with different definitions and working cultures. This silo'd approach by practitioners means no single agency has an accurate or full picture of the gang at any stage and crucial data remains uncollated. Some agencies fail to agree on the existence and impact of the gang. This complex partnership response to gangs prevents an accurate or holistic picture of the gang from developing which in turn inhibits effective partnership coordination. Adoption of a more holistic social field perspective will permit improved partnership working leading to the generation of the clearer picture of the gang and those involved. This will lead to improved analysis which can then be fed into local or regional strategies aimed at tackling gangs. Similar improvements are needed at the national level.

- **Gang research**

The application of field analysis methodology will assist gang researchers and practitioners in exploring new perspectives which present a more holistic view and offers more in-depth insight into UK gangs.
The future

This study redefines the lens through which we view gangs, allowing us to move forward from the old binaries of do gangs exist or not, are they organised or not. In so doing it allows us to move forward beyond the constricted perspectives of the risk factor paradigm, labelling and moral panic theorists. It also aims to close the chapter on those in denial of gangs and their impact on young people.

Social field analysis offers a new way of looking at gangs allowing dramatic insight into an exclusive world. It permits us to understand that for many young people gang affiliation is part of their life trajectory; they become compelled to get involved as there is no plausible alternative. This study highlights the nuances of affiliation leading to an improved understanding of the complex and dangerous world of the gang. It brings into focus the stresses and tensions of what it is like to be involved in the Game, to know nothing else but the Game and to accept completely without challenge, that the Game is everything. This study clarifies how and why young people are increasingly entangled in this social field and how it is difficult, if not impossible, to desist from this life. Returning to the concept of the force field, we see how gang life impacts and affects not just those at the centre, but those in its sphere of influence with centripetal magnetism making it difficult to pull away.

This study also shows the practicalities of the impact of information technology and the centrality of ubiquitous information. Perhaps most importantly it lifts the veil on the glue that binds much of gang life together, the doxa or shared value of the Game and the illusio – the belief or acceptance that the Game is worth playing. These principles dictate the logic of the social field.

Altering and improving the social conditions of those in deprived neighbourhoods by investment in education, in communities, in social infrastructure, and by providing opportunities which increase inclusion and reduce gaps in inequality will take time and political will. Whilst we wait for politicians to marshal the political will to address such problems we can at least begin to address the gang agenda by tackling the logic of the social field. By demonstrating the logic as illogical we can demonstrate that there are alternatives, that Playa’s are not bound by their social fate. Ultimately we must demonstrate to the young people caught within the force field of the gang that the stakes are too high and this is not a Game that is worth playing.

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Appendices

Information sheets for key workers and professionals
Information sheets for young people
Consent forms
Semi structured interview schedule for gang consultants
Semi structured interview schedule for professionals
Semi-structured interview schedule for young people
Adult Show Cards
Young people's Show Cards
Interview example
Summary Profile of principle gangs in SW9 (2009-2011)

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Appendix 1

Information sheet – Key workers and professionals

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research.

My name is Simon Harding, I am a student at University of Bedfordshire, Vauxhall Centre for the Study of Crime. I am conducting Doctorate level research into gangs and neighbourhoods and how they interact. Undertaking research into gangs is complicated and often problematic. Research can be overlooked, under-resourced or fail to make the best contacts. This research is not linked to any new initiative or action plan, it is aimed at expanding knowledge and expertise in this demanding area of social policy. Specifically, I am looking at how gangs exert influence/control over local neighbourhoods, e.g. certain ways of behaving, of acting. They may be criminal or illegal activities, including violence or be more subtle, e.g. creating a reputation for the gang or controlling public space through intimidation.

As you might imagine this research is difficult to do. It involves speaking with professionals who live and/ or work on gang affected neighbourhoods. I will also be speaking to young people who live in these neighbourhoods to hear their experiences.

I am not looking to gather information on specific individuals or their activities. I am only looking at the gang as a collective. Responses will be grouped around themes and under no circumstances be attributable to any participant. All interview responses are strictly CONFIDENTIAL and once collated into general themes, will be destroyed. All interviews will be allocated a unique reference number rather than a name in order anonymise interviews. Data will be securely stored and comments will relate grouped professions, e.g. One police officer claimed that...

Whilst I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have regarding the research, if you have any specific concerns or further questions, you may wish to contact the Research Supervisor at University of Bedfordshire, Professor John Pitts. His contact details are as follows:-

Contact: John.Pitts@beds.ac.uk

Can I take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in this research.

Simon Harding
Researcher
Dear Participant,

Thanks for your enquiry/agreeing to take part in this research. My name is Simon Harding, I am studying Youth Justice at Bedfordshire University. I’m researching people’s experiences of living in inner city neighbourhoods, what impacts upon their lives and how they deal with/survive those issues.

Doing this kind of research is difficult. Sometimes it’s linked to future regeneration; this research is not like that. I’m interviewing young people who live in SW9 to find out what it’s like to live there. I hope to better understand how lives are affected/changed by what happens around them and to hear people’s own experiences of living in SW9.

To avoid any possible misunderstanding - I am NOT gathering information about specific individuals or any crimes they committed. I’m only interested in people’s views about life in the neighbourhood – good or bad. So I’ll be asking questions like: what is it like to live here? What affects your life on the estate, and how is it affected? What things affect other people? What are the positives and negatives of living here? Are there any problems with gangs, police, other young people, etc?

Any comments made will be anonymous and generalised so they cannot be linked back to anyone making the comments. All interviews are strictly CONFIDENTIAL. I will use reference numbers to refer to interviews and when written up no real names will be used, so no-one can be identified. Ideas will be grouped into themes. Interview notes will be destroyed after six months.

Important

Sometimes in this kind of research people use interviews to reveal details about a serious incident which has happened. Maybe something they witnessed or they know about. This may be their way of telling an adult about it – possibly for the first time. I am not looking for you to do this in this interview and if you do, then it’s your choice to do so. However, if you do choose to reveal something about an incident where there has clearly been ‘significant harm’ either to yourself or to another young person, (something that has happened that is serious) then I would be required to raise this privately with the manager. They would then approach you privately for a further discussion, but of course, they may then have to inform the authorities. So it’s up to you to decide if you want to reveal something like that which may mean adults have to advise the authorities.

