How Do You Tell a "Weasel" From a "Fraggle"?

Developing an explanatory model of differential gang membership: A grounded theoretical approach.

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Overview

Acknowledgements

There are a number of people without whose help this thesis would never have been completed. I am not usually very good at this sentimental stuff, but here goes...

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While I cannot give their names (to ensure the anonymity of the research participants), I would like to thank to staff at the Youth Offending Institution for allowing me access to collect the data reported in this thesis, for their help in recruiting participants, and for generally looking after me while I was with them. And finally, perhaps most importantly, I would like to thank all the young men who volunteered their time to sit with me for an hour or two and talk about their lives and experiences – without their help there *really* would have been no thesis.

I hope that's everyone...

Abstract

Once labelled as a "gang member", young people may be subject to gang stereotypes, losing their individuality. However, gang membership is *varied*, with (at the most basic level) a distinction between Core (i.e. those forming a deep commitment to their gang) and Fringe gang members (i.e. those tending to drift in and out of gang membership). To date, multiple theories have attempted to explain why some people join gangs and others do not. However, no dedicated theory has attempted to explain why some gang members become Cores while others become Fringes. The research described in this thesis set out to uncover (psychological, sociological, and criminological) differences between Core and Fringe gang members, and devise a theoretical framework capable of explaining varied gang commitment. Interview data from 20 incarcerated Core and Fringe gang members were subject to Grounded Theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The key difference between Cores and Fringes was their exposure to pro-social peers – all described membership of pro- and anti-social/gang peer groups, however, Cores ultimately reject pro-social peers in favour of anti-social/gang peers, while Fringes actively maintain commitment to both. This effect was influenced by perceived differences in: stability of family structure and bonds; success or failure in mainstream education; the experience and expression of emotional reactions and empathy; early-years transience and the perception of social neglect; locus of control and blame attribution; and, impression management via social comparison processes. Reactions to disappointment determined whether Fringes' commitment to pro- or anti-social peers was the more salient at any given time. Cores' commitment to gang/anti-social peers was primarily motivated by a desire for excitement, material status, and/or social status. Fringes' fluid commitment to pro-social and gang/anti-social peers was motivated by a desire for acceptance, (emotional) support, and role-models. Implications for gang risk assessment, prevention, and intervention are discussed.

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Thesis Outline

Globally, the term "gang" has been liable to induce a moral panic in recent years (e.g.
Hallsworth & Young, 2004; Katz, 2011; McCorkle & Miethe, 1998; Morgan, Dagistanli, &
Martin, 2010; Sela-Shayovitz, 2011; St Cyr, 2003). While by no means a new phenomenon
(e.g. Asbury, 1928; 1933; 1936; 1940; Davies, 2008; Gooderson, 2010; Hill, 2010) for the
last 15 years or so the behaviour of young people in social groups has been under intense
scrutiny by the public, Criminal Justice System (CJS), and policy-makers alike. This is seen
in both the increasing frequency with which stories of gangs appear in the UK media (see
Figure x.1) and the growing sensationalism with which they are reported, with headlines such
as "*LA gangs take over UK streets*" (Wheeler & Brooks, 2010) and "*Youth gangs triple child
murder rate*" (Wynne-Jones & Leapman, 2008).
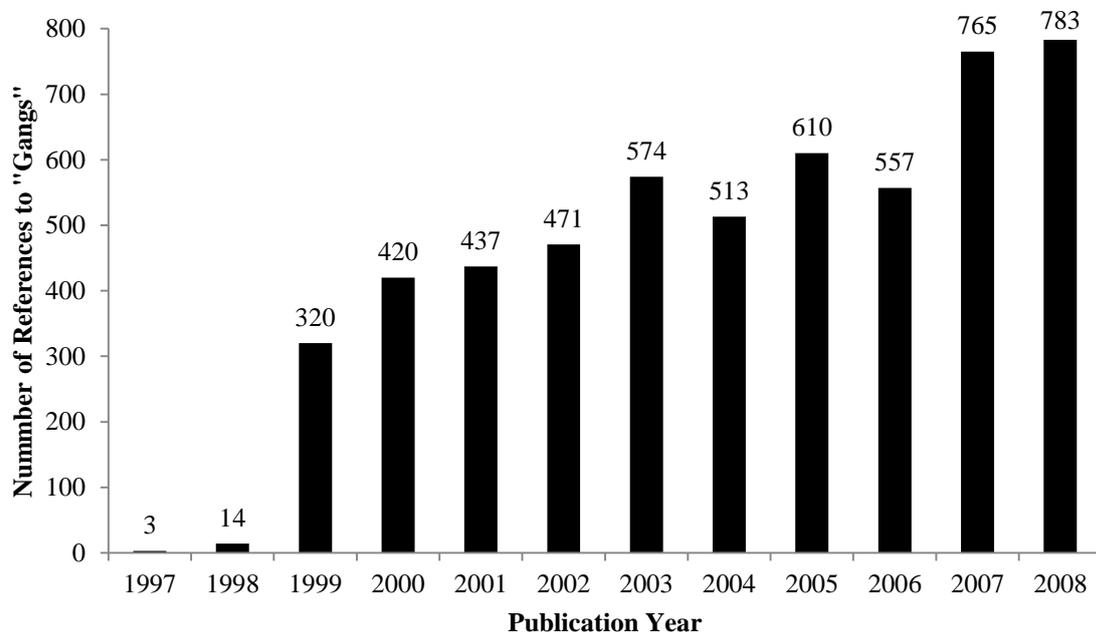
Figure x.1.   Number of references to the term "gang" in the Guardian newspaper 1997-2008
(adapted from Fitzgerald, 2008).

The notion that youth gangs exist in the UK is a contentious one (e.g. see Chapter One for a brief discussion of the Eurogang paradox: Klein, Kerner, Maxson, & Weitekamp, 2001) but it cannot be denied that gangs *do* exist in towns and cities across Britain (Bradshaw, 2005; Klein et al., 2001; Mares, 2001; Pitts, 2007; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002). It is estimated that approximately six percent of ten to 19 year olds in the UK can be described as gang members (Sharp, Aldridge, & Medina, 2006; Centre for Social Justice, 2009). It also cannot be denied that gang membership facilitates violent behaviour over and above mere association with delinquent and/or criminal peers (Bendixen, Endresen, & Olweus, 2006; Klein, Weerman, & Thornberry, 2006), in addition to other forms of criminal behaviour (e.g. theft, burglary, vandalism, and drug dealing and use; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, & Chard-Wierschem, 1993). Evidence of gang violence involving illegal firearms has been recorded in a number of British cities (ACPO, 2002; Hales & Silverstone, 2005; Hoggarth & Wright, 2002; Schneider, Rowe, Forrest, & Tilley, 2004; cited in Hales, Lewis, & Silverstone, 2006; Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002). Sharp et al. (2006) determined that: 63% of their identified gang members had offended in the previous year (compared to only 26% of non-gang members); and 28% had offended on a frequent basis (compared to only seven percent of non-gang members). Sharp et al. (2006) concluded that the six percent of British young people who are gang associated are responsible for 21% of all crime committed by ten to 19 year olds. While an argument can be made that reactions to gangs by the British media and public may be disproportionate to the problems they pose (Parkinson, 2005) and are likely fuelled by the many myths that surround the nature of gangs (e.g. Howell, 2007), the reality of gangs do pose a considerable problem to the communities in which they are found (Gilbertson, 2009) and are most definitely worthy of research attention (Short, 2005; Sullivan, 2005).

How Do You Tell a "Weasel" From a "Fraggle"? Developing an explanatory model of differential gang membership: A grounded theoretical approach

One myth that surrounds the issue of gangs is that all gang members are the same. There is a tendency, once the label of gang member has been applied to an individual, to lump he or she in with a stereotype of what a gang member should be. This stereotype is often driven by (inaccurate) perceptions of gangs that are perpetuated by the media. However, variation amongst gang members does exist, with some (Core gang members) forming a deep commitment to gang membership and others (Fringe gang members) tending to drift in and out of it (e.g. Alleyne & Wood, 2010; Bolden, 2010; Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Decker, 2012; Spergel, 1995; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003). However, to date we do not know precisely why this differential gang membership occurs. If we could explain this difference theoretically, potentially more refined methods of gang prevention and intervention may be developed. The purpose of the research described in this thesis, therefore, sets out to uncover the differences between Core[1] and Fringe[2] gang members, in terms of psychological, sociological, and criminological processes. Ultimately, its aims are to develop a theory of differential gang membership to describe and explain the wide variation in young people's involvement with gangs. The following pages provide a brief overview of the chapters contained in this thesis.

Chapter One: Gangs – Definition, Description, and Typology.

Perhaps the greatest issue facing academics, politicians, practitioners, and the public with regards to youth gangs is also the most basic issue they are faced with – simply, what is a youth gang? The definition debate has been raging for many years and shows no sign of

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[1] Referred to derogatorily as "weasels" by a participating gang member.

[2] Referred to derogatorily as "fraggles" by another participating gang member.

abating. The purpose of this chapter then is to review the current state of academic thinking with regards to youth gangs' structural features. This chapter: considers some of the various definitions of youth gangs that have been put forward; discusses the wider issue of definition versus description of youth gangs and their members; and examines proposed typologies of youth gang members.

Chapter Two: Theories on Gangs – Psychology, Criminology, and Interactions.

Having examined the definition debate, discussed variations in individual gang membership, and settled on a tentative definition of gangs for use by this research, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of the various theories put forward to explain gangs. This chapter: considers the applicability of psychological theories to the understanding of gangs; discusses the sociological and criminological theories of delinquency and gang membership that make up the bulk of the literature on gangs; and evaluates the growing importance of interactional models that combine the best of sociological, criminological, and psychological theorising.

Chapter Three: Research Design – Aims, Procedural Methods, and Analytic Strategy.

Having decided on the most appropriate definition of a gang for use in this research (Chapter One), and discussed existing theories of gang membership that account for the differences between gang and non-gang members (Chapter Two), the purpose of this chapter is to describe the current research. A Grounded Theory approach (GT: Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to data analysis was utilised, since the procedure is designed to aid in the generation of new theories of social processes. For processes that are under-researched (such as those which lead to differential gang membership) it is an excellent methodological tool. This chapter: outlines the aims of the research in detail; details the analytical strategy employed at the heart

of this research; and describes the procedures and methods used for participant recruitment and data collection that form the basis of the new theory.

Chapter Four: Core Gang Members – Trigger, Directional, and Maintenance Factors.

Core gang members (referred to simply as "Cores" throughout this thesis) are those individuals who are reasonably committed to their gang and its activities (Klein, 1971; Klein & Maxson, 1989). Based on several criteria, approximately half of the participants recruited for this research were identified as having Core status, and the purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the GT analysis of these participants' data. This chapter: discusses the demographic characteristics of participating Cores; presents a brief overview of a theoretical model derived from the information provided by Cores; and details the main themes emerging from the Cores' data, which will help explain why people may become entrenched in gangs.

Chapter Five: Fringe Gang Members – Trigger, Maintenance, and Reactionary Factors.

Fringe gang members (referred to simply as "Fringes" throughout this thesis) are those individuals who tend to drift in and out of gang activity (Klein, 1971; Klein & Maxson, 1989). Based on several criteria, approximately half of the participants recruited for the research were identified as having Fringe status, and the purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the GT analysis of these participants' data. Consistent with Chapter Five, this chapter: discusses the demographic characteristics of participating Fringes; presents a brief overview of a theoretical model derived from the information provided by Fringe participants; and details the main themes emerging from the Fringes' data, which will help explain why people may only "flirt" with gang membership.

Chapter Six: Core vs. Fringe Gang Members – Similarities, Differences, and Hypotheses.

Core and Fringe membership represent differing degrees of association with a gang. However, the importance of the gang as a unified whole should never be underestimated. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to draw together the two theoretical models presented in Chapters Five and Six, to present a theoretical account of a gang's intra-group processes. This chapter: highlights those factors which are common to both Core and Fringe membership, and accounts for why some common factors may be more important for one form of membership than the other; discusses those factors specific to Cores and those specific to Fringes, and accounts for why the presence of these factors may lead individual gang members along the paths that they follow; and from these comparisons, derives hypotheses representative of underlying theory, a grounded Theory of Differential Gang Membership, capable of explaining why such variable commitment emerges in gangs.

Chapter Seven: Discussion – Implications, Limitations, and Future Research.

Having finalised a theoretical model capable of accounting for why some young people become Cores whilst others limit themselves to Fringe membership, the purpose of this chapter is to draw the thesis to a close. This chapter: places the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership within the wider context of gang theory and research; discusses the presence and implications of any limitations associated with the development of the theory; and outlines how the theory may be used to develop future research.

Chapter One

Gangs – Definition, Description, and Typology

A key problem ... is that the notion of a 'gang' is terribly permissive. It can be evoked in so many ways that delineating what is and what is not one remains problematic.

– Hallsworth and Young (2004, p. 12)

Gang research has been plagued by an inability to satisfactorily answer what must be its most basic question – what is a gang? This issue of definition has been debated long and hard and has become a central part of the gang literature (for reviews see: Ball & Curry, 1995; Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2013; Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001; Klein, 2011; Pitts, 2008; Spergel, 1995; Wood & Alleyne, 2010; as well as numerous chapters in Esbensen & Maxson, 2012). Essentially, the problem of definition today stems from decades of work based on overly-subjective, occasionally inaccurate, and frequently inconsistent uses of the term "gang". Klein (2006; 2011) is a key proponent of the need for a consistent definition in the research literature. Without such a definition, comparative research into gang membership (i.e. comparing gang data across time, location, type of involvement, and mode of data collection) cannot be conducted. This is most costly for scientific knowledge-building about gangs (Klein, 2011). Lack of consistency in gang terminology is also an issue beyond academic circles that might have grave implications for anyone accused of committing a gang-related offence. Smithson, Ralphs, and Williams (2013) describe the problematic way in which the term gang is used in the UK (particularly in relation to matters of policy), and how this issue may serve to marginalise some members of ethnic minority communities.

Similarly, Gilbertson and Malinski (2005) demonstrate that gang definitions vary quite widely from one (US) jurisdiction to the next. This problem is exacerbated by disagreement as to what is (or should be) the unit of analysis – the gang, gang members, or (criminal) behaviours of gangs and their members (Decker, 2007).

With this in mind, the purpose of this chapter is to review the current state of academic thinking (sociological, criminological, and psychological) with regards to gangs' structural features. It will first consider some of the various definitions of gangs used by academic researchers, by various agencies tasked with dealing with gangs (e.g. police and Government), and by community- and gang members. Controversies and disagreements surrounding the issue of definition will be described by discussing the wider issue of definition versus *description* of gangs and their members (Klein, 2006; Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina, & van Gemert, 2009). Several proposed gang and gang member typologies will be discussed before, finally, an argument will be put forth to explain the choice of definition for use in this thesis.

Gang Definition

The earliest gang definition provided in the empirical literature comes from Thrasher (1927: see Chapter Two for a more detailed examination of his work and influence), who suggested that a gang is "...*an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict*" (p. 46). This group would display a range of behaviours (e.g. face-to-face contact, milling around, and planning) that would promote the development of a group awareness, with traditions, solidarity, morale, and an attachment to local territory. Since then, as interest in gangs grew (among other researchers but also law enforcement and government officials, the popular and news media, and the wider public alike), a myriad of

problems have arisen with regards to how they should be defined.[3] It is perhaps easiest to

discuss these problems by first considering a (possible) *solution* to these problems, so as to

better set them in a context.

The Eurogang network is a collection of over one hundred researchers and other

parties, spanning fifteen countries, and dedicated to examining gangs (see Esbensen &

Maxson, 2012, for a detailed overview of the network's background).   Specifically, it formed

in response to the long-standing tradition of denial that gangs existed in Europe, mainly

because European governments and criminal justice agencies would rely on the stereotype of

American gangs[4] to inform their understanding of what a gang is – by denying the existence

of *American* gangs in Europe, the *outright* existence of gangs in Europe was effectively

denied. This was termed the Eurogang Paradox (Klein, Kerner, Maxson, & Weitekamp,

2001). With this observation in mind, the fledgling network assigned itself three primary

objectives:

- To build a foundation of knowledge regarding the European socio-economic

  conditions and institutional processes that foster or curtail social exclusion and the

  subsequent emergence and persistence/dissolution of youth gangs and problematic

  groups;

- To construct an infrastructure for comparative, multi-method, cross-national research

  on youth violence in group contexts;

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[3] For instance, the opening quote from Hallsworth and Young (2004, p. 12) continues: "*When is a group of young men not a gang? Does it apply only when they are poor? If so, are the 'gang-like' qualities observed conferred or self ascribed? And just how many crimes do not involve group activity of some kind? Are the groups also gangs and if not why not? And if we want to firm matters up by arguing that, by gang, we mean an organised group pursuing a collectively agreed criminal goal, why apply the label to young people? Why not talk about corporations such as Enron (a very successful criminal gang but never classified as such) or indeed the activities of government?*"

[4] e.g. that American gangs are involved in a constant series of serious, often fatal, criminal activities such as Black-on-Black crime, drive-by shootings, turf wars, and gun crime (Bennett & Holloway, 2004). To add to the paradox, nowadays such violent gangs are less a reflection of the reality of American gangs (Klein & Maxson, 1989) and more a reflection of how they are portrayed in the popular media.

- To disseminate and effectively utilise knowledge to inform the development of effective local, national, and international responses to emerging youth crime and violence issues.

Among Eurogang's early tasks was to devise a common definition of gangs. Without such a definition, the network's objective of building an infrastructure of comparative research could not be met (Klein, 2006). Possessing and utilising a consensual definition is necessary to ensure that multiple researchers (in common cause but divided by location, culture, and methodology) can be sure that they are "...*studying the same apples and not oranges*" (Maxson & Esbensen, 2012, p. 304).[5]

The youth gang of the Eurogang definition was to be its own entity (Klein et al., 2006), distinct from a range of similar types of group, both criminal (e.g. prison gangs, motorcycle gangs, terrorist groups, and adult criminal cartels and organisations)[6] and non-criminal (e.g. any other formal or informal youth group that are commonplace during childhood and adolescence). As a further means of attaining specificity, and to ensure cross-cultural consistency in terminology use, it was decided to use the phrase "troublesome youth group" in place of "gang" wherever possible (Weerman et al., 2009). In translating the word "gang" into other languages, cultural stereotypes would often be stirred up to the point where the meaningfulness of comparisons between groups from different countries could not be relied upon (i.e. apples *were* being mixed with oranges). By developing an alternative phrase that (for all intents and purposes) meant "gang" but which could be easily translated without the stereotypical baggage, this problem could be overcome.

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[5] Klein (2011) also cites numerous studies, conducted worldwide, demonstrating how variations in gang definition can lead to much variation in findings.

[6] Although prior to the development of the Eurogang definition, there had been previous calls for the expansion of the term "gang" to include other such groups (e.g. Anderson, Mangels, & Dyson, 2001). Further Ayling (2011) suggests that the "*boundaries that researchers have drawn between gangs and other types of criminal groups, particularly organised crime, are becoming blurred*" (p. 1).

The process of developing the actual definition began by considering a range of "gang qualities" that would attract widespread, multi-cultural acceptance if incorporated into a definition. In doing so, the intent was to specify the *necessary* elements for a group to be classified as a gang – not an easy task given the abundance of qualities or characteristics that had been incorporated into gang definitions over the years (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2 for a [by no means complete] comparison). A distinction was imposed on some of these characteristics to make the task of definition more manageable, with some characteristics labelled "*gang definers*" and others labelled "*gang descriptors*". Gang definers are those qualities that the Eurogang network deems to be critical to the characterisation of a group as a gang, while descriptors are qualities that might describe a gang's characteristics but are not essential for distinguishing gangs from other groups.

Gang Definers.

After lengthy debate, the final definition was agreed at a Eurogang network meeting in Germany in 2002, and stated that (Weerman et al., 2009):

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

Within this definition, the network identified five core qualities necessary for defining a gang: 1) whether a group identity is in evidence; 2) the durability of the group; 3) whether the group is street-oriented; 4) the youthfulness of the group; and 5) whether the group engages in illegal activity.

Table 1.1

Characteristics of Gangs included in Research Definitions

	Use of term "group"	Self-accepted	Accepted by others	Self-formed	Mutual interests	Identity	Structure & Planning	Durable	Attached to Territory	Youthful	Collective behaviour	Conflict-driven	Criminal	Violent	Leader	Identifying feature ***
Thrasher 1927	●			●			●		●		●	●				
Klein 1971			●							●			●			●
Haskell & Yoblonsky 1982													●	●		
Miller 1982				●	●				●				●	●	●	
Spergel 1984									●				●		●	
Curry & Spergel 1988							●		●			●			●	
Decker & van Winkle 1996	●															
Curry & Decker 1998	●												●			
Hakkert et al. 2001	●	●	●										●			
Bennett & Holloway 2004 (UK)	●					●	●						●			
Bullock & Tilley 2002 (UK)	●	●	●					●	●				●			
Hallsworth & Young 2006 (UK)	●	●	●			●			●		●		●	●		
Sharp et al. 2006 (UK)	●						●	●	●	●	●		●		**	●
Pitts 2008 (UK)	●	●	●						●							●
Eurogang (Multinational) *	●					●		●		●	●	●	●			
Pyrooz 2013	●								●				●	●		●
Goldman et al 2014	●								●				●	●	●	

Definitions come from US research unless otherwise indicated.

* Klein, 2001, 2004, 2005; Klein et al., 2006; Decker and Weerman, 2005; Weerman and Esbensen, 2005; Wood and Alleyne, 2010; Alleyne and Wood, 2010; and many more

** States that gangs may possess a leader but that this is not essential

*** e.g. name, colours, emblems, clothing style

Table 1.2

Characteristics of Gangs included in Operational Definitions

	Use of term "group"	Self-accepted	Accepted by others	Self-formed	Mutual interests	Identity	Structure & Planning	Durable	Attached to Territory	Youthful	Collective behaviour	Conflict-driven	Criminal	Violent	Leader	Identifying feature ****
Home Office 2004 (UK)	●						●	●	●	●	●		●		***	●
TGAP 2008 (UK) *	●					●										●
Police and Crime Act 2009 (UK)	●		●						●				●			●
Metropolitan Police Service (UK)	●	●	●			●		●		●	●		●	●		
Centre for Social Justice (UK)	●	●	●					●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Federal Bureau of Investigation	●						●						●	●		*****
US Department of Justice				●					●		**				●	●

Definitions come from US research unless otherwise indicated.

*   The Tackling Gangs Action Programme. The Home Office has subsequently adopted this definition that places great emphasis not just on criminality but on firearm-related offences

**   Describe having a regular meeting pattern

***   States that gangs may possess a leader but that this is not essential

****   e.g. name, colours, emblems, clothing style

***** Specifically mention that gangs will not possess identifying features

Group identity.

The first defining element is the most basic and the one on which consensus could be described as near universal – a gang is a social group.[7] By extension, the most basic element of a group (and therefore a gang) is that it must consist of more than one person. The Eurogang definition states that, in order to be considered a gang, a group must contain at least *three* members (Weerman et al., 2009). Further, the gang must have developed a group identity or, as Weerman et al. (2009) describe, a sense of "*we-ness*" (p. 19). Group identity is characterised as being analogous to the culture of the group (i.e. outlining what is normal and accepted behaviour for gang members), stating that it *does not* relate to the personal identity of individual gang members (in contrast to the work of Vigil, 1988). Specifically, the definition cites that engaging in criminal behaviour should be integral to the identity of the group – this will be discussed in greater depth below.

Even at this stage there are issues with the definition. While the *Eurogang Program Manual* (Weerman et al., 2009) states that "*most people*" (p. 19) agree that a gang must contain a minimum of three members[8], it is recognised that some police agencies consider two members sufficient. Thus, while the Eurogang definition may be a useful instrument for ensuring that academics working within the Eurogang network remain consistent in what they are examining, whether these academics' perceptions of what a gang is (or will ever be) is consistent with non-academics' (e.g. police, Youth Offending Teams [YOTs], policy-makers etc.) perceptions of gangs remains to be seen (this will be discussed in more detail later in this

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[7] Bolden (2012) suggests that gang membership is a fluid process, with unclear boundaries of inclusion. As such, it may be more accurate to refer to gangs as networks of individual members rather than distinct groups.

[8] For example, Sharp, Aldridge. and Medina (2006) explicitly state that three is the minimum acceptable number of members in their definition of a gang, a definition that is used by the UK Home Office. Sharp et al. (2006) state a gang is "*a group of three or more that spends a lot of time in public spaces, has existed for a minimum of three months, has engaged in delinquent activities in the past twelve months, and has at least one structural feature, i.e. a name, leader, or code/rules*" (p. 2). Gilbertson and Malinski (2005) also found that 33 of the 36 US State laws whose definitions of a gang were assessed, stated that a gang should contain three or more members (the three others did not specify a required minimum number).

chapter). Further, there is an argument to be made that setting the minimum required number of group members at three could be problematic for two reasons (Alleyne, 2010): 1) it runs the risk of researchers underestimating the number of gang-like groups in existence; and 2) it may prevent researchers from effectively studying gang formation (e.g. Thrasher [1927, p. 224] describes "*two- and three-boy relationships*" that act as precursor groups to formal gangs and would not be eligible for study under the Eurogang definition). Finally, despite resting their definition of a gang as being a social group, the Eurogang network provides no explicit definition of what a social group is. A relatively standard definition suggests a group exists when "...*two or more people define themselves as members of it* [i.e. the group] *and when its existence is recognised by at least one other*" (Brown, 2000, p. 2-3). This poses a problem to the Eurogang definition in two ways: 1) it sets the minimum number for a group at two members, not three; and 2) it raises the question of whether the "group defining qualities" of self-definition and recognition should also be included as "gang defining qualities" (or whether these group definers are implicitly assumed under this gang definer). Some previous gang definitions have made these qualities explicit (e.g. Hakkert, van Wijk, Ferweda, & Eijken, 2001[9]; Klein, 1971[10]).

Group durability.