I can answer any questions you have about the research. However if you have any specific concerns or further questions, you can contact the Research Supervisor at University of Bedfordshire, Professor John Pitts at John.Pitts@beds.ac.uk

Just to say, Thanks a lot for your time and help!

Simon
Appendix 3

Young Persons Consent Form

This form confirms that I agree to be interviewed as part of research into **What is it like to live in this Neighbourhood?** being conducted by Simon Harding, under the supervision of University of Bedfordshire.

I understand that any data collected will be used to improve understanding of what impacts upon the lives of people living in inner city neighbourhoods and not to investigate specific people or crimes.

I understand that:-

- the interview is strictly confidential and that interview notes will be destroyed after 6 months.

- any views or opinions will be made anonymous so I cannot be identified in any way.

- I can withdraw from the interview at any time and don't have to answer questions if I am uncomfortable or unhappy to do so.

- if I choose to reveal any 'significant harm', either to myself or to another young person, that this will need to be raised with the managers and possibly with the relevant authorities.

- if I wish to speak to someone after my interview I can approach an agreed intermediary.

- I can contact the University for further information or to address any concerns I may have.

I ........................................................... hereby give my consent to be interviewed as part of the above research.

(This Consent form will be retained for six months before being destroyed and stored in a separate secure location)

Thank you for your assistance,

S. Harding. Researcher
Interview Schedule for Gang Consultants

Give definitions of work and of gang

What is your Current role? What is your experience in working gang issues?

Re-state conditions

Thinking generally, in your experience...

Possible activities/actions for urban street gangs to take root

1. What circumstances need to be in place for urban street gangs to start up in a neighbourhood?

2. What possible actions might an urban street gangs take in order to get established – do these actions differ later on when the gang is established/Thriving? How?

Exerting influence

3. How do they keep new people coming into the gang?

4. How do urban street gangs begin to exert influence over people in the community? (How does this show itself?) – is a conscious thing or does it just happen?

Spontaneous recall of possible Actions – What types of influence/ control do they use?

5. How do they exert influence over young people?

6. Does this exertion of influence vary at times? If so why? Does it vary by time, target or community?

7. Is this the same for all gangs – or just some? Expand?

SHOW REMAINING CARDS – do you recognise these possible activities/ actions as something urban street gangs might engage in?
8. Any examples of how urban street gangs have exerted influence/ or controlled
neighbourhoods in SW9?

9. *SHOW CARDS* which if these possible actions are you aware of happening in SW9.
Examples? *RANK CARDS*

10. Why do these actions work in SW9? What benefits?

11. Which action is most effective from the gang perspective?

Impact of these activities/actions on the community

12. Would people in the community recognise these as happening?

Impact of these activities/actions upon young people

13. At what point do young people feel the influence/ control?

14. Is influence – strong or mild? Any outward signs?

15. Can it move from being influence to ‘control’ – if so, at what point does it become
‘control’?

16. Are these actions viewed as influence or control?

17. Which activity/action has the most impact upon young people, *RANK CARDS*

18. How do young people react to these actions? Are they more ‘at risk’?

19. Is it viewed differently externally than it is internally?

20. Once ‘control’ is gained – what do they do to keep ‘control’? Examples?
Appendix 5

Professional Interviewees – Interview Schedule

• Role?

• Looking at SW9 – neighbourhoods and estates – what do you know about the area?

• Good points/ Bad points?

• Is it ‘gang-affected?’ – are you aware of gang issues?

• How do gangs affect the area? In what ways?

• Discuss?

• Rank variables that exist – examples? What impact?

• How do gangs exert influence over neighbourhoods in SW9?

• How did gang happen to rise in these neighbourhoods? What causes? Did this happen over time?

• Quickly/ slowly? Any tipping point of incident?

• How does the gang influence or exert control over the area?

• Any failing by the authorities?

• How does this influence impact or show itself to you?

• How it impact or show itself to communities?

• Any solutions?
Individual Young People Interview schedule

Reaffirm confidentiality and read statement

Living here
How long have you lived in SW9?
Do you recognise the area or its boundaries? (Show map)
Do you have an area you would call your neighbourhood?

What’s it like to live here? - What are the good points/ bad points?

Do you feel safe in your neighbourhood? The estate? The wider area?

Where do you not feel safe? Why is that?

Gang issues
What do you mean by a gang? Do you use such a term?

Is this area affected by gangs? How?

How do you know it’s affected by gangs?

Is the gang visible? If so, how?

What have you heard of? What seen?

Were you part of the gang? How and why did you join?

Effects of gangs
Have gangs in these areas affected you or had an impact upon you in any way? How?

What about upon your friends/ family?

What about upon the neighbourhood/ or community?

How does the gang affect the neighbourhood /community? (e.g. Does it make the area a good place to move to? Do people want to move away?)

Who controls the estate? How is it done?

Use CARD prompts.
Do you recognise any of these issues as having happened on your estate/ in your neighbourhood?
### Adult Show Cards - Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions exerted towards the person</th>
<th>Activities or actions exerted towards the community or nghd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>Creation of Reputation of the estate/ nghd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation – threats of physical violence to person/family</td>
<td>Control of open/public space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/ tormenting</td>
<td>Threats to business/ taking over business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumour and Gossip</td>
<td>Controlling accommodation, e.g. Sub-letting flats; take over from vulnerable person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical violence</td>
<td>Controlling access to estate, block, nghd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indebtedness/ Doing favours</td>
<td>Criminal damage to estate/ nghd property, e.g. CCTV, signs, locks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family pressure</td>
<td>Visible presence in the nghd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced involvement</td>
<td>Visible presence beyond the nghd, e.g. in or around local schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputational</td>
<td>Intimidation of professionals – e.g. postal staff, health workers, police, concierge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of previous offending history</td>
<td>Robberies/ Burglaries, possibly targeted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Visual controls via graffiti/ murals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of retribution</td>
<td>Buying and selling of stolen goods or create market for this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape/ sexual violence</td>
<td>Money lending/ loan sharking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft/ criminal damage to property</td>
<td>Marking/ setting of territory/ boundaries, e.g. postcodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect/ Code of the street</td>
<td>Business related – drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business related – drugs</td>
<td>Business related – other than drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business related – other than drugs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Young People’s Show Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things the gang could do to you or an individual</th>
<th>Things the gang could do in a neighbourhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harassing, threatening you</td>
<td>Creating a Reputation for your Endz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spreading a Rumour or gossip</td>
<td>Taking over the local park or sports court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacking you physically</td>
<td>Threatening local shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling in a favour you owe</td>
<td>Taking over a flat from someone – maybe moving in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure from someone if your family to get involved/ do something</td>
<td>Having members control who comes onto the estate or into the block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcing or scaring you to get involved</td>
<td>Vandalism to CCTV, signs, door locks, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defending your reputation</td>
<td>Being very visible in the neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building your own reputation</td>
<td>Being very visible in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know your secrets or private information</td>
<td>Threatening local workers - postmen, police, concierge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owing money to someone</td>
<td>Taking revenge on someone by robbing them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of revenge against you</td>
<td>Spraying tags / painting murals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being sexually attacked</td>
<td>Buying and selling stolen goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being pressured to steal or rob</td>
<td>Marking/ setting of territory/ boundaries, e.g. postcodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being pressured to steal or rob</td>
<td>Selling drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being pressured to steal or rob</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things to do with drugs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things to do with other businesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Interview with ex-older 12/11/10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>Did you feel safe growing up there?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>I used to live in central Brixton for 8 years and I’ve still got family there. I’m now in Crystal palace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>How did you get involved?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>I knew what was going on around the area. But I was younger so it was not so bad. But once I moved out and wanted to come back it was difficult. It was a different age group. When you are younger, it’s not so much gangs. You also want to be in it, get involved and not realise the consequences. When you are older, it’s different. When I came back, it was hard for me to come back. You couldn’t really come to Brixton if you weren’t from Brixton. I was about 13 or 14 when I realised this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>How did you get involved?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>There was my friends bigger brothers in the area. They would be around the area and you just wanna do the stuff they are doing really. To be just like them. They are your role models. They were up to mischief, nothing bad – until the age of 15 or 15 when Brixton turned from one gang into many. Brixton was one gang (PDC but then it turned into 15 or 16 different crews. They can be having trouble between each other. One or two of them might sell weed then. Maybe not be like that or even sell weed – but just to be involved. You wanna be somebody. Your friends know who they are, you want them to know who you are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>How do you do this?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>You’ve gotta build a Rep. For me i had the height and strength. I got known for this. Others maybe did stealing from shops for the Olders, doing robberies of bikes, anything.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>Is it important to have a Reputation?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yes, very, very, very important to have a Reputation and if you don’t you’ll be victimised – by anybody. If one person victimises you and sees that you are weak – everyone will victimise you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>So, it’s a defence mechanism really?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yeah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>How do you keep it going?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>You’ve gotta do the stuff that people will respect you for doing. It is the wrong way but you have to do whatever it takes. If you don’t do the stuff everyone is doing then you’re an outcast. And if you’re an outcast, you will get victimised. Being an outcast or being different from everyone else is the worst thing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>How did it move into more serious things?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>When you get older, the Older boys might want you to be with them, like recruit you or your friends. They don’t actually say, Oh to be in this gang you have to do this – for you to go get in the gang, you have to be someone with a Reputation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>To be approached to join...</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>You have to have a reputation. Or be known for something or have done something.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>How do they know?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>They might have seen you do stuff or hear about you. They don’t pressure you or say, do you wanna be in this gang? - that doesn’t really happen, not really. Its either you wanna do it or you don’t wanna do it. If you don’ then you’ll be seen as an outcast and probably victimised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>So the pressure comes from the fact you could become an outcast.?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yeah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>Did you want to get involved?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>I had older cousins and all my friends wanted to be like their older cousins and their older brothers but I didn’t. They was getting involved and going here and there. I wasn’t I was an Outcast. I never got victimised cos of my height. I already had a Rep. I didn’t want it. But everyone else was doing it I felt obliged cos I didn’t have nothing else to do really.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td><strong>How did you know you were an Outcast?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Friends stopped calling and coming round.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td>Did you make a conscious decision to engage in more serious stuff or did it just happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Eventually it was once a week I’d hang around with them then 2 days then eventually every day. Firstly they did normal stuff – about 20 – 25 boys hanging around outside a shop. Might play football. Then someone would abuse someone walking past – all minor stuff. The more serious stuff was the gang violence between different gangs and different areas. That’s when postcode beefs started at my age. If you was from a different area you couldn’t go there. If you saw someone from a different area it would be a problem. Simple stuff like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td>When you moved to Palace did you stay connected?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Yes, my family and a few friends. When you are Younger and walking the streets the older lot don’t see you as a threat or notice you – but once you are older and at a certain age and learn stuff, it’s different. I came back at age 15/16, when Brixton was split up from one gang to 10 -15 different gangs who don’t know who is who. Was PDC, so you come into Brixton….before I could walk through any estate cos of my age – but now, I can’t do that. Cos they don’t know who I am, I could be PDC, Angell or Loughborough Junction. It was problem then and in many areas. It was called the Postcode Beef. If you come from Brixton you couldn’t go Stockwell, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td>How did this start?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>I think through music stuff? People from Brixton saying they are better than people from West Norwood or Stockwell. Then eventually fights happening then escalated from there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td>10 years ago it was PDC. The Otway and GAS etc. Seems also in bits now. How does this happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Probably in a lot of gangs, there is always the main guy and under him, his best friend. There’s always someone who wants to be the main guy. So this person will try and be the main guy but the main guy has too much respect. So he will try and form his own gang. A lot of arguments happen, a lot of falling out so they will set up their own gang and do their own thing. There is a lot of falling out within the gang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td>Such as?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Mostly, that’s person got too much respect and someone else wants some of that. Money is a big issue as well. The number one could be the youngest person in the group – it’s how you carry yourself in the group and how you are. How your Reputation is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td>So it could be a Rep for violence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Or for robbery etc. Don’t have to be oldest. I’ve seen the smallest guy tell big guys what to do. They are seen as more wild.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td>I’ve struggled with eh age groups, can you help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Youngers were 12 -13 yrs old but could be 11 now. In my day it was 13. Now 11-15. 15/16 year olds would classify themselves as Olders. Maybe cos they wouldn’t associate themselves with the 18 – 21 yr olds. That age group will call the 15-16 yr olds their Youngers but the 15-16 yr olds wouldn’t see it like that. By 18, 19, 20 – its Money, it’s not gang violence really, it’s there. Maybe you have the beefs you had before, its maybe still there, problems with other gangs but it’s not as much as it was before. It’s really all about money, you just want money. That’s when I think you choose you pathways at 18/19 – either to try and get an Education or carry on with the gang stuff. A lot of people, everybody chooses at about age 18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td>So run with the gang or go to Education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>You leave school at 16 and have to go to college so it’s not an option to go or not to go. They still carry the gang stuff to college, cos they’ll not go to college by themselves, they will go with their peers. Or a number of them will go together. So they are still carrying on their thing. After two years you finish college so you either</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>So you are 15/16, friends in more serious crime. What else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>It will start with robberies and silly stuff. Phone robberies was no 1 thing. You go on a bus and you are in a group and you steal phones off people alone or in a couple. That was No 1 thing. Then after phones, went onto grab and runs, handbags, wallets, etc. That would be everywhere, uptown everywhere, buses. We’d catch a 159 to West End and get some bus back with business people on the bus and then grab the briefcase, laptops, whatever. We’d scope them out. After CCTV came on the buses we moved onto the streets. So it was grab and run. My crew mostly stayed local. We’d go West End, or Croydon Shopping Malls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>What do you mean by gang violence?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Between 2 different crews. Could be at school. It all really starts in school. A gang is in every school. I went to Stanley. There’s always a main group in the school. My small school had only two gangs. And they got on with each other. But others not so lucky. In Kingsdale they maybe had seven or eight different gangs in there – from Peckham, Brixton, Clapham, everywhere. So madness after school every single day. That’s where everything starts is in school. In Norwood Junction, Stanley. My gang was 2RS (Too rough Squad). There were about 60 of us. It started at school, lots of recruits from there and from the estate. It was a big crew. People from school would come to the estate. The youngest was about 12/13. He acted older though. He wanted to be a rebel and would come everywhere with us. The oldest was about 21.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>Age groups are different. Some say teenage kids acting out. Others say that’s only a start buy by 18 – 21 its more serious but still in Gas, Which is it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>When I started that s how it did go. Now anything goes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>So in five or six years it has changed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yeah, completely changed. When I started selling drugs for my cousins i was 16/17 and he was 19. He’d just started at 19. Kids now do it from age 12/13. It’s shocking, they just pick up knives, guns from an early age. My generation could to blame for this. Now they look back at how we done it and they just wanna do it as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>Do most get out or keep going?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>They keep going on. The stuff I started doing a late age, they are now doing at a young age. So where people my age started smoking weed it was about 18. Now its 13-14 for weed. My mates brother is even young. Weed is all they smoke at that age but selling now is younger too. You’ve got the Older lot trying to make ‘em sell it. Not make ‘em, they wanna do it. Selling crack or heroin, they wouldn’t do it themselves. The Older would say I do this and whoever wants to do it, can do it. They’ll not say you do it – but if you wanna make money I can help you do it. They don’t force them to do it. If you use your brain you know you’ve got 20 Youngers on the estate – it’s all about money. They want shoes, hats, etc, and new stuff and Mum will not pay for it. Especially she won’t pay for chains and stuff if she’s paying bills. So you get your own money. You can’t get a job at 16. Where else are you gonna get money?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>Where do drugs come from?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>I don’t know probably Olders getting it from Olders. It s all connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>At age 18 – 19 some choose to leave, others go on? Is it more drugs or more serious crime?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>To tell the truth, it depends on the kind of guy you are – you are either a Drugs seller or a Robber. So you either go into drugs game or you become a Robber. You know who’s a drugs seller and whose is a robber. The robber would start off doing the phones. Cos there were guys I know who’d be out there every single day – forget school.</td>
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If they went to school they’d be robbing phones there too. They’d be out everyday robbing, phones, laptops, etc. You can tell who’ll be the guy who’ll go to jail for robbery. Money problems mostly. Maybe some of them become more violent eventually.