Another gang-defining quality suggested by the Eurogang network was whether the group had persisted over a prolonged period of time. Groups that congregate for only a short period, or for a one-off event, are not durable and hence cannot be defined as gangs, regardless of whether they possess any other defining qualities of a gang. The importance of

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[9] "*A delinquent youth group or gang exists when the members themselves identify the group as a collective, other people identify the members as belonging to a group and it is part of the group's acceptable behaviour to engage in anti-social or criminal endeavours.*"

[10] "*Any detonable adolescent group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighbourhood; (b) recognise themselves as a detonable group (almost invariably with a group name); and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighbourhood residents, and/or law enforcement agencies.*"

the durability element to gang definition became apparent following the August 2011 riots in London and several other major UK cities. During that period, and in the immediate aftermath, much of the blame for the riots was placed on young street gang members.[11] However, subsequent statistics compiled by the Ministry of Justice revealed that the majority of those involved in the rioting were not gang affiliated (Travis, 2011) – whilst still a considerable proportion, nationally only 13% of arrestees could be classed as a gang member (rising to 19% in London and falling to less than 10% in other areas of the country). It is difficult to deny from images of the riots that gangs *looked* to be involved (i.e. the collective rioters mostly fit the Eurogang network's other definers, being a street-oriented youth group engaged in criminal activity), however, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the groups of rioters and looters likely formed spontaneously at the time. These groups, therefore, cannot be considered formal gangs since they did not possess the element of durability. The Eurogang network, recognising that their use of the term "durable" could be ambiguous, recommend that a group should be considered as a gang only if it has existed for a period of several months (three at minimum) and is capable of continuing even when there is turnover in membership.

Street-orientation.

The term "street-oriented" has the potential to cause confusion in the Eurogang definition. In the UK especially, there is perhaps a stereotype of gang members as young "hoodies", congregating on street corners, intimidating passers-by, and being generally troublesome (see Figure 1.1). For those who do not go beyond a cursory examination of the network's definition of "street-orientation", this term might then dent the Eurogang network's objective of moving away from stereotyped thinking about gangs. However, in the context of the

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[11] Prime Minister David Cameron characterised gangs as "*...a major criminal disease*" (Tapsfield, Claze, & Barrett, 2011).

Figure 1.1.   The stereotypical "hoodie" (image source: Davis, 2009).

definition, this term does not limit gangs to existing *solely* on the street: rather, it maintains

that gangs meet predominantly in public places (e.g. parks, shopping centres, even cars)

without adult supervision. It essentially amounts to whether the young person spends a lot of

time with a particular group of people outside of school, work, or home.

Weerman et al. (2009) cite the reason for the inclusion of "street-orientation" as a

gang-defining quality as being driven by the need to consider behaviours that are of concern

to the public and law enforcement agencies – it is the *public* nature of gang-related activities

that are of most concern. However, Aldridge et al. (2012) question the inclusion of this

variable in the definition (or at least the strictness with which it is applied). Based on their

long-running Youth Gangs in an English City (YOGEC) project, Aldridge et al. (2012)

identified a number of groups that they would characterise as "gangs" but who are not street-

oriented in the Eurogang sense. Aldridge et al. (2012) suggest a range of factors that keep

young gang members indoors and out of the public view, including: 1) mounting pressure

from the police (i.e. in the use of stop- and-search/account practices; see Ralphs, Medina, & Aldridge, 2009); 2) a shift towards the importance of maintaining an online presence (i.e. through social networking); 3) growing numbers of young gang members having electronic tag-enforced curfews; 4) fewer gang members living in the area where their gang is based (see Aldridge, Ralphs, & Medina, 2011); and even 5) the poor British weather. As such, given the risk of excluding a number of young gang members from research, adopting too strict an application of the "street-orientation" definer is neither recommended nor desirable.

Youthfulness of group members.

The Eurogang definition also places parameters on the age range of group members. While the network allows that some gang members may continue their affiliation well into their late twenties and beyond, in order for a (durable, criminal, and street-oriented) group to be considered a gang the majority of members must be aged between twelve and 25 years. Imposing an age restriction in this fashion is sensible (e.g. gang membership and delinquency do tend to emerge in early adolescence: Alleyne & Wood, 2010; Curry, Decker, & Egley, 2002; Esbensen & Winfree, 1998), but it is also perhaps the trickiest element of gang definition because "youthfulness" is a reasonably subjective quality. While Weerman et al. (2009) state that the *majority* of members should be between twelve and twenty-five years of age (implying that gang members can in fact be older and younger), they do not provide a rationale for why twelve years should be the minimum age. In much the same way as imposing a three-member limit on the group may prove restrictive (e.g. Alleyne, 2010), suggesting twelve years of age as being the minimum may deter gang researchers from assessing the affiliation of younger children, potentially cutting off a useful line of investigation into the long-term causes of gang membership.[12] Additionally, the term

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[12] Particularly since gangs evolve, and younger members (due to their age restricting them from criminal responsibility) may be recruited to assist with (e.g.) the distribution of drugs.

"*majority*" may prove difficult to maintain the Eurogang network's stance on comparative research. Under the definition, a durable, street-oriented, criminally active group of mostly fourteen year olds would be considered to be a gang in much the same way as a durable, street-oriented, criminally active group of mostly 24 year olds – this simple age difference will likely bring with it a number of other characteristic differences between these two groups (e.g. in school vs. in employment; living with parents vs. living independently, or being parents themselves; confined to a specific area vs. able to drive and thus more mobile) which will place limitations on the extent to which they may be effectively compared to one another.

Illegal activity.

The final quality the Eurogang network put forward for defining a gang is a controversial one. While the Eurogang members who developed the definition unanimously agreed that group involvement in illegal activity is a decisive feature of youth gangs, this is not to say that its inclusion as a definer is a simple matter.[13] It was felt, however, that the inclusion of illegal activity (i.e. delinquent and/or criminal activities, as opposed to "bothersome" behaviour) was necessary to justify the level of interest (both culturally and politically) that gangs have always attracted. It also cannot be denied that gangs are recognised *because* of their illegal activity. In addition to the findings briefly laid out in the introduction to this thesis (e.g. Bendixen, Endresen, & Olweus, 2006; Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Hales, Lewis, & Silverstone, 2006; Klein, Weerman, & Thornberry, 2006; Sharp et al., 2006; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, & Chard-

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[13] For instance, issues arise as to what constitutes gang-related criminal activity. Can individual criminal acts committed by gang members be legitimately called gang crime? Are all gang members' criminal activities committed on behalf of the gang or with the gang's knowledge or consent? Further, regional differences as to how police record youth crime may artificially inflate/deflate recorded gang-related crimes in certain areas.

Wierschem, 1993) it has been suggested that gang members, in comparison to at-risk youth, are (Huff, 1998):

- Three times more likely to commit assault in a public place;

- Eight times more likely to commit robbery;

- Ten times more likely to commit homicide, and;

- Twenty times more likely to participate in a drive-by shooting.

Gangs are also defined as criminal because they attract the attention of law enforcers (see Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Members tend to have extensive contact with the Criminal Justice System (CJS), particularly at the arrest stage (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Fagan, 1989; Katz, Webb, & Schaefer, 2000; Thornberry et al., 2003). The risk of recidivism is also higher for gang-affiliated youth offenders than it is for non-gang-affiliated youth offenders (Chu, Daffern, Thomas, & Lim, 2012; Trulson, Caudill, Haerle, & De Lisi, 2012).

In terms of the types of crime that gangs are involved in, an array of empirical studies have demonstrated a link between gang membership and involvement in drug sales (e.g. Adams & Pizarro, 2014; Bjerregaard & Lizotte, 1995; Decker, 2000; Decker & Van Winkle, 1995; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Esbensen & Winfree, 1998; Fagan, 1989; Mares, 2001; Skolnick, 1990). This link however is likely to be correlational rather than causal, with Bjerregaard (2010) later concluding that gang membership does not determine drug involvement (in terms of either usage or sales). Violence is apparently inherent to gang membership, not only in the way members use it (this will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter), but also in their heightened risk of victimisation (e.g. Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008; Miller & Decker, 2001; Peterson, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2004; Pyrooz, Moule, &

Decker, 2014; Taylor, Freng, Esbensen, & Peterson, 2008; Taylor, Peterson, Esbensen, & Freng, 2007).

The "illegal activity" definer is also critical to the Eurogang definition in that it ties into the other definers, creating a level of interaction between them that helps to strengthen the overall definition. There is an evident relationship between illegality and street-orientation embedded in the definition, particularly that which includes violence. As previously stated, it is the *public* nature of gangs' illegal acts and violence that are of most concern to the public, law enforcement agencies, and (Eurogang) researchers alike. There is perhaps some justification for this concern since (as pointed out by Klein & Maxson, 2006), compared to other types of violence, gang-related violence is more destructive, being more likely to:

- Appear in public places;

- Involve more (lethal) weaponry (including motor vehicles);

- Involve more assailants and victims (who are also more likely to be accidental or unexpected) with fewer personal acquaintances, and;

- Involve more injuries and associated charges.

Klein and Maxson (2006) also link illegal action with the youthfulness component of the Eurogang definition, citing that gang violence tends to involve younger participants than non-gang violence (a finding supported by Alleyne & Wood, 2010). Perhaps slightly more contentious is the emphasis placed on the link between illegality and group identity. Aldridge, Medina-Ariz, and Ralphs (2012) present three case studies of people who, based on the broad nature of the term "illegal activity", would be considered to be gang members under the Eurogang definition. All were young and belonged to a durable group of friends

for whom meeting in public places to engage in recreational drug use was common. All the criteria are present for gang membership but none meet what could be thought of as a "common sense" image (as opposed to a stereotypical image) of a gang member. By not providing a specific definition of illegal activity within the Eurogang definition, Medina, Aldridge, Shute, and Ross (2013) state that a number of groups may be unfairly labelled as gangs. It seems then that the Eurogang definition needs greater clarity in what it means by "bothersome" behaviour.

Overcoming the Problems of Definition.

Ultimately then, there are two related, principal outcomes that the Eurogang network sought to achieve by developing their definition. The first was to attempt to build consensus among gang researchers (and potentially other interested parties) as to what a gang truly is, and to ensure that the definition would be applied consistently (so as to make comparative research easier to conduct). Secondly, a move away from the Eurogang Paradox was desired, so that knowledge and theory on gangs might better reflect the reality of gangs internationally rather than the stereotype of gangs as exported from the USA. With a definition in place, a corresponding objective could also be realised with the development of instruments and surveys designed to measure gang membership (for an overview see Weerman et al., 2009), however, a self-nomination method is often still used. This involves presenting research participants with the Eurogang definition and relying on them to identify and/or accept themselves as members based on this (Curry et al., 2001; Esbensen et al., 2001; Decker, Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Moule, 2014; Matsuda, Esbensen, & Carson, 2012; Webb, Katz, & Decker, 2006).

Klein (2011) is particularly critical of the lack of consensus in the research literature as to what constitutes a gang. However, a Google Scholar search reveals that, in the short

time since the Eurogang definition was launched, well over one hundred texts and empirical papers on gangs have adopted it, suggesting that academic consensus may be building and indicating some success for the network. That said, even when formal, consensual definitions are put in place to try and limit the effects of stereotypical thinking amongst researchers, other interested parties (such as those who work with gangs and deal with gang issues on a more practical basis, such as police, YOTs, etc.) may not necessarily adopt the same definition. Ensuring that those in any position of authority adhere to a rigorous definition is crucial since any reliance on stereotypes would be "...*intellectually inappropriate and politically dangerous*" (Klein, 2011, p. 3). Further, at the street level, community members' awareness of gang activity in their area may differ from those who actually belong to gangs and are involved in gang activity – gang members' direct experiences will reflect the reality of gang life better than those whose experience is through observation of, and occasional contact with, local gangs. The outside observer's view will also be somewhat skewed by the role played by the media in shaping perceptions of gangs. Gangs are more than simply collections of people who assemble for some reason (Anderson, Mangels, & Dyson, 2001), but the reality is that there can be a very fine line between what may be considered a youth gang and what may be considered a youth group (Decker, 2001).

The operational definition of a gang used by the UK Metropolitan Police Service is based on a definition suggested by Hallsworth and Young (2004) which states that a gang is:

"… *a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are recognised by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is intrinsic to identity and practice*"

Since this definition is so similar to the Eurogang definition established two years earlier, we can be reasonably sure that any research conducted under the Eurogang definition will be

compatible with the views of the Metropolitan Police. The five Eurogang definers (i.e. group identity, youthfulness, durability, street-orientation, and criminality) are all present in this definition. It differs only with the inclusion of the need for members to be seen by themselves and others as a distinct entity, which (as argued above) may be viewed as implicit in Eurogang's own definition. However, given the similarity of the content of these two definitions there are also similarities in terms of their criticisms. Densley (2011) comments on the rigid way in which these characteristics are conceptualised, highlighting how (for example) a gang's street-orientation might vary according to the nature of the gang's business and the weather, in much the same way Aldridge et al. (2012) are critical of the Eurogang definition. Densley (2011) is also critical of gang features in other ways, characterising durability as one possible *outcome* for gangs and street-orientation as a *strategy* that may be employed by, rather than an innate feature of, gangs.

Other definitions used by UK-based institutions also fit relatively comfortably within the Eurogang definition's parameters. The Home Office, based on research conducted by Sharp et al. (2006), defined a gang as "...*having durability and structure and whose members spend time in public places and engage in delinquent activities together*" (p. 1). Sharp et al. (2006) incorporate the five elements of the Eurogang definition and also use the term "delinquent youth group" instead of "gang". They did, however, extend their definition to state that the group must have at least one structural feature (such as having a name, leader, set of rules, and/or attachment to a specific area). However, according to Smithson, Monchuk, and Armitage (2012), by 2008 the Home Office had adopted a new definition that came out of the Tackling Gangs Action Plan (TGAP: see also Densley, 2009) which defined a gang as:

"*A group of three or more people who have a distinct identity (e.g. a name or badge/emblem) and commit general crime or anti-social behaviour (ASB) as part of that identity. This group*

uses (or is reasonably suspected of using) firearms, or the threat of firearms, when carrying

out these offences" (p. 54)

Perhaps as a response to the growing moral panic surrounding gangs in the wake of a spate of teenage gang-related deaths at the time, the Home Office seemingly abandoned the youthfulness, street-oriented, and durability criteria in favour of an emphasis on the (stereotypical) nature of gangs' criminal activities. Similarly (as described by Densley, 2011) the Police and Crime Act 2009 introduced a civil injunction specifically intended to curb gang-related activities but failed to provide an adequate definition of who this law applied to, merely stating that the group should: 1) contain at least three people; 2) use a name, emblem or colour, or have any other characteristics that enables its members to be identified by others as a group; and 3) be associated with a particular area. This definition contains only one of the Eurogang definers, and mostly refers to some of its descriptors (see below). Finally, also in response to the growing concern about UK gangs, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ; a group made up of UK academics, practitioners, and policy makers) settled on its own definition (2009), proposing that it should be universally accepted by all those with an interest in tackling gang problems in Britain. This definition describes gangs as:

"*A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who: 1) see*

themselves (and are seen by others as a discernible group); 2) engage in a range of criminal

activity and violence; 3) identify with or lay claim over territory; 4) have some form of

identifying structural feature; and 5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs." (p. 21)

Thus, it can be seen as an extension to Hallsworth and Young's (2006) definition as used by the Metropolitan Police (and thus also a further extension to the Eurogang definition[14]).

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[14] Of which the CSJ are critical, disagreeing with the use of the term "troublesome youth group" instead of gang. However, as described, this adapted terminology was intended to improve the comparability of cross-national research by limiting the cultural stereotypes associated with the various translations of the term "gang", something which (as a predominantly English speaking, UK-centred institution) is of little concern to the CSJ.

However, the CSJ claims that their definition was influenced by the US Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJPD: Howell, 1997), which says that a gang is "*...a self-formed association of peers having the following characteristics: a gang name and recognizable symbols, identifiable leadership, a geographic territory, a regular meeting pattern, and collective actions to carry out illegal activities.*" This perhaps makes the CSJ's (2009) definition more an amalgamation of both Hallsworth and Young's (2006) and Howell's (1997) definitions.

The inclusion of Howell's (1997) definition here goes to show the importance of adopting a consensus definition. The Eurogang definition was developed as a reaction against the inability of American researchers (who are predominantly responsible for gang research) to define gangs. Howell's (1997) definition for the OJJDP contains a number of descriptive elements of gangs but few of the definers that Eurogang have subsequently suggested are required in any definition. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 1999: cited in Decker, 2007) somehow manages to adopt a definition that is simultaneously more vague *and* more specific than either Howell's (1997) or the Eurogang definitions, defining gangs as: 1) having an organisational structure; 2) acting as a continuous criminal conspiracy; and 3) employing violence and any other criminal activity; but which 4) *does not* possess any identifying features (e.g. similar clothing, colours, tattoos, hand signs, initiation rituals or even a name). While the FBI make concessions to durability and criminality, they ignore several other key defining elements while actively dismissing a number of descriptive elements. As Decker (2007) states, this definition is inconsistent with the views of most US law enforcement agencies: however most US law enforcements agencies work on separate gang definitions anyway because of variations in gang definitions set out in the laws of different States and jurisdictions (e.g. Barrows & Huff, 2009; Gilbertson & Malinski, 2005).

Finally, while in the UK (whether people accept it or not) there appears to be a growing acceptance (at least of the basics) of the Eurogang definition amongst researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, the problem of defining clearly what a gang is (and who is a gang member) will remain a matter of subjective interpretation by the wider public and gang members themselves. Hales and Silverstone (2005: cited in Hales, Lewis, & Silverstone, 2006), Schneider, Rowe, Forrest, and Tilley (2004: cited in Hales et al., 2006), and Smithson et al. (2012) all demonstrate how outsiders' perceptions of gangs may be different from those of individuals who are involved with and/or labelled as gang members. Hales et al. (2006) interviewed many young people who could be said to have belonged to gangs. These young people described belonging to groups that they insisted were not gangs, although they admitted others might have seen them as such. Labelling of youth as gang members by the police has been demonstrated to potentially exacerbate the gang problem by pushing young people into gangs (e.g. see Ralphs et al., 2009; Young, Fitzgerald, Hallsworth, & Joseph, 2007, cited in Centre for Social Justice, 2009), increasing future delinquency and amplifying deviant attitudes (Wiley & Esbensen, 2013; Wiley, Slocum, & Esbensen, 2013). Given the importance of "recognition by others" as a potential requirement for gang definition (as discussed above), understanding the public perception of gangs is of utmost importance. Hales et al.'s (2006) finding also speaks to the importance of knowing how gang members view their membership, particularly since self-nomination has played such a great role in gang research to date (e.g. Bjerregaard, 2002, cited in Bjerregaard, 2010; Decker et al., 2014; Matsuda et al., 2012; Thornberry & Porter, 2001). Ultimately, knowing how gangs are perceived, and by whom, is crucial, since it is these perceptions which are ultimately key to distinguishing a gang from a collection of young people.

It is for this reason that having a formal definition of gangs is vital for research, since the term "gang" is so infused with stereotypes and negative connotations (rightfully or

wrongfully) that to bandy it about so freely is to risk applying it to individuals and groups inappropriately. The Eurogang network's approach to overcoming the stereotype issue was two-fold. Firstly, by adopting the term "troublesome youth group" it was intended that the negative connotations of "gang" would be overcome. This tactic has its critics (CSJ, 2009; Pitts, 2008), and suffers from some issues. For example: 1) it is not clear how the term was selected by the network as an alternative to "gang", which raises the question of how valid it is as a true operationalisation of gangs; and 2) by stating that a gang's illegal activities are delinquent or criminal acts but *not* bothersome behaviours, and then including the word "troublesome" in their conception of gangs (thus implying bothersome behaviours), the Eurogang network are opening up a semantic can of worms (e.g. what is the difference between "bothersome" and "troublesome" behaviour, and is it possible for a group to be troublesome but not bothersome?) Their second tactic was to separate out gang definers from gang descriptors, so that more stereotypical elements (that may or may not be seen in gangs) might be segregated from those elements that (in the network's view) truly make a gang…

Gang Description

By separating definers from descriptors, the Eurogang network sought to overcome stereotypical notions of what a gang is. For instance, US gangs tend to be ethnically homogenous and represent the minority group in the area (e.g. Thrasher, 1927; Klein, 1971; Klein & Maxson, 1989; Spergel, 1995), while in the UK the ethnic composition of gangs tends to reflect the ethnic composition of the area in which it is based (Aldridge & Medina, 2008; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005), making them comparatively less homogeneous and minority-representative (e.g. Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Sharp et al., 2006; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002). Similarly, while gang membership has typically been viewed as a male dominion (see Rizzo, 2003), the role played by girls in gangs cannot be ignored (e.g. Alleyne, & Wood, 2010; Sharp et al., 2006). Consistent with the Eurogang network's stance,

including characteristics such as ethnicity and gender as definers rather than as descriptors (i.e. applicable to some gangs but not all) would therefore be inappropriate.

Identifying features have also often been incorporated into gang definitions, such as whether the group has a specific name, and/or uses associated colours, symbols, or tattoos to signify membership. While the most well-known gangs tend to possess the above, the Eurogang network argues that their inclusion is not central to gang definition. For instance, while adopting a name can be useful for promoting a group identity, many gangs are nameless. Further, not all gangs have names of their own choosing – oftentimes the *police* may assign names to collections of young people that they know of in order to differentiate them from other such groups (Hakkert et al., 2001). Identifying characteristics are just one example of descriptive elements of gangs. This section will briefly consider two other elements – the role of violence and conflict in gangs, and the level of group organisation – that the Eurogang network believes do not reflect the essence of gangs, and so are not considered gang definers despite how commonly they appear in gangs. These elements have been incorporated into previous definitions (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2) and there are ongoing debates concerning their potential inclusion in the Eurogang definition. While there may be a growing consensus in the use of the definition in research and practice (i.e. in terms of the frequency with which it is cited in research), this does not necessarily mean that everyone who uses the definition agrees with it in full.

Violence and Conflict.

Violence and conflict have been described as integral to gang members' lives to the extent that they can be used to distinguish gang member from non-gang member (Alleyne, Fernandes, & Pritchard, 2014; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Compared to non-gang members, it has been estimated that gang members experience a 21% increase in the odds of

involvement in violent incidents (Melde & Esbensen, 2012). Decker and Van Winkle (1996) state that violence is a useful tool for gangs which can be used to: 1) strengthen bonds between members; 2) improve the position of those on the fringes of in the gang; and 3) provide a means of entry for non-gang members. Sullivan (2006) comments that violence is so endemic to gangs that research should focus on examining gang violence as opposed to gangs *per se*.

However, as previously described, while *illegal activity* (i.e. criminal and delinquent, but not bothersome, behaviour) is integral to the Eurogang definition, the network does not provide a clear description of what this entails. Such a broad criterion runs the risk of inaccurately stigmatising a number of groups as gangs, which perhaps would not be viewed as such under any other conditions (Aldridge et al., 2012). The question then becomes whether the Eurogang's definition of illegal activity should be made more specific, or replaced entirely, with an emphasis on violence instead. Aldridge et al. (2012) describe how, in their research, it was the willingness to resort to violence (and the reputation that this engendered) that separated groups from gangs. It is a compelling argument made more telling by the fact that Thrasher's (1927) initial definition of a gang afforded conflict a central place, whereas illegal activity/criminality was not mentioned at all.

Organisation and Leadership.

The organisational structure of gangs has also been cited as a defining element, but is not considered so in the Eurogang definition. This is because extant research presents a conflicted picture of whether gangs are highly organised (e.g. Alleyne et al., 2014; Sánchez-Jankowski, 1991; Taylor, 1990) or loosely connected (e.g. Bolden, 2012; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965; Thrasher, 1927). It may be more accurate to suggest that: some gangs are organised while others are not (Decker, 1996; Hagedorn, 2001); or that gangs simply are somewhat

organised (Decker et al., 2008); or that gangs are an evolving entity in which the state of a

gang's organisation may rapidly change (Densley, 2012a). Again, the inclusion of

organisation as a definer of gangs is rightly questionable, particularly given that studies of

UK gangs tend to lean more towards the disorganised end of the spectrum, describing them

more akin to the leaderless, relatively fluid social networks of traditional friendship groups

(e.g. Aldridge & Medina, 2008; Mares, 2001). Some UK gangs may have some level of

structure which assigns different members different roles (e.g. Bullock & Tilley, 2002; and

see Figure 1.2), and this is important to consider – Decker et al. (2008) concluded that even

very low levels of organisation can have a great deal of influence on the behaviour of a

gang's members, with incremental increases in organisation related to offending and

victimisation. While inconsistent findings regarding organisation and leadership mean that

they are not considered gang definers under the Eurogang definition, this is not to say that the
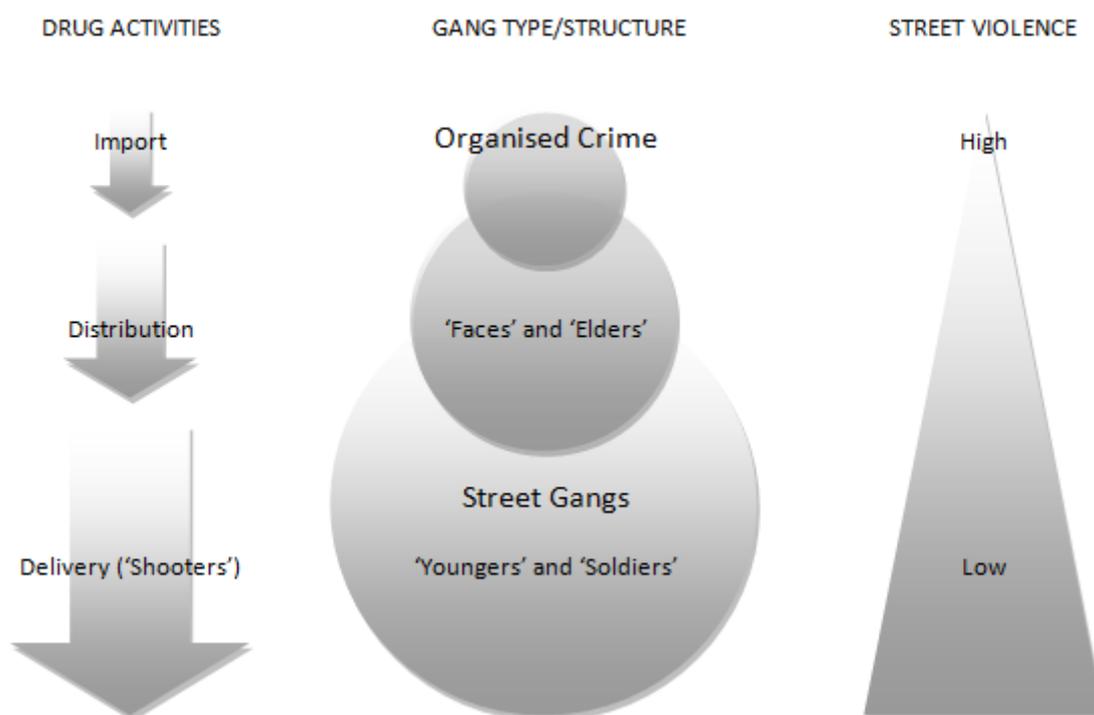
Figure 1.2.   Schematic of gang structure and activities (adapted from Centre for Social Justice,

        2008, p. 49).

Eurogang network considers gangs and their members to be homogeneous – indeed, there may be considerable variation between gangs and gang members and this has led to a great deal of research into, and description of, gang and gang member typologies.

Gang Typologies

Gang Typology.

The Eurogang network recognised the potential for variation in the nature of gangs. While the distinction between types of gang does not appear central to the Eurogang network's research,[15] they endorsed the application of Maxson and Klein's (1995) gang typology to the examination of European gangs. Maxson and Klein (1995) describe five types of gang: 1) the Traditional Gang; 2) the Neo-Traditional Gang; 3) the Compressed Gang; 4) the Collective Gang; and 5) the Speciality Gang.[16] According to Klein, Weerman, and Thornberry (2006), the Compressed Gang is the most common form of gang in both the US and Europe and, combined, these five types account for 75 to 95 percent of all US street gangs. While proportionally different, Klein et al. (2006) also maintain that the typology is applicable to the European experience.

Gang Member Typology.

Of more concern to the current thesis than variation between types of gangs and groups, is variation between *individual members within a gang*. While the definition debate has been concerned with as to when a group may be defined as a gang, there is far less discussion of what defines the individual gang *member*. Using the Eurogang definition as a basis, a gang member could be defined as "*... any young person identified with a street-oriented group with*

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[15] And, indeed, is not central to the research described in this thesis, and so will not be discussed in detail.

[16] For more details on each, see Klein and Maxson (2006), and for critique, see Decker et al. (2008) and Pitts (2008).

a duration of three months or more, and who has engaged in illegal activity on the group's behalf/with other members." Densley (2011) suggests that a gang member is any individual who has incurred the cost of identifying themselves as a member of a gang (e.g. through verbal statements, tattoos, correspondence, or graffiti) and has had this identity corroborated by others (e.g. police, partner agencies, or community information). Meanwhile, Curry et al. (2002) point out that a clear distinction between gang members and non-gang members may be discerned when gangs exhibit a highly organised structure. However, given that possession of an organisational structure only describes some gangs (rather than defines all gangs), then grey areas emerge when in unstructured gangs, allowing some young people to be gang-affiliated without being a fully-fledged member.

Several terms having been coined to account for this grey area and the various levels of gang membership. Perhaps the most basic suggest there are two levels of membership: Klein (1971) and Klein and Maxson (1989) make the distinction between Core (who are reasonably committed to the gang and its activities) and peripheral (or Fringe) members (who tend to drift in and out of gang activity); Hagedorn (1998) talks about "main group" members and "wannabes"; while Curry et al. (2002) refer to gang members and gang associates. Thrasher (1927) distinguished between an inner circle of gang members, the rank and file, and fringes, while others go to an even higher level of abstraction. For instance, in addition to Core and Fringe members, Spergel (1995) describes: 1) floating members, whose access to particular resources and services allows them to move across gangs; 2) wannabes, who aspire to membership but do not currently belong; and 3) veterans who, whilst maintaining involvement in the gang, have essentially outgrown the day-to-day trivialities of membership and have gone on to bigger and better things, such as organised crime. Finally, Yablonsky (1959) used terms such as regular, peripheral, and temporary gang members, making the point that those in the grey area may be so not only because they engage in gang-related

activity on an irregular basis, but also that their membership may last only a short time (preventing them from achieving a more central role in the gang).

Whatever the term used, examinations of differences between Core, Fringe, and non-gang members have produced a mixed bag of results. Esbensen et al. (2001) found no demographic differences between individuals at different levels of membership, but significant attitudinal and behavioural differences were found – as individuals moved closer to Core membership they became much more antisocial[17], a finding supported by Curry et al. (2002). Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) also found no demographic differences between Cores and Fringes, but neither did they find any differences in delinquent behaviour. Alleyne and Wood (2010) determined that Cores were on average older than Fringes and non-members. Wood, Kallis, and Coid (under review) found that Fringes were less likely to be Black or Asian, and more likely to be single and have been born outside of the UK, than Cores. Non-gang members have been found to display significant behavioural and attitudinal differences to Cores and Fringes (e.g. in terms of attitudes to authority, and the value placed on social status; Alleyne & Wood, 2010), although the differences between levels of gang member were less clear: Cores were more likely to engage in *minor* offences while Fringes were more likely to engage in *violent* offences, and some variation in how they justified their actions (through moral disengagement techniques) was shown. In terms of mental health issues, Klein and Maxson (2006) and Yablonsky (1959) contend that Cores are more personality disordered than Fringes. Wood, Kallis, and Coid (under review) have subsequently identified that Fringes are: less likely than Cores to show signs of psychiatric morbidity, such as psychosis, anxiety, and anti-social personality disorder; and are less likely to abuse substances (i.e. drugs and alcohol) or engage in behaviours such as stalking. Finally,

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[17] They reported evidence of Cores being more impulsive and risk-seeking, having more favourable attitudes towards fighting, a greater commitment to antisocial peers (and less to pro-social peers), greater participation in illegal activity, and fewer feelings of guilt.

consistent with a temporary membership perspective, Cores and Fringes can be distinguished by the level of delinquency they display before joining a gang (Gatti et al., 2004) – Core (stable) gang members tended to be more delinquent prior to gang membership than did Fringe (temporary) members.

While actions and attitudes of Cores versus Fringes may or may not differ, that age differences between Cores and Fringes have been found to exist suggests that a developmental process from non-gang member, to Fringe, to Core may be in place (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). This can be most clearly seen in Decker and Van Winkle's (1995) statement that "*on average, members of our sample heard about their gang while they were twelve, started hanging out with gang members at thirteen, and joined before their fourteenth birthday*" (p.68), and in the statement that a "...*'wannabe' this week may be in the 'main group' next week*" (Hagedorn, 1998, p.90). Indeed O'Deane (2010) has outlined a five-stage developmental model by which young people may or may not become gang involved.[18] As such, if there is the potential for development through a range of gang membership statuses, there is the potential for young people to reach a stage that sees them leaving the gang. Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) commented that the majority of gang members appear to be of peripheral/fringe or transitory status, with few belonging to gangs for more than a year and many citing a desire to leave, and expectation of leaving, it at some point. Curry et al. (2002) state that delinquency prevention and intervention strategies aimed at minimising gang membership would be best served by targeting non-gang and Fringe members. This sentiment is echoed by Wood, Kallis, and Coid (under review), who suggest that Fringes are potentially more pliable to treatment and gang prevention strategies than are Cores. An

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[18] The stages are: 1) At Risk, being typically aged around seven to nine years of age and who watch and occasionally imitate older gang members; 2) Associates, who are typically aged nine to thirteen years and associate with gang members on a regular basis; 3) Members, aged fourteen to twenty years, are committed to the gang and regularly engage in criminal and gang-related activities; 4) Hard-Core Members are in their late teens and early twenties, are committed to furthering the goals of the gang by any means and has rejected traditional value systems; and 5) Gang Leaders, who are in control of the gang but keep a discrete distance from the day-to-day activities and attempt to present a more legitimate identity to the world.

alternative approach suggests that strategies should focus on neutralising Cores and restricting contact between Cores and Fringes (citing that without the influence of Cores, the remaining Fringe membership levels will dissipate), however, this theory is yet to receive much in the way of empirical support (Bolden, 2010).

Gang embeddedness.

A more recent development in the examination of gang differentiation, or gang member heterogeneity, is the concept of gang embeddedness (Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Piquero, 2013). Pyrooz et al. (2013) define embeddedness as "*the adhesion of the gang member to the gang*" (p. 243). That is, the more an individual is embedded in a gang the more immersed they are within an enduring deviant social network, which reflects a greater degree of personal involvement in the gang, a greater level of identification with the gang, and a heightened status among fellow gang members. Thus, embeddedness represents a more fine-grained approach to gang membership than the Core/Fringe dichotomy can achieve. Individual members' status can be placed at any point on a continuum from full immersion in, to total alienation, from the gang. As embeddedness increases, exposure to (anti-social) norms within the group increase and exposure to (pro-social) out-group norms deceases. Thus, the experiences of individual members are contingent on their level of embeddedness.

Pyrooz et al. (2013) developed a scale intended to measure an individual's level of membership in a gang, which identifies five variables associated with embeddedness:

1) Frequency of contact with their gang;

2) Position in their gang;

3) Importance of the gang to respondent;

4) Proportion of friends in gangs;

5) Frequency of gang-involved assaults.

Pyrooz et al. (2013) found that the more embedded an individual is in a gang, the longer their length of association with the gang. Pyrooz et al. (2013) suggest that this effect may be related to the disintegration of connections to pro-social networks that comes with embeddedness (i.e. the more embedded one is, the more one comes to rely on the support of the gang as the number of associations with peers outside the gang diminishes). Additional research using this scale suggests that gang embeddedness may be as influential a concept as gang membership itself – disengaging from a gang (i.e. shifting from a state of high to low embeddedness) while still self-identifying as a gang member can lead to considerable reductions in offending (Sweeten, Pyrooz, & Piquero, 2013). The scale has also established that self-nomination is a valid method of gang member identification (Decker et al, 2014), with self-nomination as a current gang member found to be a strong predictor of embeddedness, with self-nomination as a former gang member also predictive.

Using a concentric-ring response scale (in which respondents are asked to indicate how central they were to their gang, with a score of one indicating central to the gang and five indicating right on the periphery: see Figure 1.3) to assess embeddedness, however, Melde, Diem, and Drake (2012) showed that having greater levels of "gang centrality" was more associated with unstable membership (i.e. commitment to the gang would be for a relatively short period of time), and that stable gang members (who would commit for a long period of time) were likely to report a relatively peripheral status.
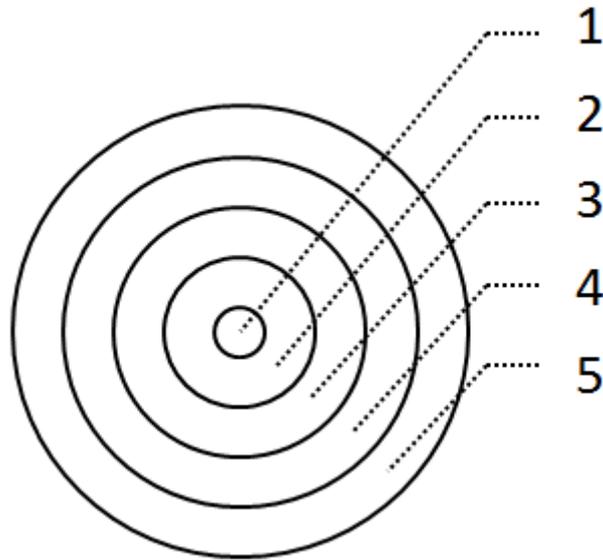
Figure 1.3.   The concentric-ring response scale for measuring gang centrality.

Finally, Egan and Beadman (2011) devised (what could be described as) an "Intent to Rejoin the Gang" scale. Incarcerated gang members would be asked to self-report whether they were: 1) a gang member in their youth (1 point); 2) a gang member immediately prior to conviction (2 points); 3) currently a gang member in prison (3 points); and 4) intending to (re-)join a gang a gang on release (4 points). If respondents answered "yes" to any of these items, the appropriate score was awarded, and the scores weighted and summed. Thus, respondents would receive a score of zero to 10, with higher scores indicating an increasing importance of gang membership to the respondent (i.e. greater embeddedness). Using path analysis, Egan and Beadman (2011) found antisocial personality (characterised as having a commitment to negative peers, low self-control, impulsiveness, low commitment to negative peers, higher positive reinforcement gained from antisocial company, and low Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) to be positively associated with embeddedness.

Conclusion and Current Research

The Centre for Social Justice (2009) report "*Dying to Belong*" opens with fictitious accounts of the life experiences of "Michael" (a 19 year old gang member) and "Tom" (a 19 year old law student). These accounts describe how, despite similarities in terms of life goals and aims (e.g. "*a desire for status, respect, material wealth and sense of belonging*": Centre for Social Justice, 2009, p. 35), Michael and Tom's circumstances growing up directed them to try and reach these goals through very different means. These accounts provide useful context to account for gang membership experiences – and provide a helpful backdrop for the current thesis. While experiences undoubtedly shape the outcomes of our lives, life is generally not as clear-cut as the differences noted between Michael and Tom suggest (despite the report stating that Michael and Tom are amalgamations of young people interviewed in the course of the CSJ's investigations). Many young people raised in similar circumstances to gang member Michael do not go on to join gangs, while many young people with backgrounds like non-gang member Tom's do join gangs and engage in criminal activity. And many will go on to have variable levels of involvement with gangs – it is these differential members, the Cores versus the Fringes, who are the focus of the research reported in this thesis, which also centres on the implicit role that psychology has to play in the assessment of individual differences in gang membership (Wood & Alleyne, 2010).

There are growing calls within the Eurogang network for research to focus on group process effects in gangs (e.g. Esbensen & Maxson, 2012; Klein & Maxson, 2006), and as such the research reported in this thesis takes these important and often overlooked influences on gang members into account by, and when, examining the differential levels of gang membership. Emphasis on group processes might also help to clarify certain elements of the Eurogang definition (e.g. Aldridge et al., 2012), and help to *explain* why differential gang membership exists. The demographic and behavioural differences between Cores and

Fringes may not always be obvious (as seen above) but the fact of their differential existence implies fundamental and untapped differences are important. An examination of how groups influence members may well be able to account for these differences, and the reasons why this may be will have important practical implications for practitioners and law-enforcers who deal with problem gangs (e.g. Bolden, 2010). Throughout the current research, therefore, gangs will be defined in terms of the defining criteria laid out by the Eurogang network, as have been critiqued throughout this chapter. This is because the definition captures a wider range of possible gang members than the alternative measures which rely on either self- or friend-nomination methods (see Chapter Three: Matsuda, Esbensen, & Carson, 2012) which is essential for research emphasising gang heterogeneity (although caution is recommended so as not to cast a net too wide: Aldridge et al., 2012). The Eurogang definition employed is not perfect, there are elements of gang membership included that require more elaboration, and there are elements that may even be missing, and it certainly has its critics (e.g. Pitts [2008, p. 14] describes it as an "*insipid mishmash that raises more questions than it answers*"),[19] but as a means of providing much needed consistency and consensus, in the simple words of Klein et al. (2006, p.419) "*it works*". However once defined, a concept must be understood – the following chapter will discuss what is currently understood about gangs by describing the myriad theories put forward to account for their existence.

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[19] While critical of the Eurogang definition, Pitts (2008) is full of praise for Hallsworth and Young's (2004) definition, which is curious given the very close similarities between the two definitions, as outlined in this chapter.

Chapter Two

Theories on Gangs – Psychology, Criminology, and Interactions

There is no shortage of volumes considering the descriptive features of gangs. Perhaps the most notable early such description appears in Asbury's famous work, *The Gangs of New York: An informal history of the underworld* (1928), which appeared around the same time as the first theories intended to *explain* gang formation, membership, and activities were put forward (e.g. Thrasher, 1927). While the definitions and descriptions of the previous chapter are entirely necessary to help further an understanding of gangs, and the need for a clear and comprehensive definition that distinguishes gangs from similar groups is paramount, a comprehensive theory of gangs is also needed, to act as a framework within which the empirical study of gangs may be conducted. By providing a fuller account of *why* people join gangs, theory may then be used to devise strategies for tackling the negative elements of gang membership. Without theory, our ability to define and describe gangs is redundant.

This chapter, therefore, goes beyond gangs' (and their members') defining and descriptive features, to provide an historical account of theories produced to explain the gang phenomenon. Psychology, as a discipline, has had little to say on gangs specifically[20] although has an extensive range of theories with regard to group formation, structure, function, and action more generally – these will be briefly considered and their applicability to gang research examined. Predominantly, gang-specific theories (commonly by way of theories of general delinquency) have come from various sociological and criminological schools of thought – each of these will be considered in turn. However, neither psychology, nor sociology, nor criminology can provide a complete account of gang membership, as

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[20] To illustrate, an examination of articles published by the *Journal of Gang Research* reveals that in its 21 year history and 300-plus articles, reports and reviews, only approximately five such publications may be characterised as being psychological in nature.

evidenced by the development of interactional theories, which combine key elements of several theories or perspectives on gangs to generate a fuller explanation than a single theory might manage alone. The combination of sociological, criminological, and psychological theorising to produce interactional theories of gang membership will also be discussed. The chapter will conclude by examining gang-related issues that remain unaccounted for.

Psychological Theories

A purely psychological theory of gangs has never been developed. This is not to say that psychological characteristics have not been considered in gang research, but that they have rarely been effectively applied in *explanations* of gangs. From these psychological characteristics, (e.g. based on comparative differences in personality, attitudes, and social cognitive skills between gang and non-gang youth) inferences of causal explanations of gangs *could be* made, however, given that psychologists themselves have rarely shown an interest in gangs (leaving sociologists and criminologists to incorporate psychological characteristics into research), such causal explanations *have not been* made.

        Personality, Attitudes, and Social Cognition.

        Personality.

Much of the (little) emphasis placed on the psychological characteristics of gang members has been on examining gang member personalities. For example, hyperactivity, impulsivity, and a tendency towards risk-taking behaviour have all been associated with gang membership (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001; Lacourse, Nagin, Vitaro, Côté, Arseneault, & Tremblay, 2006; Valdez, Kaplan, & Codina, 2000)[21] – the stereotypical notion of what gang membership entails (e.g. based on media accounts of American gangs such as the Bloods and Crips) may make gang membership appealing to

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[21] None of whom are actually psychologists.

young people with these traits. The psychological push of hyperactivity and impulsivity towards gang membership may be strengthened in the presence of other traits also. For instance, Esbensen et al. (2001) and Esbensen and Weerman (2005) state that gang members are susceptible to peer pressure, while Lacourse et al. (2006) demonstrated that kindergarten children who displayed high levels of hyperactivity with low levels of anxiety and pro-social thinking were most likely to join a gang on reaching adolescence. This pattern of traits has been recognised as an early indicator of psychopathy in children, suggesting that having pre-existing psychopathic tendencies may be a risk factor for gang membership and maintenance (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005; Chu, Daffern, Thomas, Ang, & Long, 2014; Valdez et al., 2000), particularly when a child with such tendencies is raised in a residentially unstable neighbourhood (Dupéré, Lacourse, Willms, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2006).[22]

Thus, *sociopathic traits* have also been associated with gang members, along with poor social skills and low self-esteem (Yablonsky, 1962; cited in Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). Low self-esteem is a commonly cited explanation for joining gangs, given its corresponding relationship with delinquency, antisocial behaviour, and aggression, which themselves are common characteristics of gang members (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005). Dukes, Martinez, and Stein (1997) suggest that there is a complex relationship between gang membership and self-esteem. Low self-esteem may lead young people to join a gang (e.g. the social support provided by membership may boost confidence), and as group esteem rises (e.g. from success in delinquency) so too does members' self-esteem – thus, their association with the gang may strengthen. However, it then takes a tremendous amount of self-esteem for members to break away from the gang and resist peer

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[22] Beaver, DeLisi, Vaughn, and Barnes (2010) found that male adolescents with low levels of monoamine oxidase A (MAOA) activity were more likely to join gangs than were males with high MAOA activity, and that gang members who were likely to use weapons in a fight were distinguishable from those who would not use weapons based on the MAOA activity. Low MAOA activity has previously been linked to both antisocial behaviour and psychopathy (Caspi et al., 2002).

pressure to stay. For Dukes et al. (1997), therefore, the personal history of gang membership (from voluntarily joining to voluntarily leaving) is a personal history of increasing self-esteem.

Attitudes.

Gang members may also possess (qualitatively and quantitatively) different values, attitudes, and beliefs to non-gang youth. Chu et al. (2014) demonstrated that gang members possess more criminal attitudes (specifically entitlement, pro-violence and weapon use, positive attachment to antisocial peers, and positive attitudes towards gangs) than non-gang members. With respect to prison gangs, gang members have been shown to endorse stronger violent and aggressive attitudes (Scott, 2014), and more endorsement of sub-cultural norms (Wood, 2006). Gang members value social status more than non-gang members (both for street gangs [Alleyne & Wood, 2010] and prison gangs [Wood, Alleyne, Mozova, & James, 2014]), and it has been suggested that the desire to attain high levels of status (of the type that comes with gang membership) may explain why some non-gang members engage in delinquent, gang-type behaviour (Hughes & Short, 2005; Przemieniecki, 2005).

Alleyne and Wood (2013), however, later found that the perceived importance of social status to street gang members only predicted involvement in gang-related crime when anti-authority attitudes acted as a mediator of this relationship. Possession of anti-authority attitudes may therefore be a crucial element of gang member psychology. Alleyne and Wood (2010) also describe how gang members possess highly anti-authority attitudes, stating that these attitudes may be used by young gang members to justify their membership and behaviours. However, it is unclear whether gang members possess such attitudes before joining (and thus may help explain why they might join) or whether they develop after joining, as the frequency of their (negative) contact with authority figures (e.g. the police)

increases (Kakar, 2008). Negative contact between gangs and the police exacerbates gang members' anti-authority attitudes and reinforces their identity as gang members (Flexon, Lurigio, & Greenleaf, 2009; Khoo & Oakes, 2000; Lurigio, Flexon, & Greenleaf, 2008; McAra & McVie, 2005; Ralphs, Medina, & Aldridge, 2009; Wiley & Esbensen, 2013; Wiley et al., 2013). Wood and Alleyne (2010) comment that reinforcement of anti-authority, and/or pro-aggression, attitudes (i.e. through negative contact with police, and association with delinquent peers) may have lifelong, change-resistant implications for gang members by encouraging development of anti-authority/pro-aggression information processing biases and cognitive schemas.

Social cognitive traits.

Thus, gang members may possess cognitive traits that lead them to perceive the world, and their place within it, differently from non-gang youth. Esbensen et al. (2001) determined that gang members tend not to feel guilt over their criminal behaviours, which they may achieve by cognitively neutralising negative consequences of such behaviours (Esbensen, Peterson, Taylor, & Freng, 2009; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). This may reflect an ability to morally disengage from their inhumane behaviour (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caspara, & Pastorelli, 1996). To suggest that gang members are capable of full moral disengagement from their actions may be an exaggeration (e.g. Alleyne & Wood, 2010), but gang members do show evidence of a tendency to use some moral disengagement strategies. For example, they: 1) employ euphemistic (or sanitising) language when discussing their (gang-related) behaviour; and 2) attribute blame to the victims of their criminal acts. Regarding blame attribution, victims of gang crime are typically gang members themselves (e.g. Sanders, 1994: cited in Peterson, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2004), so gang members may feel justified in blaming their victims as these victims are likely to be rival gang members. Consistent with this, Alleyne, Fernandes, and Pritchard (2014) showed that a tendency to dehumanise victims of violence

mediates the relationship between gang membership and violence use – dehumanisation of rival gang members may not only assist gang members to justify their actions but may also serve a self-promotional function by portraying their rivals as inferior, less than human, and, thus, deserving of the treatment they give them. Alleyne and Wood (2010) also distinguished differences in social cognitive skills between Cores and Fringes (see Chapter One). Specifically, Fringes were less likely than Cores to employ euphemistic language when describing their behaviour (although Fringes were more likely to do this than non-gang members), and tended to displace responsibility for their actions onto others (a strategy that Cores did not demonstrate). These findings, Alleyne and Wood (2010) suggest, are evidence of a developmental process of gang membership. Consistent with this, there has been a recent push in gang research towards a greater emphasis on developmental and life-course studies (e.g. Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2012; Decker, Pyrooz, & Moule, 2014; Gilman, Hill, Hawkins, & Harris, 2014; Pyrooz, 2013; Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2014; Wood, Moir, & James, 2009).

The difficulty with assessing social cognitive (and attitude) bases of gang membership, however, (in comparison to personality-based accounts) is that causal effects are not always clear (i.e. does a young person's pre-existing values, beliefs, and cognitive tendencies make them a prime candidate for gang membership, or does gang membership cause changes to these characteristics over time to make them a better gang member?) As such, it is not possible to draw conclusions concerning gang membership capable of adequately informing theory from such research.

Group processes.

However, as discussed in Chapter One, gangs are merely a specific type of social group. Social psychology offers a wealth of theoretical models to account for group formation,

membership, and intra- and intergroup behaviour that may be adopted and applied to the study of gangs (for a full overview, see Wood 2014):

- Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests that people are motivated to form or join social groups for the purposes of comparing their own values, attitudes, and behaviours to those of other people. Thus social comparison can act as a means: of self-evaluation; of maintaining a positive self-evaluation; and even of self-enhancement (Suls, Martin, & Wheeler, 2002). In the case of gangs, a young person who possesses (e.g.) anti-authority attitudes will find those views validated by membership of a group composed of young people with similarly negative attitudes. The theory describes two ways in which comparisons are made: upward comparisons involve comparing the self to others who are seen as socially superior; whilst downward comparisons involve comparing the self to others who are viewed as socially inferior. If young people possess an idealised image of gang membership (e.g. Hughes & Short, 2005; Przemieniecki, 2005) an upward comparison will be made, and membership may be sought, so that a perceived gulf between self-image and group-image is reduced.

- Social Exchange Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) emphasises processes that take place once an individual has joined a social group. Specifically, it concerns how costs and benefits of group membership are viewed and valued by the individual member. Assuming that people rationally seek rewards and avoid punishment, the theory suggests that group membership will be maintained: 1) as long as the benefits of membership (e.g. improved social support, self-esteem, and opportunities for criminal learning, in the case of gangs) outweigh the costs of membership (e.g. the increased risk of victimisation as a gang member), and 2) so

long as the outcome of this equation is viewed more positively than alternatives to membership of the group (e.g. lack of legitimate opportunities).