**Me**

If he’s robbing a 15/16 yr olds what’s he doing at age 19/20?

**Ex-Older**

He’s doing bigger stuff – robbing shops and cash vans – definitely. It started off at an older age but now the Youngers want to do the cash vans as well. They do. Cash vans, shops, Books all sorts. Anything that makes money really.

**Me**

Interesting idea of being a dealer or a robber? Also the idea of the age range stretching from 11 yr olds – 21 yr olds plus. The Older plus still seem to be involved?

**Ex-Older**

Yeah. It’s hard to let go from doing something you know every day to doing something you don’t know. It’s hard to give up – much like shift work. Changing to something different, it’s hard to do you know. I know a lot who have tried to leave it but they get drawn back in. You’ve gotta have a strong head.

**Me**

Why di you find it difficult to come back after being away?

**Ex-Older**

I was about 16/17. I couldn’t just walk to my cousins houses or take a shortcut through the estate. First time I was approached – who are you? Where are you from? It’s different now. It happened twice. Once on a bus. Then I realised it has changed – was very different. It depends how you are – if you rise up to it then they will be violent to you. But if you don’t – well actually it won’t work in your favour either way really – they’re gonna be violent to you.

**Me**

Must be stressful for a young person

**Ex-Older**

It is. There’s lots of stuff you wanna do and go places but you can’t. Nowadays the postcode beef is lingering.

**Me**

How did it start and why is it not so big now?

**Ex-Older**

I think it started in music industry. MCs from this are saying they were better than others. A publicity stunt to get their names out there in MC battles. Then calling your name in Rap – then escalating. At that stage Brixton was one group. Then it split into many groups about 5 years ago.

**Me**

Is it mostly young people involved in the Postcode beef?

**Ex-Older**

As you grow up you pull away from it. It might not seem as bad as it was, it might still be there. I’m no longer involved in it. But there are people my age they can’t go places but its mainly affecting the Youngers. You protect your own, your own area. The first thing you do is protect your area – what you doing here? Why you coming round here? So they might beat him up. He’s from Clapham. So he goes back and says the Brixton boys have beat me up. They’ve come back and its retaliation after retaliation.

**Me**

So its starts by protecting the area stuff? Mostly Youngers who are into that?

**Ex-Older**

By 17 – 18 more bothered by money. That was my age group so right now, they’re bothered with money, crime and gangs so everything is wrapped up together. They want it all at once, these Youngers. They want everything. Everything we’ve done as Olders in our lifetime, they’ve banged it all tougher and want it all now at the same time. It’s all gone Younger. So by the time, I’m 25 their gang violence and gang culture might be a whole different level.

**Me**

Are you the only one who got out?

**Ex-Older**

Theresa bout 5 of us. With my age the guys who were not involved in gangs are involved in gangs now. There were guys who tried their hardest to be in a gang but never made it – they’re also in gang violence now. There were people who were good at school doing homework, GCSEs etc and now I see them, they’re involved in gangs.

**Me**

So they’re moving in the other direction?

**Ex-Older**

Maybe they’ve done what they’re doing for so long they want to move in the other direction. There’s a lot of people who at school you’d say they were going somewhere and they haven’t. They’re now where I was 5 years ago.

**Me**

Why did you move out?

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I’ve done it a long time. I thought I’d done it all, more than most. I didn’t want it to be my life, I just in a gang. I saw my cousin to jail. I can’t see it happening for me. I hated being arrested. I’ve got a lot friends still involved with the gang stuff but I them know, don’t involve me. If you’ve got a beef don’t phone me cos I’ll not help you. A lot of people are still stuck in it. It hard to come out.

What makes it hard to come out?

It’s my friends, I wanted to leave but not leave them behind. They was getting into fights and involving me in beefs. So if I support them in a fight in Clapham then I can’t go there anymore. I was part-time college and part-time in gangs. During college but also fighting then I’d realise I can’t go places so I chose to form on college. It began to impact on my life, so I had to choose.

These new joiners, tell me about them?

Yes, they are aged 19/20. But they’re not going in at the start, they are going in bigger at cash van level. Not knowing about how the gang started, just in at a higher level.

It must be risky?

I don’t understand it – how they were so good at school and now do the gang stuff.

Some say it’s difficult to leave. May get asked to do something or given some knowledge which hooks you back in.

I’ve got a mate driving buses if he’s not got enough money, he’ll go back in short term to get money then go back in legit. He’d go back in just to get the money he needs or when he’s struggling.

How much do people make in drugs?

You can make as little as £50 or as much as £25,000. Depends how much you sell and how big you are really. An Older would probably make that. There are 16 – 17 yr olds who can make that. Say there 100 people on an estate and 20 sell drugs and 80 smoke. So as top man you sell to 20 sellers and they sell to 80 users. So it’s a circle. That one estate. You may be the biggest seller in Brixton and could supply 700 drug sellers and supplying 2000 users. Like a big triangle.

How much do Youngers make selling weed?

It could be £50 a day. It’s a lot of money to them. For £50 a day you only need 5 people to buy. If your Man gives you £15 a week money and you get £50 then that’s £65 a week. You’re easy. Youngers smoke a lot and abuse their money. People my age – a bag of weed would last 2 -3 days. People way older in their 30s – it would last them a week. But for Youngers it would last only a day. Maybe two hours. They abuse the skunk. It’s strong – coated in chemicals. They abuse it. A lot of them have psycho problems too. I know a lot who have ended up with that. They really abuse it. When they want to watch films or play Play station, they some it then – so it’s a habit and its routine. So they have to do it.

What about Facebook challenges and YouTube?

Facebook – maybe say Jim beats up Tom, then it’s a challenge then escalates from there. On YouTube, - it’s mostly music. Mainly. They make videos for each other. They are also about actual incidents. What they talk about is not actually happening – it’s just beef between people.

It leads to Revenge attacks though. Is it just young people involved in this?

It’s mostly young people – maybe some older people too. All ages.

CARDS – Actions re Individuals

Spreading Rumour or Gossip?

Yeah, it happens a lot. Its Chinese Whispers basically. Somebody says something and then, I’m going to kills Your Mum. Then so and so is going to kill your Mum and your whole family. It goes through 100 people before it gets to you and it’s the worst version of the story that comes to you and that you hear – so it’ll be built up to I’m going to kill your whole family! It happens a lot.

Are they purposefully malicious?

Maybe not deliberately but they end up that way. Some people wanna see excitement, some want to make the story sound more exciting. When you think
about it, it’s not really intentional. Its “I heard thing say this”. You are not going to
tell anyone a rubbish story – you want it to be exciting. If you hear it from a
person’s mouth – its rubbish. Yes, it can be very dangerous.

It could be someone got robbed, say, Michael, but he doesn’t know who did it.
Then tom has heard about this and Tom said I know who did it. It was Simon.
Simon then spreads a story. Michael wants revenge so he is ‘beefing’ Tom. It
happens in seconds – all kids now have Blackberrys, broadcasting status, testing
everyone, Facebook, Twitter – it’s real Quick.

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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th>What about taking revenge against someone who let them down?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yeah, for example, You get into a madness and you are friend doesn’t do anything. That’s a prime example. You are then a weak link or not good for the gang. Same as someone annoying you – there may be a punchup. If you are let down, that person may get punched up. But if you didn’t support a friend who was getting beaten up then everyone will turn against you – everyone else cos you never done nothing.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th>Or if you lost money or a stash – what then?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Not really – If you lose money or a Stash then you’ve gotta get it back or replace it</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th>What about paying back a favour?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Not so much</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th>How do you learn that Code?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Just by hanging around. You know what is honour and what isn’t. You know snitching is wrong – rule No 1. Don’t snitch. You know what you are supposed to do and not supposed to do really. Just like what you are allowed to do at school. They don’t even need to explain it.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th>Would the gang go after your family at any time?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>No Mums and Dads, sisters and Grandmas, and little brothers. Maybe cousins your own age or brothers older than you – not females. Unless ofcours its TOO serious – if you had done something to their family. Maybe if you slapped someone’s sister in the face they wouldn’t go after your sister – probably go after you. Females don’t really get involved. I’ve not really heard of it. Would have to be very very serious.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th>Cousins, brothers, sisters pressuring you to get involved, would that happen?</th>
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| Ex-Older | Depends. If you’re 18/19 you know what you’ve been through and you think – Do I want my little cousin to go through that? Even though they are still stuck in it many say don’t get involved as I did with my nephew. Don’t get involved – even though I was. If your cousins a year older than you but still young then he will try and get you involved – not so much pressure but definitely suggest it to you. Makes you see it’s the better thing to do than hang around with your mates who are geeks.