- Social Identity Theory (SIT: Tajfel & Turner, 1986; later extended by Turner, 1987, as Self-Categorisation Theory) predicts that certain intergroup behaviours will emerge based on the perceived status, legitimacy, and permeability of the intergroup environment. It assumes that individuals develop a sense of self based on an understanding of their personal characteristics, the characteristics of groups to which they belong, and how these relate to groups they do not belong to. Central to the theory is the idea that in-group biases may develop, whereby individuals show a preference for members of their group and indifference or even outright derogation to members of other groups. Implications for SIT's application to the examination of gang behaviour are therefore strong, given the prominence afforded to intergroup conflict in many definitions of gangs (e.g. Thrasher, 1927; Centre for Social Justice, 2009). SIT provides perhaps the most promising group processes approach to the study of gangs (see Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012), although other theories may be applied to an examination of gang conflict:
  - Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) is concerned with the way in which hierarchies that exist between social groups are maintained. Individuals who possess a high social dominance orientation (SDO: a personal, psychological characteristic which promotes a preference for unequal group relations) will endorse hierarchy-enhancing ideologies and engage in hierarchy-maintaining behaviours (e.g. discrimination and behavioural asymmetry);
  - Realistic Conflict Theory (Sherif, 1966) suggests that groups engage in conflict as they compete over access to limited resources.

However, despite calls for a greater emphasis on group processes in gang research going back more than 25 years (e.g. Vigil, 1988), it is worth noting that (with the possible exception of SIT: Goldman, Giles, & Hogg, 2014; Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012) how these group theories may apply to the study of gangs is still in the early stages of development. For instance, there has been only one published study linking Social Dominance Theory to street gang membership (Densley, Cai, & Hilal, 2014),[23] with a second linking SDO with prison gang membership (Wood et al., 2014).

Short (1985: cited in Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008) stated that gang researchers need to better understand the role of the gang in gang behaviour. This alludes to the fact that, while much has been said about the role of group *organisation* in gang research (see Chapter One), little has been said about group *processes* (Decker et al., 2008; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Maxson & Esbensen, 2012; Sun, 1994). Klein (1995; 2012; 2014) has been a strong proponent of the need to assess group processes in gangs since, he believes, it is these processes which truly separate the gang from the group. But this argument has largely gone unanswered. There has been some movement on such issues in recent years,[24] but much work lies ahead for psychologists and gang researchers in this regard.

Criminological Theories

With so little psychological attention paid to gangs, most theoretical work derives from criminological perspectives. Central to criminological thinking about gangs is the notion that the environmental conditions to which one is exposed will be conducive to delinquent behaviour – it eschews the individualism that lies at the heart of psychology. Broadly

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[23] Finding that individuals' duration and placement in the gang predicts high SDO (i.e. they have a preference for hierarchical group structures and processes).

[24] With group processes made a theme of the Eurogang X workshop (June 2010), to highlight the importance of what little work had been conducted and what still remained to be done (Maxson & Esbensen, 2012).

speaking, criminological gang theories take one of three forms, relating to: 1) social disorganisation; 2) strain; or 3) social control.

The Chicago School.

The first sustained attempt to explain, rather than describe, criminal (including gang-related) behaviour can be traced back to the University of Chicago Department of Sociology during the 1920s and 30s, and a research group that has come to be known as the Chicago School. Two main (symbolic interactionist) theories of delinquency (and by extension gang membership) have been developed by the School – Social Disorganisation Theory (Sutherland, 1924; Thrasher, 1927) and Differential Association Theory (Sutherland, 1937; Sutherland & Cressey, 1960).

Social disorganisation.

Social disorganisation can be defined as the "*... inability of a community to realise common goals and solve chronic problems*" (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003, p. 374). For Sutherland (1924), developing issues such as poverty, high population turnover, ethnic heterogeneity, and poor community associations were deemed responsible for limiting the ability to build social cohesion into community[25] and, thus, limiting trust among its members and restricting its ability to identify, regulate, or denounce members' (undesirable) public behaviour. The prospect of crime was, therefore, encouraged (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Shaw & McKay, 1942). According to Sutherland (1939), social disorganisation is the principle cause of systematic criminal behaviour and, as described by Asbury (1940), 1920s Chicago (as a highly disorganised community where systematic, organised offending was commonplace[26])

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[25] Defined as the relationship between school, church, neighbourhood and family.

[26] This was the age of Al Capone and the Prohibition Gangsters after all.

offered a prime example of this theory in effect. It was Thrasher (1927), however, who first applied the concept of social disorganisation to explain the development of gangs.

Much like in his gang definition (described in Chapter One), conflict is integral to Thrasher's (1927) interpretation of Social Disorganisation Theory. Specifically, Thrasher viewed the disintegration of the traditional community as working in opposition to the promise offered to urban youths by alternative groups composed of their peers. Thrasher believed that youth gangs form as a natural outgrowth of typical, mischievous childhood play-groups, which offered young people a degree of excitement and purpose in a dreary world (see also Delaney, 2014, and Densley, 2012b). When uncertainty about one's personal identity (an integral part of adolescence) is experienced in the confines of a socially disorganised community, the search for that personal identity becomes that more difficult and, for Thrasher, it is under these circumstances that gangs may flourish. Returning to his definition of the gang, Thrasher cites the development of tradition, internal structure, solidarity, and an attachment to a local territory as the result of gang formation – in other words, all those elements missing from the socially disorganised community.

Therefore, young people find social organisation in gangs, which become their main point of reference, providing the direction (i.e. in terms of values, beliefs, and goal formation) and sense of belonging that they need but that the traditional community is unable to supply itself (Spergel, 1995; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999; Lane & Meeker, 2004; Papachristos & Kirk, 2006). As Papachristos and Kirk (2006, p. 64) describe, "*Gangs arise either to take the place of weak social institutions in socially disorganized areas, or because weak institutions fail to thwart the advent of unconventional value systems that often characterize street gangs*". Thus, gangs typically offer organisation in a less socially acceptable, more conflict-prone package than is desired in society at large. When the group's

existence is met with disapproval and opposition by other such groups and the conventional

social order[27], a distinct group-consciousness develops as a result, and a gang is formed.

Thrasher's empirical research confirmed the general principles established by

Sutherland (1924), highlighting that Chicago's gangs were mostly found in "slum" areas.

Where single-parent families, unemployment, multiple family dwellings, and welfare cases

were most frequent, and levels of education were at their lowest, Thrasher identified at least

1,313 gangs with approximately 25,000 members (a little under one percent of Chicago's

total population at the time). Thrasher's assertion that gangs will be most commonly found in

areas of high social disorganisation has been supported by a number of empirical studies (e.g.

Curry & Thomas, 1992; Dupéré et al., 2006; Fox, Lane, & Akers, 2010; Hagedorn, 1988;

Huff, 1990; Mares, 2010; Pizarro & McGloin, 2006; Rizzo, 2003; Spergel, 1995; Tita,

Cohen, & Enberg, 2005; Toy, 1992; Vigil, 1988). Further, consistent with Thrasher's

statement that gangs develop out of childhood play-groups in such areas, evidence suggests

that associating with delinquent peers is a precursor to gang membership (Amato & Cornell,

2003; Brownfield, 2003; Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Hill et al.,

1999; Kakar, 2005; Maxson, Whitlock, & Klein, 1998; Sharp, Aldridge, & Medina, 2006),

and that gang members tend to have higher rates of delinquency than their non-gang

counterparts *before* joining gangs (Eitle, Gunkel, & van Gundy, 2004; Esbensen, Huizinga, &

Weiher, 1993; Gordon, Lahey, Kawai, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Farrington, 2004;

Spergel, 1995).

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[27] Sutherland (1939) believed that the law-abiding elements of society are more extensive and dominant compared to more criminogenic elements and, thus, able to prevail over the systematic criminal behaviour of the few if it were appropriately organised. But because society had become fractured and focussed on individual and small group interests, society allowed crime to continue. He concluded that "*if the society is organized with reference to the values expressed in the law, the crime is eliminated; if it is not organized, crime persists and develops*" (p. 8).

Despite this supportive evidence, Thrasher's theories have been questioned and caveats imposed. For instance, not all features of social disorganisation have been shown to influence gang development. Dupéré et al. (2006) and Katz and Schnebly (2011) both found that, while residential instability and population turnover was a risk factor for gang membership, neighbourhood economic disadvantage was not. Wells and Weisheit (2001; cited in Katz and Schnebly, 2011), on the other hand, found that, while a community's social stability and ethnic homogeneity were related to the presence of gangs in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, economic deprivation only had an effect on gang presence in metropolitan areas. This raises the issue of gangs in non-urban locations – most research has been conducted in urban communities but gangs have been observed in more rural locations (for review, see Wilson, 2008). The theory's applicability outside of the US can also be questioned with regard to the importance of ethnic homogeneity – for instance, UK gangs tend to be multi-racial, reflecting the ethnic composition of the communities they emerge from (Mares, 2001). The distinction has also been made between *actual* social disorganisation and *perceived* social disorganisation (Lane, 2002; Lane & Meeker, 2004; 2010), while Pizarro and McGloin (2006) question whether social disorganisation has an influence over gang *behaviours*. Finally, Katz and Schnebly (2011) found evidence that extreme levels of social disorganisation may actually *prevent* the formation of gangs. Rather, Katz and Schnebly argue that some small level of social organisation (such as a limited social network) will be required if young people are to unite to form gangs – if this is not available there will be no links to draw young residents together, and no means for the norms and behaviours of a community to be transmitted to them...

Cultural transmission.

Shaw and McKay (1931; 1942), building on Thrasher's work, argued that disorganised communities *culturally transmit* criminal traditions in much the same way as any other

cultural element is passed along.   Gangs and their associated criminality are passed from generation to generation, from older boy to younger boy, via a process of socialisation. Gangs and crime are therefore not an automatic reaction to growing up in a socially disorganised environment, but rather the result of *passively learning* that gang membership and crime are an appropriate response to such an environment.

Evidence supports the notion that young people are socialised into gang membership and delinquency. Young gang members tend to originate from families with a history of criminal involvement (Eitle et al., 2004; Kakar, 2005; Maxson et al., 1998; Sirpal, 2002; Sharp et al., 2006), and/or gang membership (Spergel, 1995). Sharp et al.'s (2006) examination of delinquent youth groups concluded that the factors most associated with gang membership were having been expelled or suspended from school and being drunk on a frequent basis (both characteristics that are prevalent in a socially disorganised community), and having friends in trouble with police and a commitment to deviant peers (both indicators of cultural transmission). Bullock and Tilley (2002) found that most new members recruited to existing gangs had friends and family who were already associated with the gang. Consistent with Social Disorganisation Theory, many were described as "*disaffected street youth*" (Bullock & Tilley, 2002, p.28) who were in search of a gang home and willing to provide services for existing members. While there is some question as to whether young people are directly recruited to join gangs by existing members (particularly Cores: Bolden, 2010), the socialising influence of existing members has been recognised as a means of: 1) maintaining the gang (e.g. the neutralisation of Cores, either by death or incarceration, might lead to the gang's dissipation: Bolden, 2010); and 2) initiating "youngers" into participating in criminal activity (e.g. through coercion and enticement). However, at this point the difference between young people being passively socialised into, or actively exposed to, gang membership becomes blurred.

Differential association.

Having initiated Social Disorganisation Theory, Sutherland later developed an alternative

theory of delinquency (1937; Sutherland & Cressey, 1960; 1974). His Differential

Association Theory is reminiscent of Shaw and McKay's theory of cultural transmission in

that delinquency is a product of exposure to criminal norms. However, Sutherland (1937)

proposed that the mechanism of developing delinquent attitudes was by associating

specifically with people who were carriers of these norms. The role of belonging to certain

social groups (such as gangs) becomes most evident here – young people *actively learn* to

become delinquent through membership of personally-relevant groups (Akers, 1997;

Sutherland & Cressey, 1960). Akers (1997) suggests that this occurs through social learning

(Bandura, 1977), whereby the belief that criminal acts are acceptable under certain

circumstances develops via criminal involvement being positively reinforced (e.g. through

the approval of friends, financial gains, etc) and by imitating the criminal behaviour of others

(particularly if they are people the individual values).

As previously stated, much research has supported the notion that associating with

delinquent peers in childhood is a risk factor for joining a gang (Amato & Cornell, 2003;

Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Hill et al., 1999; Kakar, 2005; Maxson

et al., 1998; Sharp et al., 2006). However, Battin-Pearson, Thornberry, Hawkins, and Krohn

(1998; cited by Esbensen & Weerman, 1998) report that the strongest predictors of sustained

gang affiliation were, not only interaction with anti-social peers, but also a lack of interaction

with pro-social peers.[28] More specifically, a number of empirical studies claim to have found

support of the Differential Association Theory (e.g. Brownfield, 2003; Kissner & Pyrooz,

2009; Winfree, Backström, & Mays, 1994; Winfree, Mays, & Backström, 1994), and the role

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[28] A notion that is a key theoretical underpinning of Pyrooz, Sweeten, and Piquero's (2013) conception of gang embeddedness.

that social learning may play in gang membership (e.g. Hughes & Short, 2005;

Przemieniecki, 2005).

By suggesting that it is the norms associated with a community, rather than the

conditions of the community, that may promote delinquency, Sutherland and Cressy's (1960)

theory moved the Chicago School beyond an emphasis on delinquency and gangs as being

working-class pursuits – anyone can develop anti-social attitudes and engage in criminal

behaviour if they are exposed to antisocial norms when growing up. Brownfield (2003)

describes Differential Association Theory as "*...an important element of social learning*

theory" (p. 2), and when combined with the prominent role afforded to *delinquent attitudes* in

crime, indicates that a decidedly psychological route was being taken (Burgess & Akers,

1966). Differential Association leads young people to learn both the practical skills required

to successfully engage in crime (e.g. Webster, MacDonald, & Simpson, 2006) and, through

early and prolonged exposure to deviant attitudes of those whom young people are close to

and respect, to develop greater likelihood of the young person going on to accept and commit

crime themselves.

Strain Theories.

Continuing in the tradition of Sutherland (1924) and Thrasher (1927), Merton's (1938) Strain

Theory describes how environmental conditions that an individual is exposed to can make

delinquent behaviour favourable. Whereas the Chicago School's explanation of delinquency

remains somewhat descriptive, Strain Theory introduces a potential mechanism to account for

why socially disorganised communities are more prone to crime. It is not simply that such

communities cannot provide for the common goals, or solve the chronic problems, of its

residents, but the residents' *awareness* that the community cannot adequately provide for

them, and of what exactly they are missing out on, that leads to criminal action. At the core

of Strain Theory is the idea that wider society suggests universal goals for its population (e.g. the American Dream) that only a few of its members are ever likely to achieve. This apparent inequity results in strain: a pressure, experienced by members of socially disorganised communities, caused by the discrepancy between culturally-defined goals and access to the institutionalised means available to achieve them. This pressure then builds until cultural structures begin to collapse and, while the wealthy are able to seek out cultural goals through legitimate means, the socially disadvantaged simply have to cope with their circumstances by adopting other (perhaps less legitimate) forms of action.

Merton (1938) suggested five possible strategies of coping with strain: Conformity; Innovation; Ritualism, Retreatism; and Rebellion. The Innovator[29] (according to Merton, 1938) is most likely to engage in criminal behaviour, typically emerging from lower class (or socially disorganised) communities. The proceeds of Innovative, illegal activities (e.g. fraud, theft, drug dealing etc.) are then used to access culturally-defined goals. However, Cohen (1955) suggested that traditional Strain Theory cannot account for a range of criminal offences, with gang-related crimes among those overlooked. In many gang crimes, there is no material profit to be made (e.g. vandalism and destruction of public property): rather, Cohen states, these acts are simply malicious, serving to bond gang members together and develop a sense of group loyalty. Group values develop which subvert the cultural goals and legitimate means denied to them (a form of collective reaction formation, as Cohen put it), with long-term goals absent and immediate gratification dominant.

Cohen (1955) adopted a Strain Theory approach to his own work, citing that gang development was as a form of Merton's Rebellion[30], driven by a perceived lack of economic

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[29] An individual who accepts societal goals but not the means of achieving them, preferring illegitimate or deviant means.

[30] Whereby frustration with the status quo leads individuals to seek new goals and a new social order.

and social opportunities in US society. For the middle-classes of 1950s America (as today), values such as independence, academic achievement, and ambition were prized indicators of social status. Young people from working-class slums were, therefore, faced with a conflict, as day-to-day life under these conditions limited their ability to live up to these values. This could then be perceived as a failure to achieve legitimate social status, which in turn could promote status frustration (i.e. feelings of self-hatred, guilt, loss of self-esteem, self-recrimination, and anxiety). To compound the issue, if these young people were not effectively socialised to accept the legitimate means that they did have access to (e.g. they may experience unstructured leisure time, insufficient/inappropriate educational resources, etc.) and/or when they were socialised to accept entirely different values and means altogether (such as the need to live collectively and watch out for each other), strain may persist. The resulting status frustration will lead young people to blame themselves for their failure to meet society's expectations, and will be resolved when these working-class youths begin to associate with one another. A delinquent subculture forms, and introduces a potential new source of social status.

Dukes et al. (1997) and Hill et al. (1999) both conclude that children who are likely to join delinquent peer groups are those who have difficulty integrating into the traditional societal establishment, for instance, due to having low self-esteem, learning difficulties, and/or mental health problems. Without integration into legitimate institutions, street gangs provide young people with an alternative (criminal) source of opportunities for achieving their goals by developing skills, providing contacts, and opening an entry point into illegal markets of drugs and stolen goods (Webster et al., 2006). The economic benefits and opportunities that come from gangs engaging in criminal behaviour may even spread to the wider neighbourhood, thus weaving gangs into the fabric of the local community (Jankowski, 1991; Sullivan, 1989; both cited in Tita et al., 2005; Venkatesh, 1997).

Differential opportunity.

Merton (1938) and Cohen's (1955) take on the relationship between class inequality, crime, and gangs was not the only such theory put forward. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) suggest that the difference between working- and middle-class crime is not only driven by blockages to working-class youths' *legitimate* means of achieving their goals, but that middle-class youths will similarly be denied the opportunity to achieve their goals through *illegitimate* means. That is, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) suggest that working-class children will offend more frequently (and form gangs more readily) because opportunities for criminal learning will be more readily accessible to them than legitimate learning opportunities, while middle-class children will lack the opportunity to learn how to offend. It may be analogous to suggest that while Merton (1938) and Cohen (1955) emphasise risk factors for working-class delinquency, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) have a view towards the protective factors for middle-class delinquency.

In describing the difference between working- and middle-class delinquency, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) do not state that working-class youth suffer from a lack of opportunities but, rather, are exposed to different kinds of opportunities than are middle-class youth. The presence of an illegitimate opportunity structure for the youth of working-class slums is described, which is parallel, yet opposite, to the legitimate opportunity structure afforded to middle-class youth. In much the same way Merton (1938) suggested various strategies of coping with strain, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) suggest three possible reactions to an illegitimate opportunity structure:

1. A criminal subculture may develop, equivalent to Merton's (1938) Innovation strategy, which sees young people adopt criminal behaviour for personal, material gain. Social learning assists the development of this subculture, as it is usually found

in areas with high levels of organised adult crime, providing young people with opportunities for criminal learning;

2. A subculture of conflict may develop, equivalent to Merton's (1938) Rebellion strategy. If an illegitimate opportunity structure is underdeveloped or simply not available, frustration at the lack of any form of opportunity may lead to the formation of delinquent gangs. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) stated that gang members blame society at large for their limited access to legitimate opportunities (rather than blaming themselves, as suggested by Merton, 1931, and Cohen, 1955). Gangs are therefore a reaction against society, whereby conflict is common place and status is attained through (hyper-)masculine acts.

3. A retreatist subculture may develop. Following on from Merton's own strategy of Retreatism, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) suggest that when young people cannot find a place within either a legitimate or illegitimate opportunity structure, or within a subculture of conflict, then they essentially have no place to go. This subculture is characterised by drug abuse, gambling, and prostitution.

Agnew's (1992) reinterpretation.

The emphasis placed by both Strain Theory and Differential Opportunity on social class was later questioned by Agnew (1992) and Akers (2000 - in much the same way Differential Association questioned Social Disorganisation and Cultural Transmission). This interpretation of Strain Theory suggested that deviance was dependant on the *social norms* of the environment in which the young person grew up. For Agnew, an individual (regardless of social class) experiences strain if: 1) they fail to achieve (actual or anticipated) positively valued goals; 2) positively valued stimuli are removed (actual or anticipated); and/or 3) negative stimuli are presented (actual or anticipated). Individuals who are denied just

rewards for their efforts will naturally experience negative emotions (e.g. frustration, leading to dissatisfaction, resentment, and anger), particularly when they compare the outcome of their efforts to similar others for similar outcomes.[31] For Agnew (1992), the crucial emotion is anger, since responses to anger are generally directed outward. This strain-induced anger provides a motivational force to take corrective action to reduce the strain experienced, or, at the very least, decrease negative emotions. Criminal behaviour is thus an adaptive response.

Klemp-North (2007) cites a range of research he suggests supports links between each of Agnew's types of strain and risk factors for gang membership (i.e. school failure as goal failure; disorganised, and single parent, families as removal of positively valued stimuli; and drug usage as presentation of negatively valued stimuli: e.g. Esbensen et al., 1993; Hill et al., 1999; Thornberry, 1998). However, Tsunokai and Kposowa (2009) point out that there is very limited research that is actually dedicated to examining the link between gang membership and Agnew's interpretation of Strain Theory. Tsunokai and Kposowa's (2009) own study found that, while strain associated with goal failure (specifically failure at school) was associated with delinquency, neither strain nor its associated negative emotions predicted subsequent gang membership. Still, Klemp-North (2007) concludes that Strain Theory is a valuable contribution to criminological theories of delinquency and gang membership, and rightfully points out that no theory is likely to provide a complete account of these phenomena. Rather, Klemp-North (2007) views gang membership as a likely product of Agnew's (1992) conception of general strain, Sutherland's (1937; Sutherland & Cressey, 1960) differential association, and Hirschi's (1969) theories of social controls...

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[31] It should be noted however that Agnew (1992) was not the first to incorporate emotions into Strain Theory. In an earlier modification to the theory (and in particular the Innovation strategy), Merton (1949) himself described how a person who is particularly *emotionally invested* in their culturally accepted goals may be more willing to take greater risks in the hope of achieving the desired goal.

Control Theory.

While Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) differential opportunity hypothesis made the distinction between working- and middle-class youths' experiences and access to opportunities explicit, it still did so with a focus on the illegitimate opportunities available to working class youth and why it is that offenders offend. Social Control Theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi, 1969) picks up the other side of the coin by asking why non-offenders do not offend, and confirms that it is a lack of negative social relationships in the lives of conformists that stops them engaging in crime and delinquency. For control theorists, offending offers short-term gains and immediate gratification that the pursuit of legitimate means often cannot provide. The lure of an easy life, therefore, means that people are predisposed to engage in offending behaviour, but the likelihood of this predisposition being expressed depends on the strength of individuals' social bonds.

Social controls.

According to Hirschi (1969), social controls might consist of: 1) an attachment or emotional connection to another person or institution (e.g. with parents or school); 2) commitment to legitimate social norms (i.e. a tendency towards conformity); 3) involvement in conventional activities (e.g. time spent on homework is an influential deterrent from delinquency: Williams & McShane, 2004; cited in Brownfield, 2010); and/or 4) a belief or faith in common values and institutions (e.g. that the law is just). Thus, the social bond is essentially a collection of internalised social norms – people are socialised to build these social norms into their personal self-concept through a combination of formal and informal sanctions (Fagan & Meares, 2008). Breaking the social bond, therefore, will have negative emotional consequences, the anticipated experience of which deters people from engaging in deviant behaviour in the first place. For instance, if a child has a strong attachment to (e.g.) their

parents, they will want to preserve this relationship and maintain a positive image in their parent's eyes – thus, they will internalise their rules and norms to create a social bond. However, if the child has relatively weak social bonds (e.g. if they grew up in a socially disorganised environment and/or have poor attachment to others) then the negative repercussions of offending will be lessened and they will be free to engage in criminal activity.

Regarding the link between social controls and delinquency, Li (2004) found all four social controls significantly predict antisocial behaviour, with beliefs apparently the most important, followed by involvement, attachment, and, finally, commitment (although this order is not consistent across empirical studies, e.g. Nagin & Paternoster, 1994). Further Wright, Cullen, and Miller (2001) found that delinquency and association with delinquent peers decreased as personal attachment, commitments, and beliefs increased.

Regarding gang membership specifically, gang members are more likely to have experienced family disorganisation, a lack of parental role-models, and poor parental management (Eitle et al., 2004; Hill et al., 1999; Klemp-North, 2007; LeBlanc & Lanctot, 1998; Sharp et al., 2006; Thornberry et al., 2003). However, the link between these variables and gang membership is often much weaker than Control Theory would suggest. Some factors (e.g. family structure) may also be more important predictors of gang membership than others (e.g. parental attachment and family management: Hill et al., 1999). The mechanism by which social controls work also means that there is potential for rehabilitation. Growing up with poor social bonds may lead young people down a route of delinquency and gang membership, but if controls are later (re-)established they can lead to desistance – fatherhood (Moloney, Mackenzie, Hunt, & Joe-Laidler, 2009), and employment, military service, and marriage (Sampson & Laub, 2001), have all been shown to lead gang members away from their membership. However social bonds work, it appears that they do so

independently of gender - Bell (2009) found that attachment and involvement controls influence boys' and girls' gang involvement in a similar fashion.

However, it is not enough to say that gang membership is the result of non-existent social controls since some gangs and their members continue to accept legitimate social norms (Patillo-McCoy, 1999; cited in Tita et al., 1995). Further, Patillo (1998) and Venkatesh (1997) cite examples of communities where it is actually the resident gangs who enforce legitimate social norms and are the providers of social controls (e.g. by providing financial aid, law and order services, transportation, and even groceries, to members of disadvantaged communities). As a continuation of that theme, Begg, Langley, Moffitt, and Marshall (1996; cited in Booth, Farrell, & Varano, 2008) found evidence suggesting that some social controls (particularly involvement in legitimate activities, such organised sports teams) not only co-occur with delinquency and gang membership but may actually be risk factors for them.