With stuff like this if you are going somewhere in life, the Gangsters will respect you. If you play football and you are good at it and you wanna join the gang, they will say – “You’re not joining the gang –” – cos they can see you are going somewhere in life. They might cus you all the time – “go and play football, you are not allowed with us”. But then they are respecting you for this. Certain things where they know you’ll go far in life, then they will respect you for this. They won’t allow you to join the gang. It’s not always, Oh, you’d better join the gang but if
you’re going somewhere in life they will respect you for it. When I started doing my Youth work – my friends respected me for it. They stopped phoning me. They’d say – “you’re doing a good thing – you don’t want to be around us or get involved with us”. My other friend, he’s a professional footballer now- they’d cuss him out but it was a respect thing cos they saw he’d ambition and they didn’t. It’s not always bad.

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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>What about lending you money?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Large amounts – no not really - if it happened its only pounds. At 16/17, you might lend £100 but you wouldn’t go to an Older to borrow money cos if you can’t pay it back there will be consequence. You’d get it from a friend. A lot of people do fall out over money. Once they know they are in the wrong they will try and get it to the person. Not a major problem as everyone trying to get their own money right now. They group together and try and make money together in one. So if a gang of 20 – we would split into a team of five each. We called it the Robbing Team; the Drugs Team. I was in the Hustler team – we’d sell knock off goods – fake trainers and trackie bottoms. I’d sell it to my friends. Others would sell things too – drugs, robbed goods. Four different teams. We split it like that.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>Who decided to do it like that?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>It just happened one day. The five wanted to go robbing – I didn’t. My cousin phoned me to go look at stolen goods so I took my friends with me. He then gave us each 10 trainers and track-suits to sell. You keep this much money and give me the rest – it was split about 60/40. Everything fell into place. Nothing goes to plan. If you plan it, it doesn’t really work out well.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>Everything is continually changed and re-negotiated. So no one person is directing this?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>No. There is the top man that everyone looks up to but he has to look up to someone else as well</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>But this idea of splitting it up- where did this come from? Was it a member?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yeah, anyone.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>Would people stay in those teams or move around?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yeah, but the Robbing crew got bigger and grew. Everyone wanted to join in the robbing crew. That group got bigger. Mine got smaller until it was just three of us. The other two in our group went off to do drugs. Some people wouldn’t like what they were doing and would change.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>Why join the Robbing group?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>It was fast money! Everyone knows you are a phone robber, so they’ll put in an order for an I-phone. You know who you’ll sell it to already. A lot of foreigners or phone shops will take it – they don’t know if it’s stolen. So you get rid of it quickly. Fake trainers, handbags and knock-off track suits often sold at school and everyone my age. They want the latest gear but can’t afford it. Trainers are £50 so you sell for £20.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>What about disrespecting or dissing?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>It’s very big issue. Disrespecting someone – they’re not going to have it. The main example – Slagging them off really or backstabbing. YouTube – if someone mentions you on this or Internet and said your name. It’s based on embarrassment. If they call you a dickhead etc. It’s a major thing. Dissing a Reputation it’s the same thing you can’t do it – it’s a violation. Everyone used that term and would know what it means. Its back to this Hidden Code.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Me</th>
<th><strong>What about Secret or personal information about you?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Rule of the Road – never trust a girl! They open their mouth but don’t know what they are doing. They could be on a bus going passed your house and they will be like, “Oh, that’s where Michael lives” they want others to know that they know the top man, Michael. They want people to know they are connected but don’t know what they are saying. Then there are some who do know what are they are doing and a boy would say, “Oh, you talk to so and so – so tell me where does he live?” now that is a problem – it’s really snitching. We call it ‘dry snitching’, cos they don’t know what they are doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>So they're giving away information by being a bit stupid really?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yeah. For example, going to the police station when you are arrested. Saying I wasn't there but I don't know if he was. Here you never said he wasn’t there, you just said you weren't there. So you left him in the dirt. So it's dry-snitching cos you never said he wasn’t there. He's already said he was with you but you say you don't know if he was there, so he's dropped in it now. Information is important. Knowing where you live or what school you go to. Even your number is personal. Your bredrin. It's really annoying when you've got your enemies phoning you saying they're gonna kill you – whatever. It's your personal number.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>How do you keep it private?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Its kinda difficult. I've had people who I'd classify as my good friends and they end up being the enemy. They ended up going to the same school as the enemy so they hang around with them now. Now he knows where I live. Information gets traded. Some not purposefully or consciously and some by mistake. It leads to big problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>Girls used to set people up or get information? Girls used to get information on other gang members</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yeah. It happens a lot.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>What about taking revenge on someone by robbing them?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>They'd target but maybe not rob them – possibly a fight but if you'd got problems with them you may take something off them – a chain for example. Straightforward revenge. Sometimes it's to teach a lesson as they can become friends again.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>What about hiding weapons, cash or drugs?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>It happens all the time. Everybody's got a friend who's not involved in gangs so it's mainly at their house. If he doesn't want to do it, then it's at a girl's house. You'll not put in someone's house if they are really known to the police. Cos they'll find your cash, gun or drugs. So someone not connected to the gang or a female is best.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>So you have a group of central people and then those outside the gang. They must be connected though still into the gang of they must know somebody who is in the centre of the gang?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Well yeah.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>So really it's one foot in and one foot out.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>It could be via drugs. Cash, if large amount then could be done for money laundering if you are carrying this. Not heard of a 14 yr old holding too much money. Police could investigate how you got all your money.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>What about girls doing sexual favours?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Well not unwillingly – only if they wanted to do it. Then yeah. Not forced it would just happen. When girls do say it happened unwillingly it is usually because they have just been found out that it happened and they just say this. They said I was forced. At my age if do this at a young age and your friend finds out you are then branded as a slut. So they say – &quot;he made me do it&quot; – especially if your friends are all calling you a slut and you've soon got no friends. Also if your parents find out then that is worst.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>What about girls that hang with the gang?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>A boy will get feelings for her and her for him. Then they'll get together and become a couple if they break up she can stay in the gang and will probably do same thing with another boy. The Girls in the gang usually go around 3 or 4 boys in the gang. She might be called a 'Jezzy ' or a 'slut'. But she won't know this – it'll be private amongst the boys.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>Does her rank or her Rep suffer?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>It depends how she carries herself. If she's normal. If she's a BAD girl, - out there mashing up other girls, then no not really. Overall, You'd get a bad reputation and be called a slut.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td><strong>What about forced involvement – even using religion?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>A couple of years ago a lot of people turned Muslim. If you are not Muslim then you'll get beaten up. A lot of people talked about it. I didn't experience it myself –</td>
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but it doesn’t really happen these days. I don’t know if it was hearsay. It’s not there at all now. There was a large population converting to being Muslim back then. But now it seems not important – you are whatever you are. So it doesn’t happen. You can be anything in any gang.