Self-control.

Control Theory is extended through considering the role of self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). The strength of the social bond and the difference between the offending and non-offending child rests on the development of self-control and the ability to overcome the urge for immediate gratification. A child who is adequately socialised and develops strong social bonds will be more skilled at self-control and, thus, resistant to criminal offending. A child who is poorly socialised and develops weak social bonds will be less skilled at self-control and, thus, tempted to engage in criminal offending. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that the principle mechanism for poor self-control (and, thus, delinquency) development is poor child rearing (e.g. lack of supervision of the child's behaviour and/or recognising, and punishing, deviant behaviour). This, therefore, moves the focus away from

delinquency being class-specific (as was the implication of the Chicago School and, to an extent, Strain Theories) to being endemic, with family environment being central to preventing delinquency (with Gottfredson & Hirschi suggesting that children growing up with criminal parents or in single-parent families at most risk of delinquency).

Less empirical research has been conducted with regards to self-controls, particularly with regards to gang membership, although meta-analyses of available studies indicate that individual self-control is one of the strongest predictors of criminal behaviour (e.g. Pratt & Cullen, 2000; Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007). Where self-control has been assessed for gang members, the results are mixed – while some find that gang members display lower levels of self-control than do non-gang members (e.g. Brownfield, 2010; Hope & Damphouse, 2002) or find life-course variations (e.g. with increased self-control associated with shorter durations of gang membership: Pyrooz et al., 2013), others find no relationship at all (e.g. Childs, Cochram, & Gibson, 2009; Kissner, & Pyrooz, 2009).

Interactional Theories

The criminological theories described thus far take as their bases the idea that delinquency and gangs are a product of a breakdown in social structures. However, as Klein (1995) points out:

"...it is not sufficient to say that gang members come from lower-income areas, from minority populations, or from homes more often characterized by absent parents or reconstituted families... because most youths from such areas, such groups, and such families do not join gangs" (p.75-6)

This highlights the importance of individual differences in accounting for gang membership, and the role that psychology might/should play in its assessment. As described above,

several of the later criminological theories introduced concepts relating more to individual, than societal/cultural/class, differences. Conditioning and Social Learning Theory are important components of both Differential Opportunity (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960) and Differential Association (Sutherland & Cressey, 1960) Theories. Differential Association Theory also assigns a link between deviant attitudes and deviant behaviour. Agnew's (1992) reinterpretation of Strain Theory describes emotional responses (particularly anger) to strain as being a key motivator for engagement in delinquent activity. And the influence of social controls (Hirschi, 1969) was later extended to consider the role of self-control on delinquency (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1960).

Research has also documented an empirical link between individual and societal differences that may make certain people prone to gang membership and delinquency. For example, young people with psychopathic tendencies who live in disorganised communities are five times more likely to join a gang than those without this interaction of variables (with poor parental bonds also playing a part: Dupéré et al., 2006). As already noted, Dukes et al. (2007) describe an interaction between low self-esteem and strength of social bonds with the wider (pro-social) community which may influence the decision to join a gang. This suggests that neither a purely sociological, criminological, nor psychological theory alone can fully explain gang membership. To provide a full, reliable, and valid account of gang membership, any theory must incorporate elements from all perspectives. Two such interactional theories exist – Thornberry's (1987; Thornberry & Krohn, 2001) aptly named Interactional Theory and Wood and Alleyne's (2010) Unified Theory.

Interactional Theory.

Thornberry (1987; Thornberry & Krohn, 2001) suggests that a reciprocal relationship between young people and their peer groups, social structures (i.e. neighbourhood and

family), (weakened) social bonds, and learning environments (i.e. that promote and support delinquency) contributes to gang membership. Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, and Chard-Wierschem (1993) outline three related processes through which young people may come to join, and be accepted, by gangs:

1. Selection, whereby existing gangs select and recruit new members from the community based on evidence of their prior delinquency. Individual delinquency will continue if and when the young person leaves the gang;

2. Facilitation, whereby gangs provide delinquent opportunities for young people who were not delinquent beforehand. That is, delinquency is a reaction to an external situation rather than some personal, delinquency-motivating trait (as Selection might suggest). Delinquency, then, is high during the period of gang membership, but will return to the individual's pre-gang low levels after leaving;

3. Enhancement, whereby gang members are recruited from a population of high-risk youth who become more delinquent as a result of their membership. However, delinquency will tail off after leaving the gang. Enhancement is essentially an amalgamation of the Selection and Facilitation processes.

While there is anecdotal evidence to support a Selection effect (e.g. pre-gang violence, self-reported delinquency, and conduct disorders are all risk factors for gang membership: Hill et al., 1999; Lahey, Gordon, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Farrington, 1999), most empirical research has been concerned with determining the validity of the Enhancement process. For instance, Lacourse et al. (2003) found that joining delinquent groups was associated with a significant increase in violent offending, while leaving the group was associated with a subsequent decrease in violent offending. Bendixen, Endresen, and Olweus (2006) found a small but significant Selection effect for violence and general antisocial behaviour but found much stronger support for a Facilitation effect – they conclude that the Enhancement process

is a valid model of gang membership, but that it is Facilitation that contributes most to this process. Gordon et al. (2004) reached a similar conclusion in an assessment of gang members' involvement in drug dealing, drug use, and violent and property delinquency. Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, and McDuff (2005), again in an assessment of delinquency and drug use, crucially found that different types of gang member may experience different joining processes – specifically, a Facilitation effect was found for "transient" gang members, while "stable" gang members showed evidence of an Enhancement process. Finally, Peterson et al. (2004) found evidence of Enhancement not only for gang members' delinquency but also their victimisation – gang members were more likely to be the victims of crime than non-gang members generally but were also more likely to be victimised during their time as a gang member than at any other time before or after their membership.

     Unified Theory.

Wood and Alleyne (2010) proposed a preliminary model designed to highlight not only (sociologically-, criminologically-, and psychologically-informed) pathways into deviance and gang membership, but also possible pathways *out* of deviance and gang membership. The model also considers entirely non-criminal pathways. The model was developed using Theory Knitting (Ward & Hudson, 1998), which involved taking the best aspects of existing gang theories and building an overarching model capable of explaining gang membership, inspiring testable hypotheses, and furthering theory development. Taking inspiration from Thornberry (1987) and Howells and Eagly (2005), Wood and Alleyne's (2010) framework (see Figure 2.1) unifies a range of the criminological theories described with various psychological factors.

     The model begins by considering how a young person's individual characteristics (e.g. mental health, personality, and intelligence), specific social factors (e.g. presence of
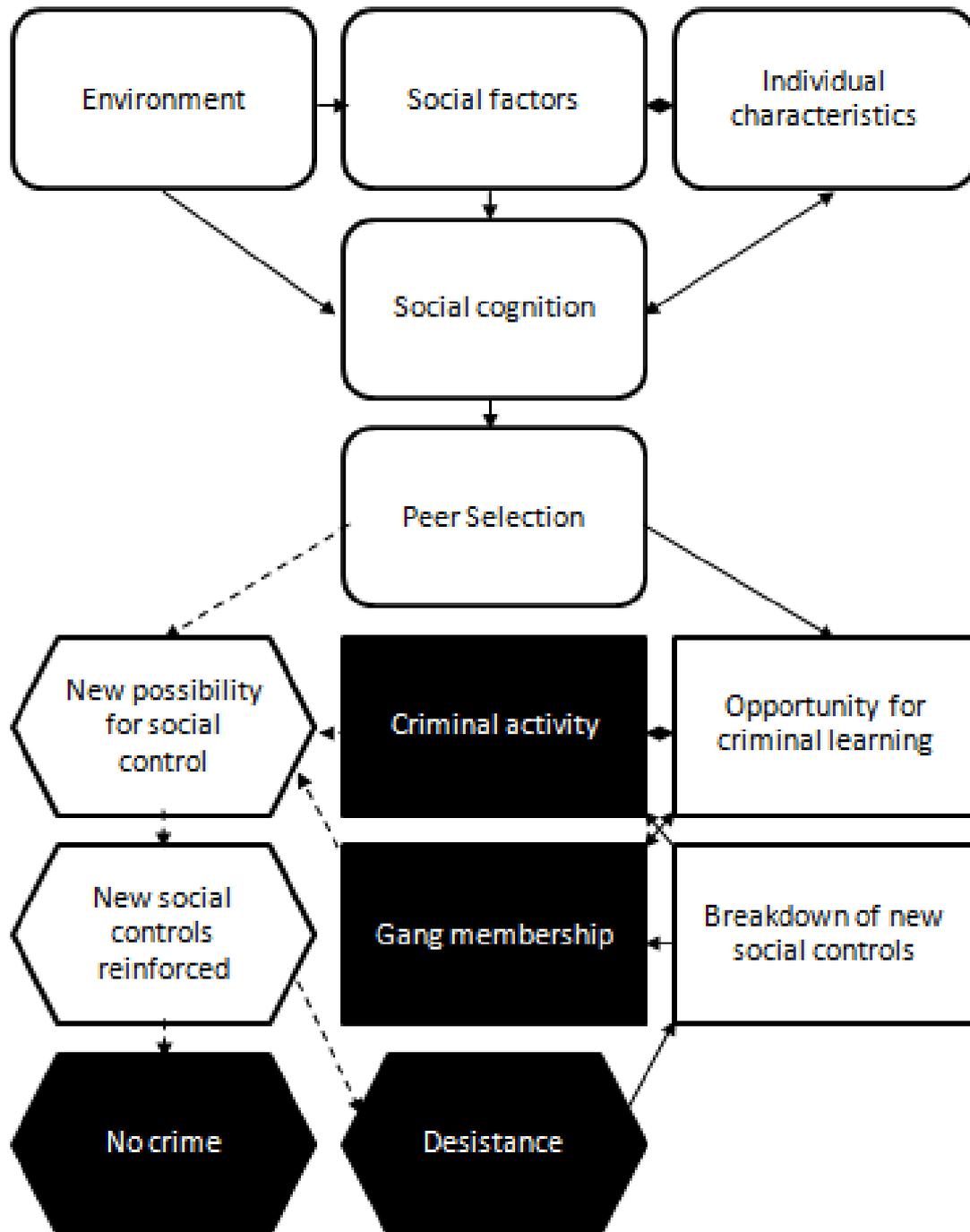
Figure 2.1.   Unified Model of Gang Membership (Wood & Alleyne, 2010).[32]

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[32] Round-edged boxes indicate normal social process (but which may be either risky or non-risky for delinquency), square boxes indicate risk factors for deviance, and hexagonal boxes indicate non-criminal activities. Dark shaded boxes indicate outcomes. Solid lines represent risks and dotted lines represent protectors.

social controls, strength of family bonds, and relationship with educational opportunities), and wider cultural environment (e.g. level of community organisation and family structure) interact. For instance, certain environmental issues might influence the expression of certain social factors (e.g. socially disorganised communities may possess correspondingly fewer social controls). Individual characteristics possessed by the young person may also have a reciprocal effect on the social factors they experience (e.g. hyperactivity and IQ may influence their success, or lack thereof, in school, which may then reflect back to influence [e.g.] anxiety). The interactive nature of the model allows for deviance and gang development even when one or more important conditions are not present – a young person growing up in a socially organised community may still join a gang if, for example, they perceive weak formal and informal social controls and/or display high levels of anxiety or hyperactivity. Regardless of exactly what factors are possessed and/or experienced, what is clear is that this collection of variables will affect how young people perceive the social world around them.

Wood and Alleyne's (2010) model emphasises several elements of social cognition that might be influenced by the individual differences/social factors/environment relationship. To begin, and in line with Strain Theory (Merton, 1938; Cohen, 1955), young people may perceive limited opportunities (or obstacles to available opportunities), and accordingly experience frustration, if, for example, they experience personal failure at school and/or poor self-esteem. Areas with high levels of gang activity coupled with certain personality characteristics (e.g. high anxiety) may lead the young person to over-exaggerate the likelihood, and subsequently fear, of victimisation: if experienced in conjunction with strain, then the individual is likely to perceive the world to be an especially hostile place. Anti-authority (anti-police) attitudes may develop when crime is high and social control is low, as the individual may feel that police are failing (or are unwilling) to protect their communities.

Personal knowledge of gangs also plays a crucial role: If gangs are present in the community, direct experience with them (via peers) will shape a young person's attitudes and beliefs about gangs and crime; if gangs are not present, then gang-related attitudes may be shaped by the media (e.g. the newspapers that demonise them or the films and music that glamorise them). With all these elements milling around the young person, their eventual view of the world will affect their choice of peers.

By selecting a peer group who has experienced similar backgrounds, and who shares common attitudes (whatever they may be), the young person's own attitudes will be cultivated. This is a crucial stage in Wood and Alleyne's (2010) model as peer selection will determine which pathway a young person is likely to take – a pathway to legitimate opportunities or a pathway to criminal learning. If the young person's experiences and beliefs lead them to spend time with those with pro-social attitudes and a commitment to achieve their goals through legitimate means, then their own developing pro-social attitudes will be reinforced and continue to develop, and they will be more likely to follow the path of legitimate opportunities (i.e. they will be more receptive to informal social controls, such as legitimate employment, long-term romantic relationships, and/or parenthood, etc.)[33] If the young person comes to associate with delinquent peers, however, then any anti-social attitudes that they already hold will be reinforced and they will be presented with more opportunities for criminal learning and further development of anti-social attitudes.

Young people who become part of an anti-social peer group will be more receptive to opportunities for criminal learning than to traditional social controls. These new skills will then be acted upon, making criminal involvement more likely. Criminal learning and criminal involvement have a reciprocal relationship. As the young person engages in more criminal and deviant behaviours: they will learn new ways to offend and their criminal skills

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[33] Engaging in criminal behaviour and delinquency is then unlikely, or at least unlikely to endure for very long.

will improve; existing anti-social and pro-aggression attitudes will be reinforced and any pro-social moral standards may be, at least in a delinquent context, set aside; they will experience pro-aggressive reinforcement through continued association with delinquent peers, resulting in a positive appraisal of personal aggression and the development of pro-aggressive information processing biases (cognitive schemas) that will guide their future behaviour; and they will experience an increase in their self-esteem (from approval from their peer groups) and a strengthening of bonds with delinquent peers. These social, cognitive, and emotional developments will, in turn, all strengthen their inclination to continue their involvement in criminal activity.

A secondary path that selecting delinquent peers and opportunities for criminal learning may lead to is gang membership. Wood and Alleyne's (2010) model does not consider criminal activity and gang membership as symbiotic – young people engaging in criminal activity may not come to join a gang, just as young gang members may not necessarily engage in criminal activity before joining a gang (although the two possess a strong correlational relationship: Klein, Weerman, & Thornberry, 2006). Gang membership affords the already-delinquent youth a number of benefits to their criminal activities beyond mere association with delinquent peers – it brings additional:

1. Protection (e.g. from competing criminal entities);

2. Social support, elevated status, prospects of attaining power, and opportunities for excitement;

3. Social controls – consistent with Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) observation that gangs develop their own parallel opportunity structures, they may also develop their own sets of rules and standards that members are expected to abide by. This may even develop into providing a form of surrogate family environment;

4. Opportunities for criminal learning which will increase involvement in criminal activity.

However, for all the potential, life-enhancing benefits of membership there are also potential downsides (e.g. the increased protection afforded by gang membership being a misplaced belief, with much research finding that gang members are, in fact, at an increased risk of victimisation; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1991; Gover, Jennings, & Tewksbury, 2009; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991; Miller, 1998; Miller & Brunson, 2000; Peterson et al., 2004; Rosenfeld, Bray, & Egley, 1999; Taylor, Freng, Esbensen, & Peterson, 2008) that may ultimately lead young delinquent gang members to wish for a gang- and crime-free life. Wood and Alleyne's (2010) model allows for desistance from both criminal activity and gang membership by diverting the delinquent pathway along to the legitimate opportunities pathway, as followed by those who develop pro-social peer groups. This is achieved when the young person gives up their criminal- and gang involvement in favour of opportunities for informal social control, such as legitimate employment and/or parenthood.[34] Adherence to these new-found, legitimate social controls may be strengthened by positive and/or negative reinforcement (e.g. through promotion at work) or weakened by positive and/or negative punishment (e.g. if stable relationships with a partner and/or children break down). If strengthened, then the youth will continue to desist from crime; if weakened, then they may fall back into old pattern of criminal activity and gang membership. However, gang desistance research is still very much an emerging field (Carson, Peterson, Esbensen, 2013), and it is only truly starting to gain traction with the aforementioned push for an emphasis on life-course issues (e.g. Decker et al., 2012; Decker et al., 2014; Gilman et al., 2014; Pyrooz, 2013; Pyrooz et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2009).

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[34] Although Moloney et al. (2009) comment that the effectiveness of parenthood as a social control is contingent upon additional changes to the amount of time spent on the streets and having the ability to support oneself and one's family with a legal income.

Conclusion and Current Research

As Wood and Alleyne (2010) point out, Unified Theory is a very preliminary framework of the possible processes that lead to gang membership. It is not in itself a specific theory of delinquency or gang membership but, rather, by assembling the various elements described by criminological theories into one model and then integrating them with relevant psychological factors, a broader and more scientifically rigorous (i.e. in that it has explanatory power and provides testable hypotheses) account of pathways to (non)-criminality, gang-membership, desistance, and back again becomes apparent. The framework can, therefore, be used as a springboard that can be used to assist the study of specific aspects of gang membership and further develop theory (and indeed some researchers have already attempted to incorporate their own findings into the framework: e.g. Haddock, 2011). Further, because it includes potential avenues for non-involvement in crime and delinquency (either outright or as desistance), the framework allows for meaningful comparisons to be made (e.g. between gang members and non-gang members, between current and ex-gang members, between socially organised and socially disorganised communities, etc.), thereby placing it firmly in line with the aims of the Eurogang network (e.g. Klein, 2006).

However, there is an obvious omission from the description and evaluation of Unified, Interactional, Control, Strain, and Chicago School Theories as presented in this chapter, and in the research presented as evidence supporting or contradicting these theories – while able to account for why young people may or may not become gang members, they cannot account for why some young gang members maintain only peripheral gang associations while others go on to become considerably entrenched in gang culture. That is, they do not clearly speak to the examination of Core versus Fringe membership (see Chapter One). As gang theory has evolved (as presented throughout this chapter), the ability to infer

explanations for variable gang commitment has improved.[35] However, there are few

examples in the research literature making such inferences (e.g. Bolden, 2010; Gatti et al.,

2005) and, regardless, inference is not explanation.

This, then, is the emphasis of the current research – the development of a theoretical

model of differential gang membership that could explain why some youth become deeply

entrenched in gangs (i.e. Cores) while others stay on the fringes of gang life. It is possible

that Fringes are "wannabes" and equally possible that Fringes do not want to become fully

immersed into gang life. These are the questions that focus the research reported in this

thesis. Taking inspiration from Wood & Alleyne's (2010) Unified Theory, and consistent

with the Eurogang network's ambition to promote the qualitative examination of group

process in youth gangs (Maxson & Esbensen, 2012), it is hoped that the first valid, testable

account of intra-group gang processes may be built.   In Chapter Three, a methodology

specifically geared towards the generation of new theory will be discussed.

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[35] For instance, such variation cannot be accounted for by Chicago School or, to an extent, Strain Theories given that gang membership is explained in terms of relatively static social factors (suggesting that all young people exposed to such factors are equally at risk and likely to join gangs). Variation can be inferred from Control Theories, in that young people may become more or less affiliated with gangs as a function of the relative strength or weakness of their legitimate social bonds. Finally, Unified Theory can be used to suggest a number of reasons why young people with no obvious risk factors for gang membership (e.g. those with stable family backgrounds, good education prospects, etc.) may be tempted to associate with delinquent peers (e.g. perceived protection from other groups, excitement, status, and power) and that this association may only be fleeting (i.e. they will only achieve Fringe status). Conflict between the gang's culture and the young person's existing pro-social attitudes, morality, and/or school success etc. will prevent the young person from becoming too involved with the gang, which may even deny them further involvement itself (e.g. if the other members do not see them as fitting in with the group).

Chapter Three

Research Design – Aims, Procedural Methods, and Analytic Strategy

As described in previous chapters, gang researchers (e.g. Alleyne & Wood, 2010; Bolden, 2010; Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001; Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Piquero, 2013; Spergel, 1995) acknowledge that gangs consist of different degrees of membership. Recent advances in this field have led to the notion of gang embeddedness, a continuum which reflects levels of immersion within, and adhesion to, a gang (Pyrooz et al., 2013). At the most basic level, however, gang immersion can be seen as a dichotomy, with some youth fully committed to the gang and its activities (i.e. Cores) and others tending to drift in and out of gang activity (i.e. Fringes). However, although some research examines the (descriptive) differences between Core and Fringe membership (e.g. demographics, attitudes, and behaviours), research cannot yet tell us *why* differential forms of gang membership occur. Understanding varied commitment to gang membership (both in terms of the embeddedness continuum and the Core/Fringe dichotomy) will help researchers, policy-makers and youth workers identify factors important to gang joining, membership maintenance, and desistance. Criminological theories only take us so far – young people growing up in the same or similar social, cultural, and/or economic conditions display variable levels of gang involvement (e.g. Goldman et al., 2014; Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Thus, if we are to truly understand Core and Fringe membership (and the developmental processes they imply) the importance of investigating individual differences (including individual responses to social/group processes) is clear.

A theoretical model capable of explaining social-cognitive processes and biases, and developmental trajectories, specific to Cores versus Fringes would greatly enhance our understanding of gangs. Longer-term, explanation of differential gang membership may allow *targeted psychological* interventions (e.g. cognitive behavioural) addressing gang

membership to be developed.   If different routes *into* Core membership and Fringe membership exist, and are underpinned by different psychological processes, then this implies that different routes out of Core and Fringe membership may exist also. Thus, when considering preventative gang interventions, and strategies intended to assist existing members to leave the gang, it would be irresponsible to tackle issues with greater relevance to Fringe membership when working with an identified Core (and vice versa). However, first, it is necessary to identify which psychological processes are most relevant to gang membership and which are not, and which (if any) are specific to Cores and which to Fringes. With this in mind, this chapter will: outline the aims of the current research; detail the analytical methodology employed at the heart of this research; and describe the participant recruitment procedures and data collection practices utilised.

Research Aims and Expectations

This research aimed to identify factors which contribute to offending youths' attitudes and beliefs towards, and engagement with, gang membership. This was achieved by conducting a qualitative assessment of gang-associated young offenders' thoughts and feelings towards gang membership and criminal behaviour, their views on and explanations for their own experiences of criminality and gang membership, and how these may relate to their intentions regarding further offending and continued gang association. Specifically, the research sought to examine whether any qualitative differences exist between identified Cores and Fringes (in terms of their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and/or cognitive biases, for example) which may account for their distinct levels of membership. Key questions the research was intended to address were:

1. Why do some young gang members become Cores while others do not?

2. What effect does type of gang membership (i.e. Core or Fringe) have on attitudes

    regarding criminal behaviour (both in general and with regards to their own) and

    expectations of leading a crime free life in the future?

In some senses, given recent advances into the concept of gang embeddedness (Pyrooz et al.,

2013), emphasising the Core/Fringe dichotomy may seem like a backwards step in gang

research. Embeddedness, in proposing that an individual's gang member status can be placed

along a continuum from tentative to full immersion, introduces a fine-grained approach to the

examination of gang membership that the Core/Fringe dichotomy does not. Indeed, Pyrooz

et al. (2013) suggest that this dichotomy is little better than examining gang membership

unilaterally, because both approaches "*restrict variability in gang membership and promote a

false conception of homogeneity*" (Pyrooz et al., 2013, p. 241). However, psychologists are

interested in the overall characteristics and behaviour associated with group membership. As

such, the current thesis focuses on the Core/Fringe dichotomy in order to identify

characteristics associated with discrete stages of gang commitment. This thesis does not

reject the concept that even within this dichotomy that there will be some form of continuum.

As discussed in later chapters, Fringe membership may even be dichotomised further into

Inner and Outer Fringe membership.

Since so little is known and understood about the attitudes of gang members to gang

membership and criminality (and in particular to potential important differences between

Cores and Fringes), and given the contentious, emotionally-charged nature of youth gang

research (particularly research in which known and/or suspected gang members are expected

to participate) a population-driven, preconception-free approach to data collection can be

vitally important. Hence, Grounded Theory methodology (GT: Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was employed.[36]

Aims of Grounded Theory.

There are a number of competing GT methods to choose from, including the objectivist approaches of Glaser (1978) and Straus & Corbin (1990) or Charmaz's (2006) constructivist approach. In the current research, Charmaz's (2006) approach was adopted, however, they all share the same basic function. The aim of any GT analysis is for research to go beyond description and hypothesis-testing and to instead *generate* a theory of some specific social process and/or action. This theory should be "grounded" in the behaviour, words, and actions of the participants of study. Thus, GT: 1) is driven by issues identified as important by the population of interest (i.e. young gang-associated offenders) rather than those with an outside interest or agenda (e.g. academics, policy-makers, etc.); and crucially 2) is designed to filter out any preconceptions researchers may have (inadvertently) developed concerning the topic of interest. For instance, Charmaz (2006) described the use of *sanitising concepts* (i.e. background ideas that create a framework around which researchers build the research problem, knowingly or not) and reflective thinking in helping to overcome preconceptions. Generally speaking, therefore, GT methodology can increase ecological validity, and enhance the scientific rigour, of qualitative research.

The process of conducting a GT analysis (which will be described in greater detail later in this chapter with regards to participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis) begins with identifying a research situation. This is achieved by asking whether the specific social phenomenon that a researcher wishes to investigate lacks the theory to adequately

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[36] For a more complete (than can be provided in this thesis) overview of the philosophy, assumptions, and procedures involved in conducting GT research please see (e.g.) Birks and Mills (2011), Charmaz (2006), and/or Gordon-Finlayson (2010).

explain it – as argued in Chapter Two, the phenomenon of differential gang membership meets this criterion. The researcher must then ask whether GT is the most appropriate methodology for addressing this theoretical deficiency – GT is most appropriate when assessing behavioural processes and actions. In the case of differential gang membership, the behaviours and actions engaged in by Core and Fringe members, and the underlying motivations behind them, may vary greatly and thus should be of prime interest for assessment.

A good theory can be characterised as a loosely-linked set of hypotheses, the relationship between which should be able to explain and predict the relevant phenomena (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Theory generation then is a process that involves collecting data on the phenomenon and then constructing alternative explanations until the explanation that fits the data most simply is determined (Morse, 1994). Constructivist GT (Charmaz, 2006) offers a framework around which this theory generation process can occur, underpinned (according to Gordon-Finlayson, 2010) by three key qualities that influence the logic, procedures, and product of a (constructivist) GT study. That is, GT should be:

1. Theoretical, in that the product of the analysis should be a substantive theory capable of making sense of its own context, as opposed some universal theory of human behaviour;

2. Analytical, requiring a level of reflection, inductive ability, and sensitivity to the data on the part of the analyst, without which the specific details collected regarding the process and/or action of study cannot be used to infer a more general theory of said process and/or action;

3. Cyclical – generating theory requires continually moving backwards and forwards

between data collection and analysis, the emerging theory and the existing literature,

so as to establish and reflect on the link between evidence and theory.

The aim of GT, therefore, is to understand the research situation and to discover the theory

implicit in the data.[37] The philosophy and rigorous, though flexible, procedures involved in

GT, especially when in comparison to other qualitative methodologies such as Interpretative

Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, 1996) or Conversation Analysis, thus make it the

ideal methodology to employ in the current research.

In Relation to Eurogang Research.

From a theoretical perspective, this research fits well within the stated objectives of the

Eurogang network regarding the need for qualitative examinations of group processes in

youth gangs (Klein, 2012). By independently examining Cores and Fringes, the interactions

between these subgroups within the larger gang structure may shed much needed light on

intra-group processes that occur within gangs. Research comparing gang and non-gang youth

all too often considers gang members as a homogenous group and cannot do justice to such a

complex social issue. This research highlights important differences between Cores and

Fringes, and the processes that lead to and maintain such differential membership. Finally, in

developing a theoretical model of differential gang membership, a framework for further

research and hypothesis testing may be established. This research is intended to be the first

step in a long-term programme of research comprised of multiple studies, individually

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[37] Given the purpose of GT, it has enjoyed a growing popularity over the last decade or so among forensic psychologists, with GT analyses of sex offending (Courtner, Rose, & Mason, 2006; Gannon, Rose, & Ward, 2008, 2010; McCormack, Hudson, & Ward, 2002; Polaschek, Hudson, Ward, & Siegert, 2001; Wakeling, Webster, Moulden, & Marshall, 2007; Ward, McCormack, & Hudson, 1997; Ward, Liuden, Hudson, & Marshall, 1995), homicide (Beech, Fisher, & Ward, 2005; Cassar, Ward, & Thakker, 2003; Milsom, Beech, & Webster, 2003), firesetting (Barnoux & Gannon, 2014; Tyler, Gannon, Lockerbie, King, Dickens, & de Burca, 2014), neonaticide (Riley, 2005), and even disqualified drivers continuing to use their cars (Wilson, Ward, & Bakker, 1999).

addressing the issues highlighted here as important contributing factors to Core and Fringe

membership (whether they be factors previously identified and ingrained in gang theory or

newly brought to light by this research).

Ultimately, process differences between Core and Fringe youth may then be taken

into consideration when developing or enhancing interventions aimed at reducing

(re-)offending. For instance, the needs of Cores and Fringes are likely to differ because, with

variation in their immersion within the gang, the levels of group influence on members'

offending behaviours will differ. This research aims to identify the factors relevant to each

group and may, one day, allow these differences to be taken into account when devising new

interventions or enhancing existing strategies to address a youth's specific criminogenic

needs. Overall, this research will provide much-needed, psychologically-derived theoretical

insight into the role of differential gang membership on offending behaviour. Moreover, it

will enable, for the first time from a psychological perspective, the level of group

membership to be taken into account when considering the needs of individual youth.

Methodology

Participants.

Based on an examination of past GT studies it was estimated that approximately 25 to 30

participants would be sufficient to reach theoretical saturation – that is, the point at which

continued data collection fails to elicit new details or properties that contribute to the

development of the grounded theory.

In practice, interviews from 20 participants were included in the GT analysis.

Twenty-four interviews were conducted with incarcerated young offenders and, based on the

information gathered, theoretical saturation was achieved. Four participants were excluded

from the analysis: one due to a clerical mistake;[38] one due to his tendency to answer complex questions with one word answers;[39] a third was excluded as the participant did not discuss any topics related to the research;[40] and a final participant was excluded owing to concerns about his ability to understand the study and his ability to consent.

The mean age of participants included in the analysis was 17.50 years (SD = .587), with a range of 16.25 years to 18.17 years. Four participants were White, eight were Black, seven were Mixed Race, and one was Pakistani.   Thirteen lived in the Greater London area, three lived in suburban areas around London, and four lived elsewhere in the southern UK. Their mean age at first conviction was 14.18 years (SD = 1.23). Eleven were incarcerated for property offences (four of which involved use of weapons), five for violent offences, two for drug offences, one for drug and firearm offences, and one for kidnap.

Materials.

An in-depth interview schedule (complete copies of which may be found in Appendix Two) was devised to cover as many issues typically related to gang membership, and participants' experiences of, and attitudes and beliefs towards, these issues as possible. The interview schedule was broadly divided into three sections, covering:

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[38] Having had no prior association with gangs he should not have been approached for participation.

[39] Thus providing little interpretable data.

[40] The interviewer abandoned the interview schedule early in the session in favour of letting the participant simply speak about issues he himself wanted to discuss. This participant, AV, was one week away from release and terrified at the prospect. Having already been returned to jail three times for accidentally breaching his parole conditions, AV was convinced he was stuck in a cycle of imprisonment that he would be unlikely to escape from. AV took the opportunity afforded by the interview to talk through his concerns with a neutral party (i.e. someone not affiliated with the participating Youth Offending Institution). The interviewer allowed this as AV's need to get things of his chest was deemed to be greater than the researcher's need for data at that time. As such, no data relevant to the present research was recorded during the interview.

1. Background and (criminal) attitudes, including the topics of community, educational experiences, peer associations, family and/or living arrangements, and criminal awareness and experience;

2. Gang membership, including consideration of gang definitions, awareness of local gangs, and attitudes towards gang membership, gang members, and gang behaviours;

3. Leading gang/crime-free lives, including discussion of practical solutions to gang prevention and intervention, experiences of/engagement with community and Youth Offending Institution (YOI) gang programmes, and hopes for the future.

In total, two interview schedules were used. The first interview schedule (see Appendix 2a) was used in the first week of data collection. While the data collected in this week was carried forward into the main GT analysis (consistent with Glaser's [1967] dictum that "*All is Data*"), this week was also used as a pilot test of the schedule. Several minor revisions were subsequently made to the schedule in light of the first week's experience to make the interview process more efficient (see Appendix 2b). Changes made included: 1) rearranging the order of topics in the Background section (moving discussion of family later in the schedule, so as to start the interview on a more neutral topic); 2) restructuring the questions related to the Eurogang definers to give them more prominence; and 3) restructuring the Leading Crime-Free Lives section so as to better assess attitudes to various forms of intervention.

Procedure.

Interviews were conducted at a YOI located in the South-West United Kingdom (UK) over a ten week period throughout 2012. Prior to data collection, full ethical clearance for the proposed study was sought and approved by the Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology at the University of Kent, UK. All materials (including information sheets,

debrief sheets, and interview schedules), and all equipment (including laptop computers, recording equipment, and transcription equipment), were vetted and approved by the participating YOI authorities prior to commencement of data collection. The researcher also received specialist safety and key training, in order to move freely and safely around the YOI without an escort.

Conducting research in prisons, and in particular YOIs, presents a number of challenges, both in terms of practice and ethics. Interviews took place within one of the institution's regular education/association sessions, of which there were four per day, each one hour and 30 minutes in length. This was to ensure that conducting the research had as little impact on the day-to-day running of the YOI, and on the routines and educational opportunities afforded to the young people themselves, as possible. This meant that interviews could last anything between 40 minutes and one hour and 20 minutes, depending on which of the two prison wings the participant had to be transferred from to the interview room and on the prisoner transfer pattern that day. The researcher was able to record the interviews, with participants' consent, provided that all recordings were transcribed on site and immediately deleted – no audio recordings of the interviews were permitted to be removed from the YOI.

Participant recruitment.

Grounded Theory uses a theoretical sampling process (for more detailed description of issues surrounding theoretical sampling, see Brekenridge & Jones, 2009) – anyone who may be knowledgeable about the phenomenon of study may participate. Unlike other qualitative methods, such as IPA (Smith, 1996), a homogeneous sample is not required in GT. Since the aim is to develop theory, a representative sample is not necessary, and since GT is an iterative

process, sampling procedures may be reassessed mid-research and new appropriate sources of information sought depending on what emerges from the data collected.

Having been informed of the nature of the research, members of the YOI Psychology Team would identify a selection of young men who might offer a range of views on, and experiences of, gang membership from prior to their incarceration. These potential participants were then briefly told of the research project and invited to voluntarily attend an interview with the researcher. Individual meetings were arranged between the researcher and those who responded positively to the invitation. At the start of the meeting the voluntary nature of the interview was stressed again, details of the research and the nature of the topics likely to be raised within the interview were reiterated, and all were given the opportunity to withdraw before the interview commenced. In total, approximately 50 potential recruits were approached by the YOI Psychology Team about participation. Of these, 34 agreed to participate, although nine of them failed to attend the arranged meeting. Of the 25 who attended the meeting, only one opted to withdraw from the research before commencement of the interview, leaving a sample of 24 participants interviewed, with (as previously described) data from 20 carried forward into analysis.

Data collection.

Before interviews began, participants were given information about the study and details on their participant rights, including caveats to their right to anonymity. It was emphasised that the interview would take the form of a relatively informal, confidential discussion that was intended to gain an understanding of their own experiences. They were told that there were no right or wrong answers. It was explained that the discussion would be recorded, but that the interviewer would be the only person to listen to the recording, that an anonymised transcript of the discussion would be made, and that the audio recording would then be

deleted. Potential recruits' rights as participants regarding anonymity and confidentiality were then explained. This is critical to all ethically-minded psychological research, but it is more so when research is conducted in a prison setting as there are certain (aforementioned) caveats to these rights. For instance, the right to confidentiality can be withdrawn if interviewees are to break a prison rule during the interview, or admit to; 1) a breach in prison security; 2) further identifiable offences for which they have not been convicted; and/or 3) a threat to harm themselves or others. It was stressed that the discussion was only concerned with their behaviour outside the prison, and only with criminal behaviours which had been recorded (i.e. through conviction, charge, or caution). It was explained that the discussion may at times touch on sensitive topics and that if there was anything that the interviewee felt uncomfortable talking about, or if they felt uncomfortable in any way, the discussion would be paused to give them a break or would simply be moved along to talk about something that they felt more comfortable with. If they were not happy to continue, the discussion would be terminated, for which they would incur no penalty.

This information was presented to interviewees in the form of an information sheet (and subsequently a debrief sheet, which may be found in Appendices 1a and 1b). However, the researcher also read aloud all the information contained in the sheet, so as to ensure participants with literacy problems fully understood what would happen in the session, their participant rights, and the conditions under which these rights might be waived. Finally, the researcher confirmed again that the volunteer was happy to participate and asked if they had any questions. Participants then signed to confirm their consent to participate and their understanding of their rights, and the interview began. Upon completion of the interview, and transcription of the data, consent forms were kept separate from the interview transcripts so as to preserve the anonymity of the participants' individual data.

As described in the Materials subsection above, the interview schedule included open-ended questions about the young offenders' backgrounds (e.g. school, home), their associations with peers (offending and non-offending friends), their own perceived gang membership status (whether they were Cores, Fringes, or non-gang members), their offending experiences (i.e. were they gang-related) and their attitudes (and/or aspirations) towards crime, gang membership, and leading crime-free lives.

The interview schedule was only used as a rough guide to attempt to ensure that similar topics were covered in each interview. Consistent with GT methodology, how participants responded to questioning, and where their responses would lead discussion, varied – participants were in control of the conversation (with the occasional query or request for clarification from the interviewer) to ensure that the content of the data collected reflected their own views on the topics discussed, unswayed by any preconceived notions the interviewer may have possessed. Only when the participant appeared to have exhausted conversation on any given topic did the interviewer interpose by moving on to the next element of the interview schedule.

Data Analysis

All audio data was transcribed on-site and then immediately deleted, in accordance with YOI stipulations. Interview transcripts were taken away for analysis.

Identifying Gang Membership.

As described in Chapter One, for the purposes of this research the Eurogang definition of gang membership was used (Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina, & van Gemert, 2009).[41] When using the Eurogang definition to determine whether a research participant is a

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[41] i.e. *"a gang (or troublesome youth group) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity"* (Weerman et al., 2009, p. 20).

gang member or not, Weerman et al. (2009) suggest a range of variables to assess, both for

the individual participant and the group to which they belong. These variables are divided

into several levels. Level One (or core) measures relate to the five gang definers Weerman et

al. (2009) propose, and should be built in to all methods of data collection when conducting

gang research:[42]

- Individual variables:
  - **Demographics** (Weerman et al., 2009, do not suggest the nature of the
    demographic information to be recorded).
- Group characteristics:
  - <u>**Age**</u>, **sex**, *ethnic composition*, *immigrant composition*, *reasons for joining*
    and **presence of (negative) peer commitment**;
  - <u>**Engagement in common group crimes**</u>, <u>*illegal activity*</u>, and/or ***drug and
    alcohol use***;
  - **Group size**, *group duration*, and <u>***whether it could be considered a gang or
    not***</u> (including terms used to describe the group);
  - Whether the group has a name (considering what it is and who gave it), ***sub-
    groups***, *territory*, and is <u>**street-oriented**</u>.

In addition to these variables, Weerman et al. (2009) list a number of descriptive elements

that they believe would be desirable to include in any study of street gangs, providing

additional information about individual gang members and the gang as a group. These Level

Two variables assess information that it would be desirable to collect data on but are not

strictly necessary:

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[42] Those variables underlined represent one of the five key definers explicitly incorporated the Eurogang definition statement (Weerman et al., 2009). Those variables in bold are incorporated into the interview schedules used in the current research; those in italics were assessed only when deemed appropriate (i.e. depending on interviewees' responses to earlier questions); the remaining variables were not directly assessed.

- Individual variables:

  o **Family background**, including *parental monitoring and supervision*, parental schooling and employment, their legal and/or immigration status, and **status of siblings**;

  o *Girl/boyfriends*, and the **proportion close friends in gang**;

  o **Experience of gang/crime prevention**, **intervention**, and/or **suppression strategies**;

  o **Criminal history**, including **self-reported delinquency** and **victimization history outside of gang**.

- Group variables:

  o *Group values and history* (including key events/incidents), **group roles**, and **level of attachment to group**;

  o *Entry and exit criteria*, and use of symbols and *colours*;

  o ***Other groups are present in the same location***, ***have external antagonists*** and *fights with other groups*.

Finally Level Three is a list of suggestions for interesting additional measures that can be included in a comparative gang study:

- Individual variables:

  o **School and family attachment**, *family residence* and socio-economic status;

  o **Personal networks beyond the gang**;

  o Mental health issues.

- Group variables:

  o Class composition of gang, and *proportion of members co-located*;

  o *Hanging out together*, and *kinship*.

Much has been made of the distinction between using self-nomination measures (i.e. relying on research participants to identify and/or accept themselves as gang members) or the Eurogang instruments as a means of identifying gang membership (e.g. for review see Matsuda, Esbensen, & Carson, 2012; Webb, Katz, & Decker, 2006). For instance, Esbensen et al. (2001), Curry, Decker, and Egley (2002), and Decker et al. (2014) each claim that self-nomination is a robust means of distinguishing gang from non-gang members, although Esbensen and Weerman (2005) question whether this holds outside the US (due to variations in cultural knowledge associated with the term "gang"). Indeed, Smithson, Monchuk, and Armitage (2012) provide a couple of nice demonstrations of young British people's responses to the term which indicate that it may be of limited use in an interview setting, while Hayden (2008; cited in Medina et al., 2013) determined that while 23 percent of a sample of young people self-nominated as belonging to a gang, the characteristics of these groups failed to meet the criteria for gang membership typically used in research. This is the reasoning behind the Eurogang network's adoption of the term "*troublesome youth group*" (Weerman et al., 2009) and this was the reason why gang membership is assessed in this research by embedding questions relating to each of the Eurogang's defining, Level One qualities into the interview schedule. Should the interviewee not self-define as a gang member or be unwilling to discuss gang-related issues, a determination of the likelihood of their involvement with gangs was made based on their responses to these questions. However, if an interviewee spontaneously raised the term or issue of gang membership as being applicable to them, then the researcher followed this up to confirm a possible self-nomination, typically by asking the interviewee whether they believe it would be a fair assessment to use the phrase "gang member" with reference to them.

The Eurogang instruments do not provide specific measures designed to assess the distinction between Cores and Fringes – using their defining qualities only allows for the

distinction to be made between gang and non-gang members. Core and Fringe membership were inferred from interviewees' responses to questions such as "*How would you describe your position in the group?*" (consistent with how the distinction was made in research by Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993). As their role in the group becomes more central, the likelihood that they would be categorised as a Core increases. Several other questions concerning frequency of contact with that gang, importance of the gang to the respondents, and number of friends in the gang, were included to provide additional information for determining Core and Fringe membership. By chance, these questions correspond with four of the five embeddedness items devised by Pyrooz et al. (2013).

Grounded Theory Analysis.

Charmaz's (2006) constructivist approach to GT analysis was employed in this research. Very briefly, data analysis and theory generation involves:

1. *Open coding* – the process of breaking (interview) data up into distinct units and labelling them by identifying key words and phrases. This is achieved by "interrogating" the data, asking questions of it such as "*what is going on here?*", "*what is the main concern being faced by this person?*", "*how is this person managing this situation?*" Two procedures are key to this process: 1) memo-writing[43]; and 2) constant comparison[44];

2. *Focussed coding* involves synthesising and explaining larger segments of data, by using the most significant or frequent open codes to lift the data to a higher level of abstraction – that is, where open codes describe data, focussed codes interpret data;

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[43] The researcher's written reflections of the analysis, where ideas about how the data fits together come about and where the theory begins to develop.

[44] Comparing the similarities and differences within the data (e.g. comparing interview with interview, statement with statement, story with story) and then comparing code with code.

3. *Theoretical coding* – using both memo-writing and constant comparison, relationships between open and focussed codes are hypothesised. Distinct categories are created containing codes that appear closely related to one another;

4. *Identifying a core category* (i.e. an emergent category which appears central to the phenomenon and to which each of the other identified categories relate and become organised around).[45]

Once the coding process is complete and a core category has been selected, the GT analysis concludes by putting together a final statement of the substantive Grounded Theory that has emerged. All interview transcripts, coding, and categories are reviewed by a second coder to verify the validity and reliability of the emerging theory. Any disagreement between the coders regarding a code or category is discussed and appropriate action taken – for example, the code/category will be re-evaluated and either kept the same (as per Coder One's initial interpretation), changed (in accordance with Coder Two's interpretation), or a new interpretation sought (e.g. a compromise between the interpretations of Coder One and Coder Two).

The present analysis emphasised information gathered concerning interviewees' perceptions of the links between gang membership status, criminality, and rehabilitation. Using the GT analytic strategy described above, a theoretical model was developed detailing the (risk and protective) factors (e.g. environmentally, socially, psychologically, and/or behaviourally) which seem to contribute to differential gang membership, views on youth crime (both participants' own and in general) and how this differential membership might contribute to interviewees' attitudes towards, expectations of, and intentions regarding

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[45] Corbin and Strauss (2008, cited in Gordon-Finlayson, 2010) state that a core category should: a) be abstract (related to and yet superior to the other categories, and broad enough that it might apply to the later development of more general theories); b) appear frequently in the data; c) emerge from the data logically and consistently; and d) grow in depth and explanatory power as each of the other categories is related to it.

leading crime-free lives following release from prison. Appendix Three presents an extract of an analysis sheet used to code, categorise, and write memos based on participants' statements and responses to questioning based on the interview schedule items.

Conclusion and Analytic Forecast

Having discussed issues surrounding the definition of youth gangs (Chapter One), theories devised as a means of explaining (almost all aspects of) street gangs (Chapter Two), and the practice of conducting Grounded Theory research, and the methods used in the process of data collection and analysis for the current research (Chapter Three), the remainder of this thesis will focus on the output of research. As such, Chapter Four will present the outcome of the GT analysis of interview data collected from participants who met the criteria for Core membership, outlining a proposed theoretical model capable of explaining this particular type of gang affiliation.

Chapter Four

Core Gang Members – Trigger, Directional, and Maintenance Factors

Theoretical reasoning around gangs tends to work at a between-groups level, seeking to understand and explain why some people join gangs while others do not. There is, however, little theoretical work examining gangs at a *within-groups* level, which seeks to understand and explain individual variations within the gang (or why some become Cores and others Fringes). This chapter focuses on Cores (defined as those who are committed to the gang and its activities: Klein, 1971; Klein & Maxson, 1989). Consistent with how the Core/Fringe distinction was made by Esbensen and Huizinga (1993), Core or Fringe status was determined for the present participants by asking "*How would you describe your position in the group?*"[46] The more integral the participant rated their position in the group, the more likely that they would be categorised as being Core. Other items (e.g. role within the group, closeness to other members, frequency with which they met, etc.) were also included to support evidence of their Core membership.

This chapter presents analysis of the information provided by Cores. As per the Grounded Theory (GT) methodology outlined in Chapter Four, a theoretical framework, the Core Gang Member Model (grounded in the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of participants) was constructed. This model therefore reflects the lives of these young people and is capable of explaining how they account for their (negative) associations and behaviours. After briefly describing participating Core gang members' demographic characteristics, a brief overview of the model's structure will be presented. Specific phases of the model will then be looked at in turn, elaborating on the structure, but also detailing the content of each category of the model and how they may explain Core membership. Relevant

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[46] As indicated within the interview schedule described in Chapter Three.

quotes from interviewed participants will be presented as evidence to support the design of the model.

Core Gang Member Demographics

In total, ten participants were identified as being Cores. Their mean age was 17.58 years (SD = .544), ranging between 16.25 and 18.17 years. Two were White, three were Black, and five were Mixed Race. Six lived in the Greater London area, while four lived elsewhere in the UK – one in a suburban town west of London, one in a large city in the West Midlands, and two from South West England (one from a city and one from a small rural town). Based on the limited data available, their mean age at first conviction was 13.50 years (SD = .577). Six were incarcerated for property offences (two of which involved use of weapons), two for violent offences, and two for drug offences.

Table 4.1 displays individual demographic details and criminal history information for each Core. Table 4.2 displays information regarding individual Cores' life experiences (i.e. their communities, family backgrounds, educational histories, adopted lifestyles, contact with the care system, and history of drug use), as detailed by their Asset reports.[47]

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[47] The Asset is a method of assessment that aspires to examine a range of factors which might have contributed to a young person's (offending) behaviour (Youth Justice Board, 2003: cited in Webster, MacDonald, & Simpson, 2006). The reliability and predictive validity of the Asset has been found to be high (Baker, Jones, Robert, & Merrington, 2003; cited in Webster et al., 2006). Asset data were examined in order to corroborate certain statements made by participants during interview.

Table 4.1

Core Gang Member Demographic Details and Criminal Histories

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Location	Index Offence	Sentence	Previous Convictions	Previous Custodial Sentences
SL	17 years & 10 months	Mixed (White/Black Caribbean)	West Midlands	Robbery	Ind. Section 226 Duration: 4.5 years	Yes From age: 14 years	One
TS	17 years & 6 months	White (White British)	South West England	Armed Robbery with Intent to Endanger Life	Section 91 Duration: 5 years	Yes From age: 14 years	None
JW	18 years & 2 months	Black (Black British)	North East London	Rioting & Intent to Supply Class A Drugs	Unrecorded Duration: 10 months	Yes From age: Unknown	None
LS	17 years & 11 months	Black (Black Caribbean)	South London	Possession & Intent to Supply Class A Drugs	DTO Duration: 10 months	Yes From age: Unknown	One
CH	17 years & 8 months	Mixed (White/Black Caribbean)	Central London	Robbery	DTO Duration: 6 months	Unknown From age: Unknown	Unknown
JS	17 years & 6 months	Mixed (White/Black Other)	North East London	Armed Robbery	Unrecorded Duration: 3 years approx.	Yes From age: Unknown	None
CJ	16 years & 3 months	White (Other)	West London	Common Assault	DTO Duration: 12 months	Unknown From age: Unknown	None
WM	17 years & 2 months	Mixed (White/Black African)	South West England	Burglary	Unrecorded Duration: 18 months	Yes From age: 13 years	One
DB	17 years & 10 months	Black (West Indian)	North London	2 x GBH	Unrecorded Duration: 7 years	Yes From age: 13 years	None
TH	17 years & 11 months	Mixed (White/Black British)	South East England	Burglary	DTO Duration: 12 months	Yes From age: Unknown	None

NOTE: All ages correct at time of interview. A Detention and Training Order (or DTO) is given to juvenile offenders who have been convicted of crimes warranting relatively short-term incarceration (e.g. less than two years); a Section 91 sentence is assigned when a juvenile offence is deemed serious enough to be dealt with at Crown Court (it can be treated as a juvenile or adult case and will carry a custodial sentence of over two years); a Section 226 is commonly known as an Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (or IPP), and are assigned for individuals who are deemed to be a danger to the public (and thus should not be released until the Parole Board determine they are no longer a risk) but whose crimes are not serious enough to merit a normal life sentence.