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<th>Me</th>
<th>COMMUNITY CARDS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Reputation for the neighbourhood?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>Sure, if you are starting up a new gang you want to be known. You might have a vendetta against others before you start a new gang. Gangs really start from an area, people are friends, you know you and your five friends. You all five go to different schools or their friends call come together. That’s how it starts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>They come together to make a gang. To get your name on the map you might be fighting, really not selling drugs to get your name up there. Really it would be gang violence to get your name up there. You might join with another gang, e.g. Angell Town and GAS gang join together and GAS already have their name and you would do anything to get your name out there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>Then YouTube etc comes in here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>YouTube can have a large effect. Music is a big part of it – it helps get the gang known. Nowadays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>What about threatening local shops?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>No not really, only stealing drinks maybe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>What about taking over a flat from a vulnerable person?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>No not really, well only if a heroin or crack users house which is used as a smoking house. Then people will allow you to use their house, but they will say you must bring me something. So shotters will use their head so they will take up some weed. Also other people will using drugs there so they will be able to sell there anyway. They would let you use it. You don’t really take it over, you just use it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>What about the gang controlling whoever came into the estate, or the block?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Yeah, the Postcode Beef...They’ll be on the stair. If they don’t know you, you will get approached. Not anyone standing out there looking. Just that if they see your face and they don’t know you they will approach you. It’s not everyone who will get approached – just if you look like a gang culture person. If you don’t look like a gang culture person or gang affiliated, then you’d get approached.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>I saw look-outs, I think in Angell town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>This would be perhaps a day when there was a Beef or a Beef expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>What about vandalising CCTV or door locks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Block doors maybe – cos its cold outside and they want to get in into the warm. Attacking CCTV means showing your face anyway. Guys on Angell town and Somerlayton know exactly where the cameras are. They know the range where to hide and where to run as covered by the cameras. When you get arrested, the police show you the camera range and the shot. You then report this back and you then change your behaviour of a robbery for example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>What age range would get involved in this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Just Youngers. At my age (20), you are trying to stop getting attention from police.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>What about taking over local parks and open spaces?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>In Summertime. Not really taking over but if 30 hoodies were in a park it will be intimidating. So not on purpose – it’s just being there really. They don’t go to parks in Winter – they go inside blocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>Are parks neutral spaces?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Well you wouldn’t go to Brockwell park – only for a funfair, Lido or country Show only for that otherwise you’d use the local green space or court on your estate. Your patch would mainly be something you call your ‘frontline’. Mainly where the closest shops are on your estate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>What about being visible in the neighbourhood?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Older</td>
<td>Colours etc was a phase but that died out. Very 2008. That has fizzled out. To make yourself visible? Not really on purpose. But if you’ve got 10 friends – the estate will all see you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me</strong></td>
<td><strong>Would it ever be beneficial to be visible?</strong></td>
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<td>--------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Sure if you heard Peckham Young Guns were coming over – they could cap one of your friends or beat him up so, yeah, you’ve got to ‘group up’ and ‘stay large’. If you’ve heard they are coming then there is going to be a gang fight obviously. They are coming to your area. So you’ll get your numbers up, otherwise you just draw attention to yourself.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>What about selling drugs outside London?</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Not really, only if you know someone big. It would be higher level stuff only.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>What about boy with vicious dogs?</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>If you own a Pit Bull you don’t want it to act like a chiquaqua, you own a vicious dog. You’d walk around with it and show it off, you wouldn’t purposefully use it. You might use it for protection if you had been bullied but not to threaten people</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>Do gang have Pit bulls?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Yes, in Larkhall Park, it was Pit Bulls used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>What about Murals and tags around the area?</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Years ago. It was big when I was at school. It’s died out. Youngers would do it. There are some who would do the big Graffiti stuff – it’s their thing – but they are not in gangs. Gangs did do it – but not anymore.</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>Gangs threatening people coming onto the estate such a police, health workers, council staff, etc?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>The police – it depends. Obviously you are on your own beat – if they know you are a weak officer they will victimise you and abuse you, especially the PCSOs.</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>Who is the most violent or most dangerous crew at the moment in the area?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>The biggest Rep is GAS gang. ABM and Roadside Gs – are older. They’ve got Youngers but its GAS really – the amount of violence is big.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>Have they taken over from PDC?</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Not like anyone ever really said – you take over, but really they have.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>I thought they were PDC Youngers years ago but now they have got their own brand?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Yeah, along those lines. Not all gangs are formed to be out there and violent, it can be just friends. If they see you doing something positive, they will respect you for it. No-one really forces you to join in. Really you make that decision for yourself. You can say yes or say no. No one really forces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>And those saying they had to join for protection?</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Protection is just bullying. They are saying for you to be in the gang. They’re just bullying you cos you are weaker than others. You are a swot at school while they are bunking off. They don’t force you – but it plays on your mind. If I act more like them then they’ll leave me alone. I know it’s a contradiction but it’s how it happens.</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>So not everyone goes into this to be a criminal it just happens that way?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>Some do it to be left alone, some to get friends, some do it to be known, they’ve all got their own reasons. It’s not the peer-pressure that everyone keeps saying. Some people use that as an excuse.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>The big argument now is whether gangs are organised or disorganised, or it is between the two or is it a bit of both.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>I would say organised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Me</strong></th>
<th><strong>So Youngers are mostly Wannabees, in it for fun, dram and some join for protection. As they get older they sell drugs and want money. The Olders will stop doing ASB and nonsense and get more focussed and organised and the organisation becomes better. At the bottom it’s disorganised and at the top more organised.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-Older</strong></td>
<td>That’s exactly what it is.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Summary profile of principle active gangs in SW9 (2009 – 2011)

### GAS

GAS stands for Grind and Stack or more notoriously Guns and Shanks. They are considered by police to be the most problematic gang operating in SW9 at present. They are based in an area from Brixton Road up to Stockwell Park, parts of Myatts Field, including Angell Town and Loughborough. They are known to be in beef with Peckham young Guns and TN1 in Tulse Hill. GAS are linked to the PDC and OC, however they now have their own brand. The PDC remain well rooted in the area however as they have gotten older, new Youngers, including GAS, are more visible. Graffiti tags on Angell Town suggest GAS view themselves as the new power in Angell Town. As one Younger said recently to the police, ‘we run this estate’. The oldest GAS member is 18 yrs old. Rumours abound that the PDC run the main operations behind the scenes now was the Elders.