Table 4.2

Asset Information for Core Gang Members

Asset Details	SL	TS	HW	LS	CH	JS	CJ	WM	DB	TH
Hometown										
Signs of drug dealing	•				•			•	•	
Signs of racial tension								•		
Lack of transport access available				•	•		•	•	•	
Lack of age appropriate facilities available				•	•		•	•	•	
Living arrangements										
Deprived household (i.e. dependant on benefits, free school meals, etc.)							•	•		
Unsuitable household										
Living with known offender		•							•	
Disorganised household (i.e. has many people coming and going residentially)	•	•		•			•	•		
Absconded/stayed away from home										
Family Relations										
Family involvement in criminal activity in previous 6 months	•	•		•			•	•		
Family involvement in drug abuse or alcoholism in previous 6 months		•					•		•	
Inconsistent supervision				•						
Lack of interest shown	•						•			
History of witness to abuse										
History of witness to domestic violence										
School/College										
Lack of attachment to education	•	•			•			✕	✕	
Negative attitude to education	•							✕	✕	
Experienced bullying as victim										
Experienced bullying as perpetrator										
Poor relations to teachers										
Poor parental interest in school										
Lifestyle										
Participates in reckless activity	•	•		•	•		•	•	•	
Has nothing to do in spare time		•		•	•		•	•	•	
Lacks age appropriate friends					•					
Lacks an adequate legitimate personal income	•			•	•		•	•	•	
Associates with predominantly pro-criminal peers										
Lacks non-criminal friends										
Care History										
				•				•	•	
Drug History										
		•		•				•	•	

NOTE: The presence of risk factors in individual participants' lives are indicated by a dot. If the participant's name is crossed out, Asset information was not available. The presence of a cross indicates that while Asset information was available for the participant, information regarding that/those specific risk factors were not.

The Core Gang Member Model

Figure 4.1 displays an overview of the structure of the Core Gang Member Model, based upon the GT analysis of Cores' interview responses. The model reflects concepts included in Unified Theory (Wood & Alleyne, 2010) – current findings suggest that Unified Theory provides a realistic portrayal of processes leading to gang membership and criminality. However, the current data also highlighted several themes not evident in Unified Theory and, thus, the Core Model presents a number of revisions, additions, and refinements to both the theory's existing structure and content.

Broadly speaking, the Core Model is divided into three sections: 1) the Trigger Phase; 2) the Directional Phase; and 3) the Maintenance Phase. Each will be considered in turn, initially focusing on the structural features of the phase (i.e. how broad factors[48] interact with one another to influence gang development and joining) followed by thematic content in each phase (i.e. how specific themes within each of the broad structural factors[49] emerge and interact).

Phase One - Triggers.

Structural features.

Trigger factors are those underlying features (environmental, social, individual, and social cognitive) which may influence propensity to join a gang or social group. Structurally, this phase closely follows the analogous section of Unified Theory (although there are differences in the content of these two models, as depicted below). It posits that an individual's personal characteristics interact with environmental and social factors they experience, thereby influencing social cognitive development and subsequent social cognitive processing. In

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[48] Such as environmental and social conditions, individual characteristics, and social cognitive processes, etc.

[49] Such as family structure and bonds, emotional responses, attitude development, etc.
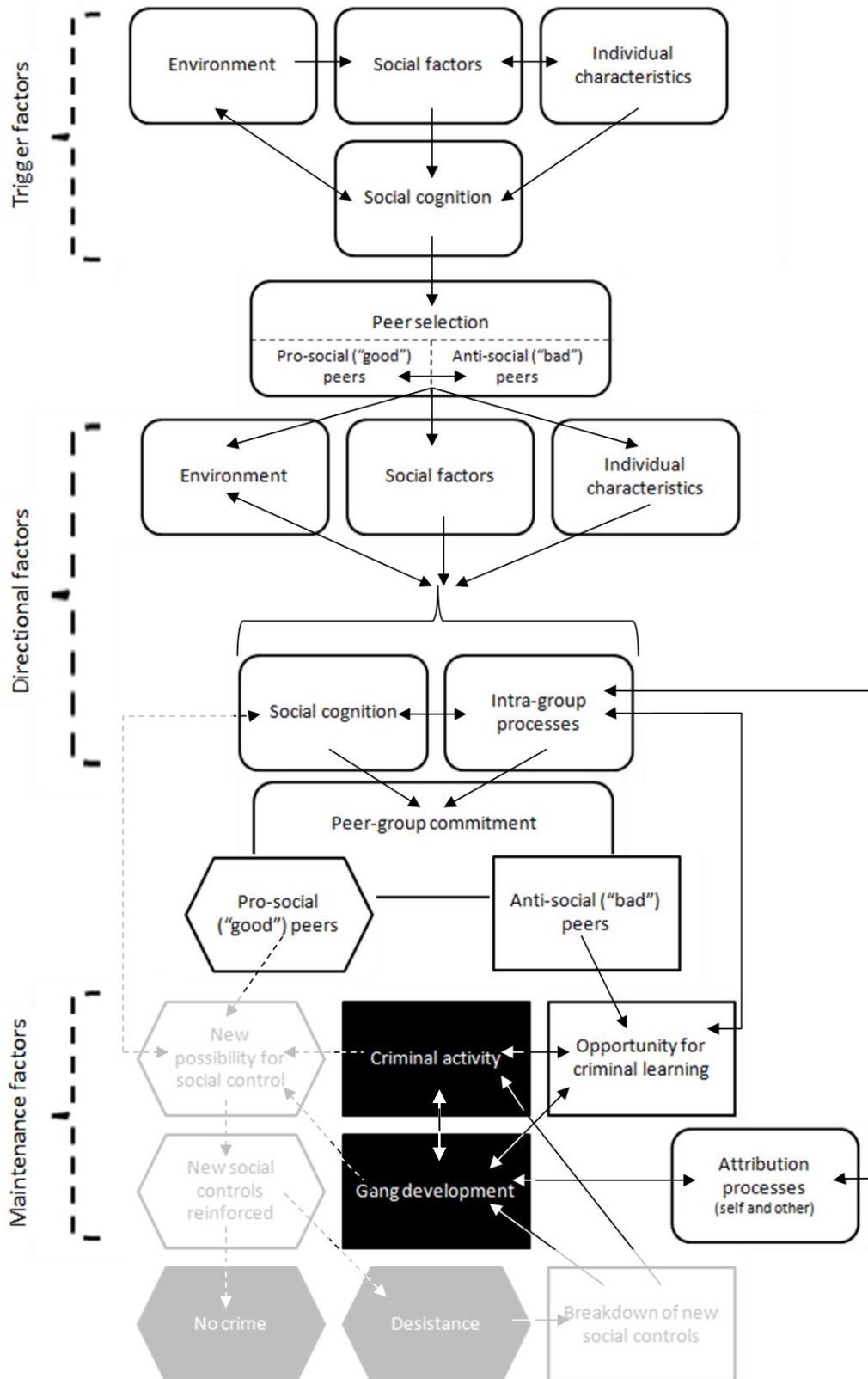
Figure 4.1.   Structure of the Core Gang Member Model.[50]

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[50] The shading and shape of each box reflects similar processes to those described for Unified Theory (Figure 2.1). Faded boxes indicate Unified Theory processes which the current data were not able to speak to.

turn, social cognitive processes influence their choice of peer groups, through variations in exposure to, evaluation of, and identification with, a range of different groups.

It is at this point that the first major structural divergence from Unified Theory appears. A common theme that emerged from discussions with Cores was that, when selecting peers, they did not (at least initially) limit themselves to only a single social group. Rather, they tended to identify two distinct forms of social group to which they felt some connection and sense of belonging. These groups were independently described by several participating Cores (e.g. SL, JW, JS, LS, CJ, WM, and DB) in terms of their presence (in school vs. outside of school) and influence (generally considered to be good vs. bad respectively):

- Associations with their "good" group of friends were typically limited to school hours. They were so-called because they were perceived as being a collection of individuals who could potentially exert a positive influence. Being rooted in a school environment, these positive influences would tend to revolve around commitment to education, positive engagement in classroom activities, and balancing schoolwork with social activities. Good influence peers would be described as staying out of trouble, both inside and outside of school (i.e. they would not be involved in criminal or gang-related activity);

- Associations with their "bad" group of friends were typically limited to outside of school hours. Initially members may engage in typical adolescent behaviours (i.e. not necessarily anti-social behaviour), such as playing football together or going to fast-food restaurants. However, longer-term, participating members came to see the group as being a collection of individuals who could potentially exert a negative influence over them, for example by encouraging offending behaviour, public loitering, and underage drinking and smoking (and relatively low-level drug use in some cases).

Being rooted in the local community environment in which they were brought up, they were frequently characterised as developing over a prolonged period of time and possessing strong social cohesion. Initially a select group, these groups would be supplemented via integration with known individuals from outside the group.

These differential influences would have an effect on Cores' behaviour, with JS saying that "*in school, I wasn't a problem I guess. I was kind of doing good in school, but it was just, a matter of, outside school, you know what I'm saying...*" Typically, members of participants' pro- and anti-social peer groups would not interact with one another on a day-to-day basis. This would either be because members of these two groups were so different from one another that there was little-to-no common thread to bring them together, or because the participant would actively seek to keep the two groups separate, almost as if attempting to maintain a dual social identity. For example, JW comments how:

"*...people that ask me, my friends like, "*yeah man let *[me]* join you man, let me see what's going on like*", it's like, nah man.* [Once] *they chill with us, see what we're doing, they want to chill with us the next day, and chill the next day, chill the next day, then eventually, they wanna be part of the gang. So that's why I say no man. Like, friends from school, like different areas and that, the only time I see them is just like, one to one like, when we're going out, to get something to eat, or go to cinema with a girl, but I don't, I won't let them be in the* [gang] *environment...*"

On occasions where members of the two groups would interact, such as a local party, there would often be tension, with Cores describing acting as peacemaker. Cores considered both groups as important and they were keen that they should all get along:

LS: *So when, they've had problems with them I've had to sort of like "[he's cool him] can't touch him". Sort of the middle man, like, trying to stop it from like [happening]. But there's only so much you can do, if two people wanna get at each other...*

Interviewer: *So it sounds like, that it was almost like you were kind of like the peacemaker then*

LS: *Yeah, in that situation, yeah. 'Cos I've known them from school, and... like, friends I've, I've not known them for ages but I've known them for a while, from the same area... it's a bit of a difficult situation...*

Thematic content.

Figure 4.2 displays the emergent categories and themes which fit within, and may be considered facets of, the broader categories/factors comprising the Trigger Phase of the Core Gang Member Model.

Environmental themes.

Two themes emerged from the data which were characteristic of environmental influences which participating Cores were exposed to. These concerned: 1) the state of the neighbourhood(s) in which they grew up or had some connection with; and 2) the structure of their family group.

- Neighbourhood organisation.

Stereotypically, it is assumed that gangs thrive in communities and neighbourhoods that are socially disorganised (Sutherland, 1924, 1939; Thrasher, 1927: see Chapter Two). However, while some elements of social disorganisation are evident from Cores' views on their
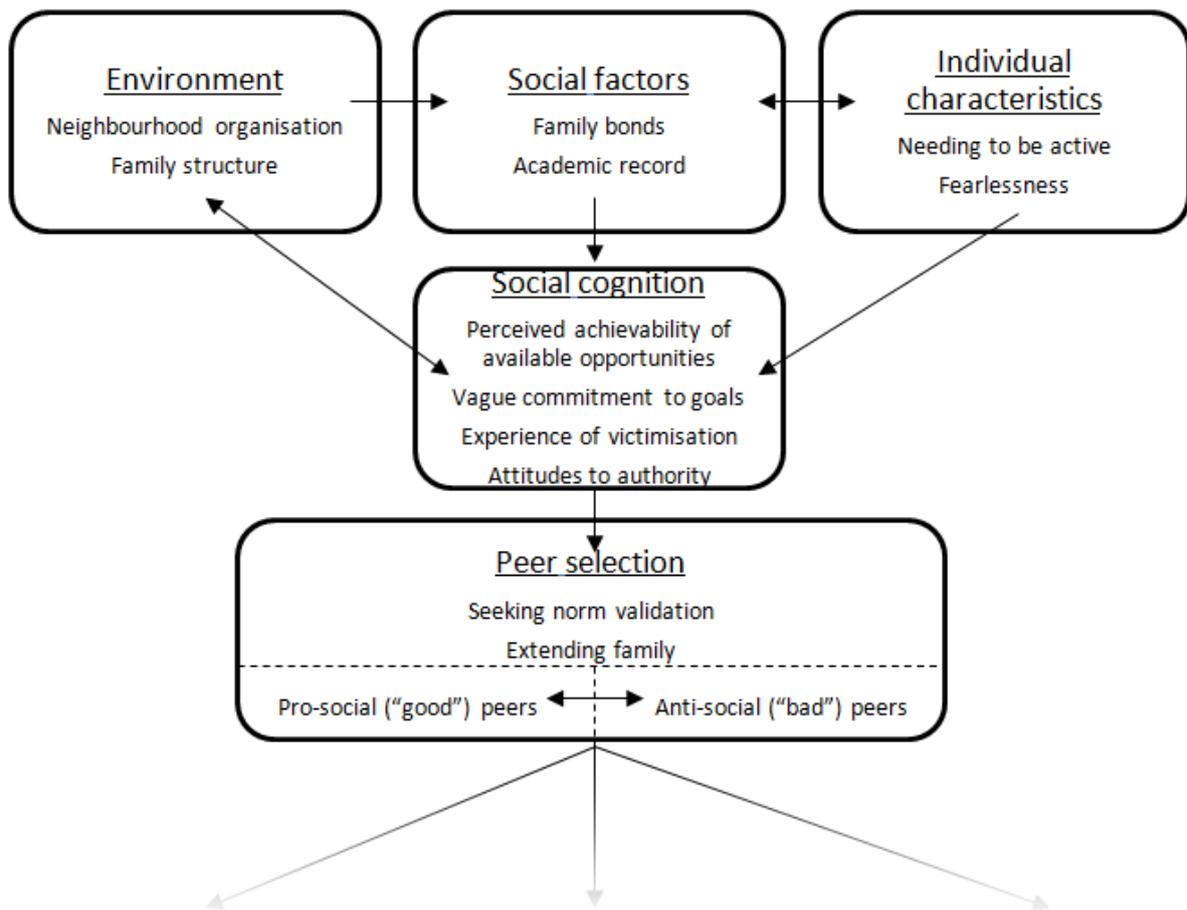
Figure 4.2.   The Core Trigger Phase.

neighbourhood exposure growing up, they also present evidence suggesting that gang

membership is not *limited* to traditionally socially disorganised environments. For instance,

JW (who had mixed to positive feelings about his neighbourhood[51]) described growing up

with his principal peer groups from a young age, and that all their parents were friends

themselves from adolescence. He commented that everyone in the area knew one another on

account of it being a small community, and that his peer associations were really continuing a

tradition of friendship passed down through the generations. This suggests neither an

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[51] JW describes his neighbourhood as "*...not the best place to live but, it's good... it's good good good place to live.*"

excessive degree of population turnover nor poor community associations. In short, key

elements of social disorganisation were absent. JW also cited awareness of a range of

different social facilities located nearby (e.g. community centre, parks, and sports facilities)

intended for use by community members. This suggests that attempts were made to cater for

the various social needs of community members and to encourage pro-social activities. SL

also evaluated his community positively,[52] specifically due to the associations and emotional

ties he had with other residents. Similarly, LS stated that "*...in my area everyone talks to*

each other, if anything happens in our area everyone knows about it and... everyone pretty

well knows each other pretty much", and that he was regularly stopped by local residents

when out walking his dog to chat (with him) and play (with the dog).

This is not to say that all was well within Cores' home communities. CJ, while

having a generally positive evaluation of his area, commented that there were particularly

weak bonds between members of the community. He accounts for this as being due to: the

relatively vast area that his community (or his perception of it) covered; and the ethnic

heterogeneity of its residents (e.g. "*...Somalians, Asians, stuff like that...*"), all of whom

tended to associate solely with their own ethnic group. This suggests CJ did experience some

degree of social disorganisation. While LS (as stated above) told of strong community bonds,

he also described his community as a "*pass-through*" – an area through which many people

would have to travel to get to and from their actual destinations.[53] Thus, while community

residents may have remained relatively stable, many different faces passed through the area

each day and, with a high level of transport accessibility, the community itself had little in the

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[52] Having been there for seven years, or approximately half of his life – the shortest period of time any Core had lived in their home area.

[53] This view was facilitated by his area being a hub for transport, with train, tram, and bus stations all located close by.

way of its own social facilities and resources (i.e. residents would have to travel outside the community to access local community centres, parks, etc.).

The presence of social facilities within Cores' home areas was perhaps the one common concession to social disorganisation cited, although this was typically a subjective experience. Like LS, JS described a lack of (awareness of) nearby facilities, suggesting a belief that the social needs of the community, and a focal point around which a strong community ethos could be built, were deemed irrelevant by local authorities. The remaining Cores (i.e. TS, SL, JW, CH, CJ, WM, and DB) were all aware of social facilities provided for local residents. For example, WM commented that "...*there was a couple of youth clubs... um going back a while there's, four, I can think of off the top of my head, within* [a certain] *area. It wasn't like we had nothing to do really.*" DB described having "...*got swimming pools, gym... youth clubs... parks, cinemas, stuff like that.*" However, while aware of them, Cores did not use such facilities, either because they were not seen to be exciting/enticing enough or because they had used them so frequently that they had grown bored with them. Thus, while objectively aware of access to social resources, subjectively Cores *felt* there was little to do nearby.[54]

Crime was also a common feature which seemed to indicate some degree of social disorganisation. Most Cores stated that they were aware, or that they felt, that crime rates were particularly high in and around their neighbourhoods when growing up (e.g. with TS saying that there was "...*a lot of crime going on around there... small area but a lot of big things go on* [laughs]"). The exceptions to this were JS, who felt that crime was low where he grew up, and CJ and DB who did not feel able to comment (stating their belief that crime was not high, but a lot more could have been happening than they were aware of).

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[54] Implications of this view will be elaborated further with regards to the perception of age appropriate facilities (in the Directional Phase – environmental factors) and perception of social neglect (in the Directional Phase – social cognitive factors).

As such, it seems that some degree of social disorganisation may be present and/or inferred by Cores in their community environments, but that these environments were not approaching a state of full social collapse. All had a relatively positive evaluation of their home areas, and with regards to the key characteristics associated with social disorganisation: most described having strong and/or positive community associations; resident populations were seen to be relatively static; only one Core raised the issue of ethnic heterogeneity; and only one other (TS) mentioned poverty in the context of a perceived lack of employment opportunities.[55] From this it seems that, for Cores at least, Katz and Schenbly's (2011) argument that some level of social organisation is required if young people are to unite to form gangs has substance. Where there is no neighbourhood/social organisation, there are no means through which (deviant) associations, norms, and behaviours will emerge.

- Family structure.

Similar to the idea that gangs are a product of socially disorganised community environments, it has also been suggested (and stereotypically assumed) that gang members are a product of disorganised family environments (e.g. Eitle, Gunkel, & van Gundy, 2004; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999; Klemp-North, 2007; LeBlanc & Lanctot, 1998; Sharp, Aldridge, & Medina, 2006; Thornberry, Krohn, Liozotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003).[56] As such, it has been suggested that young people join gangs as a means of experiencing attachment via a surrogate family, and that family disorganisation inhibits development of social bonds (e.g. Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

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[55] Being of school age, and with some having been in prison from a young age, Cores were generally unable to assess the economic state and/or employment opportunities available nearby – it simply was not relevant to them at the time.

[56] Where children grow up in an unstable family structure, experience poor parental management, and/or have experienced significant periods of parental neglect, and lack positive parental role models.

However, also similar to the social disorganisation issues above, while elements of family disorganisation were evident from Cores' discussions of family life, they also presented evidence contradicting the idea that gang membership arises from traditionally disorganised family environments. For instance, of the ten Cores examined, JW, CJ, WM, and DB, all lived at home in what might be described as traditional, nuclear families, with two parents and (multiple) siblings. While JS described his mother as being a "*single mum*", in truth his parents were still together, but his father (an army officer) was often away from home. LS and CH both lived with single mothers, though both had regular (every weekend and daily, respectively) contact with their fathers. TS lived with his single father, who was disabled. Before he was imprisoned, TS acted as his father's principle carer and was (and continued to be) extremely protective of him. He had little (if any) contact with his mother after she left the family home although she was still married to his father. SL and TH were the only Cores to have little-to-no paternal influence in life. SL lived with his mother and seven siblings, while TH had his mother and three older siblings. TH's father had three other children, however, TH "*...don't class them as my family, 'cos I don't class my dad as my family.*" Therefore, five out of the ten Cores came from two-parent families, two maintained contact with both parents despite separations, one maintained contact with his single father, and two fit the stereotype of the gang member as a product of an absentee father.

Therefore, it seems that, in much the same way that Katz and Schnebly (2011) hypothesised that some degree of social cohesion is necessary for a community to spawn a gang, some degree of stable family structure may be necessary for a young person to successfully function as a Core. Cores may be more likely to attain this level because they are able to transfer their experience of being (relatively) successfully socialised into, and thus committed to, a stable family group to the process of becoming socialised into, and subsequently committed to, peer groups outside of the family. That is, stable family

structures may facilitate an individual's ability to engage in socialisation processes and commit to group membership, and thus they are able to embed themselves more deeply into social peer groups (regardless of the group's pro- or anti-social nature).

Social themes.

Two themes emerged from the data which were characteristic of the social influences participants were exposed to. These concerned: 1) the strength and valence of bonds and relationships within the family group; and 2) the individual's record in school.

- Family bonds.

The physical structure of the family group may be an important element of children's social development, but the strength of bonds between family members may play an equal, if not greater, part. While there may be some correlation between family stability and the nature (or quality) of relationships within the family, the unstable family/weak family bonds relationship may not be automatic. Positive effects of a stable family structure may mean little if bonds within that structure are weak, and negative effects of an unstable family structure may have little influence when there are strong, positive bonds between family members.

TS and CJ display this disparity the most. As described, TS had an unstable family background – he was abandoned by his mother, left in the care of his father and, owing to his father's disability, over time, the carer role passed to TS.[57] He was deeply affected by these circumstances, and was clearly uncomfortable when discussing his mother. However, these circumstances produced an especially strong bond between father and son – "*My dad was my mum and my dad, like, you know... Brilliant, brilliant dad... Everything he's ever done for me, best dad you could ever ask for...*" CJ, however, was dissatisfied with family life despite

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[57] TS's Asset report makes particular reference to the pressure he felt to support his father.

its structural stability. There were no broken bonds between family members, but there were weak bonds,[58] which, CJ felt, was attributable to the size of the family (e.g. making the house seem noisy and overcrowded, prompting him to go out as often as possible). Of others who spoke in detail about relations with close family members, experiences range somewhere between TS and CJ's. For instance, SL (like CJ) had many siblings but (like TS) grew up in a single parent family. He described having strong family bonds. LS had a comparatively small family, and described strong bonds within this unit, although admitted to a rocky patch between him and his mother when he first started offending. Despite regularly seeing his father, their bond was weak and/or negatively skewed – LS blamed his father's leaving home for his own subsequent bad behaviour. In contrast, CH, who also lived with his mother while regularly seeing his "absent" father, was happy with the state of his family relationships. Despite the break-up, his father visited daily and his parents continued to get on well. Finally, JW described strong, positive bonds with his mother, father, and sister whilst growing up. However, while this remained so for his mother and sister, he reported a significant deterioration in the state of his relationship with his father since going to prison.

As a consequence, perhaps, of the generally observed stability (or near-stability) in Cores' family environments, the majority identified themselves as having strong, positively-oriented bonds with (at least some) family members. With the exception of TS and JS (a self-confessed "*daddy's-boy*"), Cores' seemed most attached to, and had the closest bond with, their mothers. As such, Cores indicated feeling a relatively large degree of traditional maternal influence growing up. Paternal influences were mostly evaluated positively, with only CJ describing a poor relationship with his father, and obviously SL with no paternal influence whatsoever. None had been in the care system, with limited contact with social services.

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[58] To the extent that he was (somewhat) affected by the idea that he should be a positive role-model to his younger siblings and that, by offending and being sentenced to prison, he was failing at this.

Just as qualitative evidence concerning family bonds can be taken as an extension of qualitative evidence concerning family structure, so too can we extend the hypothesis regarding stable family environments (described above) to cover stable family bonds. As such, exposure to a stable socialising force, such as a perceived stable family background with strong, positive bonds between members, may support the development of social skills necessary for developing and maintaining social relationships through childhood and into adolescence. The marital status of the parents is not the sole important factor – it is the child's degree of contact with, and strong, positive feelings of attachment to, each parent that really matters. Children who develop strong bonds with family members, and who recognise the benefits of support provided by maintaining these bonds, will learn to transfer the skills developed in such an environment outside of the family, such as to other children in their schools and neighbourhoods. When such a child grows up to become a gang member, these social abilities (developed in an environment typically considered to be a protective factor from criminality) may actually enhance their membership, by providing them with the means necessary to more fully integrate into the gang (i.e. become Cores).