The GAS gang have strong links to OC (Organised Crime) on Stockwell Park and Myatts Fields. This includes some common members and again GAS appear to operate as the Youngers of OC. GAS is thus a hybrid of both PDC and OC. Again OC are now older with higher levels of criminality and organised crime with consequent reduced visibility and less street dealing. Certainly there is considerable interaction between the two. Both have membership in excess of 40 plus.

GAS gang are prolific in ‘Reppin’ their neighbourhood on social networking sites such as Facebook. As they do so they denigrate and ‘diss’ other rival gangs with provocative lyrics, images of incursions onto their estates and chants and challenges, often specific to other individual gang members. This has brought multiple problems for them from neighbouring rival gangs, both in SW9 and across the border in Southwark, with the PYG. Thus at present GAS gang are surrounded by gangs that have ‘beef’ with them: TN1 from Tulse Hill to the south, PYG from Peckham to the east; ABM to the west. Presently the area to the north is clear. As a result of these numerous ‘beefs’, GAS gang are considered to be in a precarious position and experience multiple incursions onto their Endz. This has also led numerous young men in this area to affiliate to one or other of the rival gangs for their own safety.

### Roadside G's (Roadie Gangsta’s)

Another key gang in SW9 is Roadside G’s. They operate between Loughborough Junction and Myatts Fields and appeared approximately 2008. They are currently in beef with ABM, Peckham Young Guns and OC. In the past two years Roadside Gs splintered off from O-tray and now operate from slightly different areas. This was thought to have occurred when several members of T-ray were imprisoned. Roadside Gs are again older and deemed to be more serious, operating at a higher level of serious criminality. They have a low visible presence, maintain a low profile and only appear at certain times. They can bring considerable violence when required and are considered, ‘hardcore’ and ‘the up and coming gang in SW9 at present’. They are heavily involved in trading and dealing drugs in regional towns. They are said to have a loose hierarchical structure but are the most organised of all Lambeth gangs at present. Boys join them cos they group by location and estate. They are also affiliated to GAS Youngers. Recently the police uncovered 2 loaded Mac 10s submachine guns and one Scorpion machine gun in a communal shed in Loughborough Junction. The guns had been held by GAS for Roadside G’s.

### 031 (O-tray One)

The O-tray gang is currently situated north of Clapham Rd and on Wandsworth Rd side bordering SW8 and Stockwell in SW9. This brings them into conflict with ABM in SW9 with whom they have a long-standing rivalry. This has resulted in several deaths of members linked 031. This territorial rivalry is often played out in neutral spaces such as Larkhall Park, the scene of the murder of 16 yr old Seyi Ogunyemi from ABM by Chrisdian Johnston from O-tray. They are said to belong to a loose Bloodset alliance of gangs in south London. This however is only emulation and is not certification of the USA Blood gangs. They retain links to Roadside Gs.

### PDC (Peel Dem Crew or Poverty Driven Children)

PDC was centered around Angell Town estate in SW9 and developed as the Youngers from the local gang the 28s. Throughout the 1990s PDC were the most prominent and active gang in SW9. Key members were known London wide and their activities involved drugs, shootings, stabbing, robberies and violence. As members aged (they are now 30 plus) their activities changed and they are now less visible and on the surface, appear to be less active. However known figureheads remain in the community. They have also
moved into running local businesses and key members have moved into the music business. Around 2005 they changed their moniker from Peel Dem Crew to Poverty Driven Children to reflect their origins. Some viewed as a cynical move as they are widely reputed to remain in control of the area, directing operations through their Youngers, the GAS gang and OC. The evolution of the gang is given narrative form in Street Boys by Tim Pritchard. When younger they often wore purple colours to identify themselves and in early 2000 became linked to the Muslim Boys, along with South Man Syndicate in Streatham. A local Angell town resident summed it up as:

‘To me they’re the most proper gang – like Cripps and Bloods, they match that. They’re very organised. They’ve legitimised most of their activities into music production now. They are now by and large legit. They’ve got older but still active’.

(Male Resident)

Several locals and professionals reported PDC have moved on to higher levels of crime and expanded their areas of influence rather than focus on just one estate. They are occasionally still seen on the estate. For some residents and professionals PDC represents the institutionalisation of gangs as described by Hagedorn (2008). This included their influence within business and political structures in the neighbourhood.

‘PDC - it’s a different stage. We are in danger of it becoming too ingrained, like organised crime in the States. They appear to be taking a step towards that which is worrying. Because that is where you get serious trouble’. (Male Resident)

TN1

As the main gang in Tulse Hill they have also joined in alliance with PYG against GAS. This ‘beef’ is exacerbated following the stabbing of a young GAS member, during which a TN1 member ripped his chain from his neck whilst he was on the ground. Following this ‘violation’ a group of GAS members traced the violator (aged 15) and stabbed him to death outside his school in West Norwood. Like many others, they will affiliate with rival gangs for a short time if its opportune and serves their needs. Currently in joint ‘beef’ against GAS. This alliance will however be brief and eventually fail as these are transient and opportunistic alliances.

Organised Crime, (The OC)

Based around Myatts Fields, in SW9, and are known to be linked into GAS and South Man Syndicate in Streatham. They were highly active in the mid 2000s. They are also known to be rivals of ABM, O-Tray and Peckham Young Guns. OC are now older with higher levels of criminality and organised crime with consequent reduced visibility and less street dealing. Recently Younger OC and Tiny OC have both evolved from the original OC gang.

Caveat: The above commentaries are composite reports arising from the respondents interviews, undertaken in 2010 and 2011. It has not been possible to verify in full the accuracy of the commentaries given and in the fast changing social field of SW9, it is likely that the situation has now evolved. The location of these gangs in SW9 is shown in XXXXXXXX.
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