As such, Figure 4.3 (very roughly) visualises the interaction between the stability of the family environment and the strength of family bonds for participating Cores. Based on an estimation of how Cores relate to one another, as inferred from their descriptions of family stability and bond strength, the shaded area represents those family environmental and social conditions which may be more conducive to producing a Core gang member. Coming from a background of near-stability and perceived strong family bonds would appear to put young people at greatest risk of gang membership (on account of the improved socialisation skills hypothesised above). Less frequently, Core gang members may also come from stable
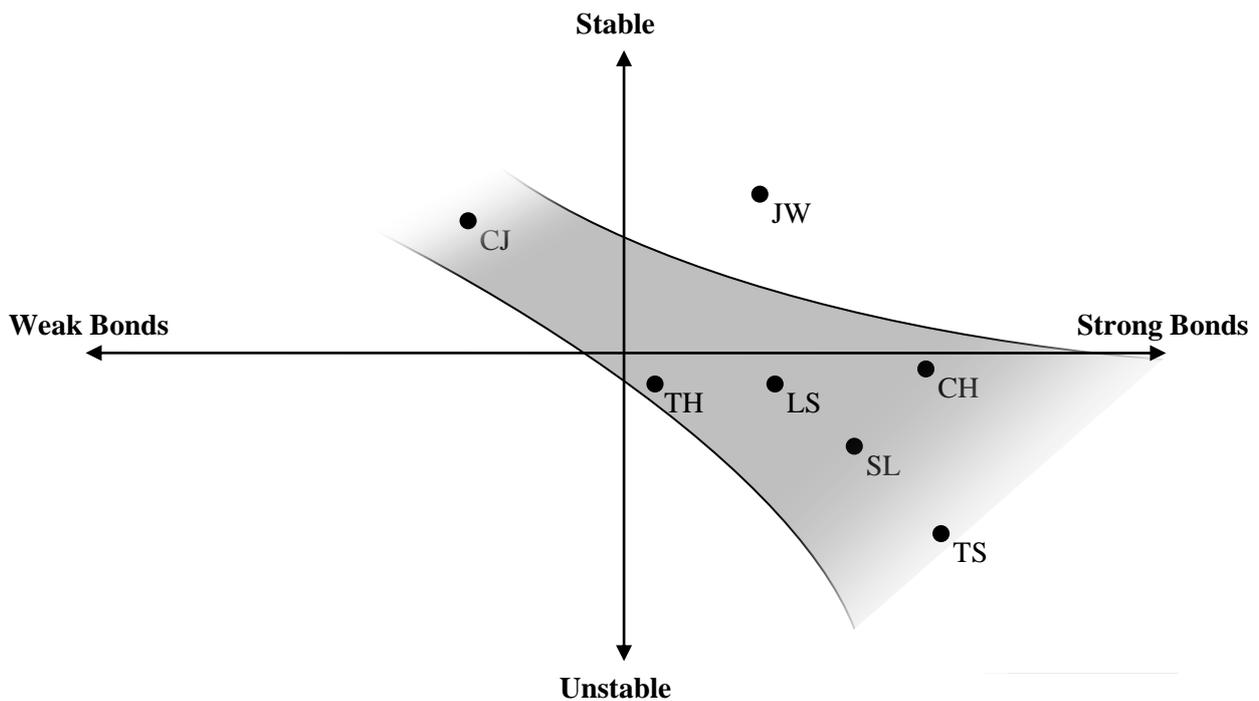
Figure 4.3.   Using family stability and bond strength interactions to predict Core gang membership.[59]

though weakly bonded family groups. Gang members from stable, well-bonded families may

be relatively rare; however, these conditions (via enhancing socialisation skills) do promote

the potential for gang membership to occur. In this case it may be that the young person

experiences significant pull in two different directions (i.e. towards the family, and towards

peers and [criminal] opportunities outside of the family), with gang membership more likely

if/when the pull of peers exceeds the pull of the family. Finally, it appears that growing up in

an unstable, weakly bonded family may inhibit Core gang membership. Future research

quantifying both family stability and bond strength is required to verify the accuracy of this

predicted interaction.

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[59] This interaction predicts that young people from strongly-bonded, stably-structured family environments will be more likely to become Core gang members than young people from weakly-bonded, unstably-structured family environments. This skew is partly based on WM, JS, and DB all coming from stable families, although none provided information concerning bond strength so they do not appear in the figure.

- Academic records.

Educational success (or, at least, engagement) is generally considered a positive social control (Hirschi, 1969; Wood & Alleyne, 2010). It provides young people with a routine structure, exposure to (and enforcement of) socially-accepted standards of behaviour, and improves potential access to legitimate opportunities for further education and employment (i.e. further social controls).   School success, therefore, is considered to be a strong protective factor against gang membership and criminality (e.g. Sharp, Aldridge, & Medina, 2006; Tsunokai & Kposowa, 2009).

Without exception, Cores described troubled school histories. By and large, they had relatively positive attitudes towards their school experiences specifically and educational opportunities more generally. However, given reliance on incarcerated gang members for this research (i.e. individuals who were denied the opportunity to access traditional, mainstream education at the time of data collection), a hindsight bias[60] may have been in operation (i.e. they had a positive evaluation of school when compared to their current situation in prison, and that their attitudes towards, and behaviours within, school were more negative at the time). While almost all mentioned at least one subject that they enjoyed and/or had a strong academic record in, school was generally seen as a social event rather than an educational opportunity. Typically, the most common responses to the question of what (if anything) they liked about school revolved around meeting up with friends (e.g. WM, DB), meeting girls (e.g. CJ), or having something to do to get them out of the house and out of trouble (e.g. LS).

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[60] Indeed JW illustrated this potential by describing how, at the time he left school, he said to himself "*ah school was shit man, school was boring*", but that as he got older he came to realise that most of the fun times he had were in school and that he actually missed school a lot. Similarly, JS stated "*...looking back now, school was actually good, it was actually the best of times...*", while TS and DB both made similar statements.

Consistent with the possibility that a hindsight bias may have clouded participants' depictions of school, several Cores offered contradictory information, specifically regarding their relationship with teachers and classroom behaviour. While they would characterise their relations with teachers as generally good (e.g. JS), and use terms such as "*I kept my head down*" when discussing their behaviour, they would also recount incidents such as attacking other pupils (e.g. CH), hitting teachers and bringing knives into school (e.g. JS), fighting (e.g. CJ), and rudeness (e.g. WM).

Starting secondary school (at age 11 years) was identified as being the turning point when Cores became aware of, experienced/engaged in, and suffered the consequences of troublesome and criminal activity. For instance, CJ stated that "*...until, I went to secondary school then, wasn't really aware of, gang stuff. Didn't read the news or nothing like that so... it's only since, I went to secondary school...*" and "*as more kids go to secondary school and stuff like that, that's when they all get involved with, stuff they shouldn't do.*" Further, DB commented that he was "*Not* [aware of crime locally] *when I was in primary school. When I... hit secondary school, that's basically when everything, went downhill... that's when I started going out and, stuff like that.*" It is possible that the "newness" of the secondary school environment may have overly-stimulated Cores, with both JS (cited below) and JW describing their responses to being in this new environment: "*I got comfortable a bit too quick, settled in a bit quick.... instead of just, you know, staying quiet, I wanted to make a name for myself so... by like the first two weeks the whole school already knew me...*"

Given the potential for hindsight bias in Cores' depictions of school life, any firm conclusions or suggestion of directional hypotheses regarding the impact their (*post hoc*) school evaluations had on subsequent offending behaviour and gang membership must be treated warily. That said, that a positive hindsight bias in incarcerated gang members' recollections of school may be in evidence may indicate a current (i.e. at time of interview)

endorsement of the social controls that mainstream education provides. In other words, they failed to appreciate what they had at the time, and have come to value it more now it is lost to them. Thus, it could be inferred that school success is seen by Cores as a possible protective factor against anti-social peer group and gang membership (or commitment), and school failure seen as nullifying this protection (as described below).

Individual themes.

Two themes emerged from the data concerning individual characteristics possessed by (a majority of) Core participants. These concerned: 1) an evident need to keep active; and 2) a sense of fearlessness.

- Needing to be active.

A common sentiment among Cores was that they liked to be active and feel constantly engaged. As TS stated, "*I don't like to sit around doing* [school] *work.... I'd rather get my hands dirty.*" CH also described how he is quick to become bored and liked to be entertained. JW referred to the need to fill his time, particularly with active pursuits such as playing football, to the extent that he found there was not enough time in the day to do everything he wanted. In the pursuit of near-constant stimulation, there may be an attraction to anti-social peer groups which may (when compared to pro-social peer groups) offer an increased frequency of engagement in physical, adrenaline-pumping, exciting activities. Such groups may also offer a qualitatively different form of stimulating experience (such as getting a thrill from doing something one knows one should not be doing).

The need to keep active and stave off boredom may not be sufficient alone in promoting excessive anti-social behaviour and gang membership. However, when experienced in an environment containing some characteristics of social disorganisation,

specifically related to the availability of social facilities, these environmental and individual factors may interact to promote a greater likelihood of gang and criminal engagement. For example, CJ stated that "*there wasn't really nothing to do, we was bored most of the time so then... I don't know we'd just* [do] *stu*[pid] *illegal stuff like... just smoke weed, meet girls and, just like, meet, make try and make money.*" Several other Cores supported a link between staying active and engaging in delinquent acts, including SL (who used his local youth centre while it was open, but then did "*bad stuff*" when it was closed), JS (who described having little to do after school and so began "*...getting mixed in with the wrong crowd, and getting involved in...*" before tailing off), and WM (who elaborated on the process, in that he initially used social facilities available to him, before growing bored with them, and then behaving badly which saw him banned from the facilities outright).

The staying active/social organisation link may also be enhanced by group processes (to be described in more detail below). Briefly, however, with an excess of nervous energy and a perceived inability to expend it in a socially-acceptable manner, the urge to express these feelings is most likely to emerge during free time, or in the presence of anti-social, after-school peer groups. Thus, when performed in public or with others, the socially-unacceptable activities they engage in (e.g. drinking, smoking, bullying, minor delinquency) may be subject to audience and co-action effects respectively. In other words, social facilitation occurs (Allport, 1920), and these relatively minor nuisance behaviours can potentially escalate into something altogether more serious.

- Fearlessness.

Cores displayed a tendency towards fearlessness. For those who reported awareness of local deviant/criminal activity when growing up (either by direct observation or vicarious experience of crime and/or gangs), this fearlessness resulted either from becoming

desensitised to crime or from accepting a local deviant norm. Subsequently (or in conjunction with this social learning account), the social facilitative effects associated with the link between their need to be active and early engagement in socially-unacceptable behaviours meant that those on a trajectory towards gang membership may have often found themselves caught up in increasingly risky or dangerous situations. The consequences of this could have long-lasting, negative effects on their own and others' lives. These risks and consequences could be imminent (e.g. risk of injury or death in confrontation with a rival gang) or delayed (e.g. risk of incarceration if caught by the police), but the fear factor may be overridden (or the threshold increased) as personal engagement in such behaviours became normalised. Cores described very little in the way of genuine[61] fearful responses to being in such situations or engaging in such behaviours.

There was only one explicit reference to the experience of fear, made by a single Core participant. SL described the fear he experienced when (aged 13) he first got into trouble with the police over a pair of stolen bikes. However, this emotional reaction was a one-off experience, and did not have a deterrent effect: "*...after that it got worse.*[62] *I started doing robberies with my friends, beating up people... other things...*" For others, fear was a more tangential experience, such as for: DB, who "*wasn't bothered*" (a particularly commonly used phrase) about the risks to himself or the actions he took part in (such as the stabbings he committed), but was concerned for his mother and how she would feel should anything bad happen to him; and CJ, who, speaking hypothetically, described the fear he would experience

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[61] Meaning it was apparent that Cores really did not respond fearfully to any great extent, in contrast to the possibility that they did/do have fear responses but were deflecting from that by putting on a show of bravado for the interviewer. Of course, it is also possible that Cores are so well-versed in shows of bravado for the benefit of other gang members that bravado is now a norm for them. The current data cannot speak to this.

[62] The escalation of his criminal behaviour was also partially attributed to him being excluded from school upon being (erroneously) labelled as a gang member at around the same time – a label which he subsequently adopted for himself.

in the event that a friend and/or fellow gang member were to be critically hurt, particularly as a result of a shooting.[63]

If fear had not been an issue in the past, that was not to say it would not be in the future: JW, who also "*wasn't bothered*" by his gang membership prior to his incarceration, did express concern as to what he would be expected to do on his release to maintain his connection with his criminal peers (i.e. he was fearful of involvement in future gang-related activities, if not of future involvement with his gang). Still others were more explicit in describing their outright lack of fear, for instance: WM, who felt that there was no room for fear or worry since anything could happen at any time (thus, vigilance was his only concern, placing emphasis on behaviour over emotion); and TS, whose main emotional concern was the embarrassment he would feel whenever he was caught for criminal behaviour. All told, there was a general consensus amongst the Cores that they were not fearful of the nature of their actions, the potential consequences of these actions for themselves personally, or the risks or threats posed to them owing to their status as gang members. If any personal fear was experienced, it was likely limited to the very beginnings of their criminal careers, and was soon stamped out by direct experience of criminal and gang-related matters.[64]

The development of a sense of fearlessness could be seen as an individual facet of, and extension to, the process of norm development. An analogy can be drawn with the development of young children who grow up in other forms of "unsafe" environments. For instance, a feeling of disgust, unease, or outright fear in the presence of snakes, as an evolutionary response, is a fairly common experience for most people. However, a child who grows up in a home where snakes are kept as pets, who is exposed to them and learns how to

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[63] Shootings were viewed as an escalation of their situation, compared to stabbings which were a daily occurrence and not anything CJ thought he should be concerned by.

[64] And (possibly) an adherence to gang norms of not showing fear and instead putting on a show of bravado.

handle them from an early age, will tend not to possess or display such feelings. Prolonged exposure to a potential source of threat will influence the emotional response to the threat (e.g. dampen any innate negative feelings towards the source), if not cognitive responses (e.g. the individual will still be aware of the threat posed and know to handle it with caution). The same can be said of criminality and gangs. When a child grows up in an environment in which they witness and/or are exposed to violent crime and gang conflict from a young age, they may become desensitised to it. For instance, CJ came to accept carrying a knife as a normalised behaviour after seeing his father carry one every day, while SL expressed difficulty characterising his emotions towards crime "...*because when I was around that age* [approximately 13 years]*, I think I was involved in it myself.*" While Cores maintain a relatively healthy appreciation for the dangers associated with engagement with such groups (e.g. WM describes feeling a constant pressure to "*watch his back*"), they learn not to fear engaging with such groups, or their actions and conflicts. This would appear consistent with Melde, Taylor, and Esbensen's (2009) finding that gang membership reduced fear of crime despite an increase in actual victimisation, although contrasts with Coid et al.'s (2013) finding that gang members experience heightened anxiety (compared to non-gang members).

　　　Social cognitive themes.

The interaction between the individual, social, and environmental categories and themes described above influence an individual's social cognitive processing – that is (as per Unified Theory; Wood & Alleyne, 2010) their view of the world will be shaped by their experiences growing up and their own innate character traits. Four themes emerged from the data which characterised Cores' social cognition at the very early stages of their gang membership. These concerned: 1) their evaluation of available opportunities for (social) advancement and of how personally achievable these opportunities were (i.e. how able they were to engage with these opportunities); 2) vagueness in development of, and commitment to, life goals; 3)

their interpretation of experiences of criminal victimisation; and 4) their developing attitudes towards authority (and specific authority figures).

        - Perceived achievability of available opportunities.

Strain (Cohen, 1955; Merton, 1938) and Differential Opportunity (Agnew, 1992; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960) theories suggest that gang development is an outgrowth of young people's awareness that their disorganised communities cannot provide them with opportunities necessary for them to attain desired, socially-accepted goals (such as personal development, a legitimate income, and/or some degree of social status). Further, it is the emotions that this awareness elicits which shape subsequent behaviour. Gangs, therefore, form as a means for such angry, aware young people to attain these goals via other, less socially-unacceptable methods.

However, as described previously, many Cores did not grow up in areas that may traditionally be described as (wholly) socially disorganised, and by and large they did not perceive that they were lacking access to legitimate opportunities (such as schools and colleges). Thus, the notion that individuals form/join gangs in response to strain induced by perceived obstacles to these opportunities would seem to be in doubt. If strain *does* account for gang membership in any way, it may not be caused by the objective absence of legitimate opportunities or by an individual's lack of awareness of available opportunities, but by their subjective feeling that they have denied *themselves* access to these opportunities. That is, opportunities allowing for legitimate attainment of (socially-)desired goals may be present within the local environment, and the individual may be fully aware of them. However, if the individual does not avail themselves of those opportunities (thus impeding their ability to achieve socially-desired goals), a sense of strain of their own making may develop as they allow existing opportunities to go to waste. It is their perception of how personally able they

are to achieve goals within the existing legitimate opportunity framework available that influences any experience of strain and the direction they may take to attain the desired goals.

It would appear that Cores' attitudes towards, and beliefs about, legitimate opportunities do not influence whether or not they see legitimate, available opportunities as achievable. Rather than dismissing educational and employment opportunities, many Cores valued the opportunities that institutions such school, college, apprenticeships, and employment schemes offer generally, while appreciating the influence each had/could have had in their own and others' lives.[65] When Cores identified an inability to achieve using available opportunities the reason for this was deemed to be: 1) unavoidably of their own making (e.g. TS: "*The problem with school was basically... like the work, if I couldn't do it I'd get angry... if it was too hard I'd get frustrated. If I can't do it I'd just chuck it, screw it up*"); 2) of their own making, but entirely avoidable (e.g. LS and CJ, who both described feeling they would have done much better in school if they had not skipped classes so often); or 3) out of their own control (e.g. TS again, who felt unsupported when valued opportunities did arise[66]). However, perhaps based on growing maturity or sense of motivation based on their experiences in prison, there was a general sense of optimism among the Cores. That is, while opportunities may not have been achievable based on past behaviour, they would be on the strength of their intended future behaviour (i.e. re-engaging with college courses, completing apprenticeships, and seeking employment with the aid of Youth Offending Teams).

It appears that Cores' perceptions that they were unable to achieve using legitimate opportunities was driven by their behaviour towards these opportunities when presented to

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[65] Although, as previously mentioned, the possibility of hindsight biases in this regard should not be discounted.

[66] Such as when his YOT worker failed to submit paperwork which would have secured TS work as a farm labourer, a job that he was very keen to take on as he felt it played to his strengths.

them, rather than negative beliefs about the availability of opportunities. While they may value the legitimate means via which opportunities may be achieved, they have in some way behaved in a fashion (either voluntarily or reluctantly) which became an obstacle to legitimately obtaining desired opportunities, and hindered their ability to pursue legitimate opportunities and achieve desired goals. By limiting themselves in such a way, they may then find opportunities presented by anti-social peer group/gang membership to be more enticing and more personally *achievable* than legitimate opportunities, thus providing them with an easier (socially-unacceptable) route to their (socially-desirable) goals (e.g. excitement, wealth, status). In addition to the idea that it is perceived achievability of legitimate and illegitimate opportunities which is influential (as opposed to Differential Opportunity Theory which focuses on the presence or absence of legitimate opportunities only: see Chapter Two), this may also indicate that gang members have issues in terms of immediate gratification, as demonstrated by TH:

> *"year 8 year 9 you start to realise that... "*my mum needs money, I need money*" like, what's school getting you? Still got years left of it... and I was like "*fuck school*", just try and get money...."*

>   - Vagueness in development of, and commitment to, life goals.

Related to the notion that Cores lack a belief in how personally achievable available legitimate opportunities are is the observation of a general aura of vagueness in many aspects of their lives. These include:

1. Having no plans for future education or employment during their school years. SL, JS, and WM (who stated that rather than preparing for his future he "*just went to school 'cos that's what I had to do*") admitted to this, although LS and CH both hoped to study Business in college;

2. Having no, or only vague, plans when it came to offending. SL, TS, CH, CJ, and JS all spoke in terms of their criminal behaviours being relatively spur of the moment events, with JS stating that he "*Just got caught up, wasn't premeditated, it just, kind of* [suddenly] *popped up in the day. Went out... done the crime...*"

In a sense, the belief in achievability of available opportunities may have a reciprocal relationship with the vagueness factor, in that each could serve as an antecedent or a consequence of the other. Being vague about life goals may mean that Cores: 1) lack motivation to pursue legitimate goals and thus fail to adequately evaluate their potential to achieve them; and/or 2) possess a belief that they will be unable to achieve goals with available opportunities, leading them to conclude there is no point in making specific plans.

Continuing the idea that belief in achievability of available of opportunities and vague development and commitment to life goals are reciprocally-related, and consistent with the optimism Cores expressed towards post-prison opportunities, they were also all very specific about their need to have set plans in place for their release (i.e. providing opportunities for informal social controls, such as in having a place to live, a college place or apprenticeship set up, employment confirmed, etc.) In some cases, especially if the Core gang member was coming to the end of their sentence, these plans and support structures would be in good shape (e.g. TS), others would have good intentions and the beginnings of set plans and support structures (e.g. SL, JW, CH, and JS),[67] while others were yet to think about it (e.g. WM and DB). In at least one case, plans were not necessarily positive – CJ was arranging a post-prison college place, though he admitted that he was doing so to please his mother more than out of any personal wish to do so, and that he thought it likely he would continue

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[67] Generally the only set idea they would have would be not to continue offending, highlighted by CH who commented that "*Yeah, like obviously, you can't be doing crime for your whole life like, you've gotta find something else to do init...*", and JS who said that "*Obviously if I'm committing crime and getting caught then it's obviously not my, you know not my cup of tea!*"

engaging in illegal activity. Of those whose plans remained vague, CH aimed to "*start my own business most probably*", though he then admitted he had no idea what form this business would take. However, this could be intentional, with JS stating, for example:

"*I get whatever job I get, and just, keep it... I'm not being, picky and saying "*I want to do something in catering*" you know. I'd <u>like</u> to, it'd be great but, you know... guess I'll just have to, just go with it at the time, see how it is and things.*"

Much as it was hypothesised that extreme levels of social (dis)organisation and family (in)stability may protect against gang membership, then perhaps extreme (high vs. low) levels of vagueness may prove to be a risk for continued gang membership. In other words, having some degree of vagueness in ones' plans may benefit gang members attempting to desist from criminal and gang opportunities and commit to social controls, since allowing for some flexibility in their plans may enhance their ability to adapt to unplanned-for circumstances. Having marginally vague plans will be beneficial to those with limited options (e.g. due to a criminal record) as they will be more likely to keep their options as open as possible. Having a set goal with limited options, while laudable, may lead to disappointment if/when that goal is not met, potentially leading back into old habits. Having a broader, more realistic approach to goal setting may not allow some to achieve set goals, but it may be more likely that they will have some longer-term success avoiding re-offending.

- Experience of victimisation.

Cores' views on victimhood, particularly their own, were quite variable. In some cases, they freely admitted to having been the victim of a crime, while others challenged the notion that any incidences of being targeted by criminals and/or gang members really counted. Still others felt that they had never been the victim of a crime.

For instance, CJ described never having personally been the victim of crime, although commented that several of his friends had been stabbed: indeed, he characterised this as a fairly regular occurrence given that it was not uncommon for them to have been stabbed more than once. TS also felt that he had never experienced victimisation himself, which he accounted for due to his family being well-known in the area and thus people being unwilling to "*mess with*" them. He used this reputation to his advantage if/when his friends were ever victimised, by "*sort*[ing] *it out*" for them and getting whatever had been stolen back.[68] To TS's credit, he recognised that this lack of victimhood may have influenced his behaviour. He states that "*...so I don't know how it feels like, you know what I mean. I don't know how it feels, to be robbed off*", indicating that had he had the experience and could empathise with those *he* had robbed in the past, he may not have been quite so prolific a thief himself. CH also did not believe he had ever been the victim of a crime and felt that, had he been, he would have been unaware that he had (stating that it would have happened behind his back rather that to his face).

For the remaining Cores, discussions of victimisation revolved around being the victim of gang-related crime. Sometimes discussion would be hypothetical, as in the case of SL, who described how gang membership came with the risk of being killed, stabbed, beaten up, mugged, or getting one's family hurt (none of which SL claimed to have thought about at the time of his offending). Others detailed actual experiences. LS's first encounter with a gang came at the age of eight when he and his brother were travelling by train to spend the weekend with their father. They were mugged at knife-point by a group of teenagers when the group discovered they were travelling into a "rival" area. While LS was apparently unaffected by this (particularly since the group were unable to activate LS's mobile phone

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[68] With no hint of irony (given his index offence), TS then went on to say of those who had stolen from his friends "*They won't do it again. *[They] *shouldn't have done it in the first place really.*"

and so gave it back[69]), he believed that this incident was the reason why his brother subsequently never left home without carrying a knife. JW and DB's experiences were somewhat more severe. When JW and his peers met another group they were friendly with, one member (who they did not know) of the other group then attacked a member of JW's group with a bottle. JW described attempting to calm the situation (along with other members of both groups) when another group linked to the instigator's group "*appeared out of nowhere.*" JW was stabbed in the neck with a machete and received severe defensive injuries to his arms. DB was stabbed at the age of 13 in an attempted robbery when another group from elsewhere entered his community:

"*I stood with a bunch of people... and they they ran but, me 'cos it's in my area I don't really like running from my area... I'm not running from no one. And they come, basically like a robbery as well but obviously I wouldn't give over my stuff, so then they stabbed me... But I didn't know. I didn't know I got stabbed, I thought I got punched, that's what it felt like. And then,* [they] *took my phone and that and ran, and I felt like, once* [I knew they weren't] *coming back* [I realised] *I got stabbed.*"

Finally, WM (who, given a long history of gang culture in the town where he grew up, was perhaps indoctrinated into gang-life earlier than any other Core) described being the victim of gang crime "*all the time*" but failed to elaborate beyond that. He does describe being robbed by older members of his own gang, but did not count this as crime: "*...that was just 'cos a thief* [got] *a thief 'cos they could.*" Thus, having never been the victim of any form of criminal behaviour ("*...other than police brutality*") outside of the gang context, he felt he had never been the victim of a crime. In fact, he questioned the very possibility that anyone

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[69] The mundane, everyday nature of such crimes became apparent in LS's account of a similar occurrence some years later, to the point that there is now almost an "etiquette" to knife-point mobile phone robberies – groups of young men would steal other young people's mobile phones in the street, though not before allowing their victim to remove the sim card so that they could keep their contacts etc.

in his neighbourhood could be a victim. Taking a street robbery as an example, he stated "*I mean, "*victim*" isn't really a plausible word, like where I'm living. If you're the victim of a crime, then that's just ridiculous, you gotta do something about it.*" Thus, it seems that, in WM's eyes at least, victimhood is a temporary state that one can erase by taking retaliatory action against the perpetrator.

- Attitudes to authority.

A key finding reported by Alleyne and Wood (2010) was that gang members possess highly anti-authority attitudes (compared to non-members) which may be used to justify their membership and behaviour. Being one of the few psychological examinations of gangs, the inclusion of attitudes to authority was therefore a key element of the interview schedule devised for this research, but findings show mixed support for Alleyne and Wood's (2010) conclusion (at least with respect to the Cores). Reactions to several forms of, what may be described as, authoritarian out-groups (such as parents/guardians, teachers, and the police) and the procedures they employ were examined and, in contrast to the expected outright hostility towards such groups, multiple participants actually expressed a range of *pro-*authority attitudes.

As previously discussed, Cores (e.g. CH, JW, LS, JS,[70] CJ) provided generally positive accounts of their school experiences, and often spoke of having good relationships with teachers. The nature of the pupil-teacher relationship often hinged on how supportive Cores perceived individual teachers to be. For instance, CJ commented:

"*Um... most of, like, some of them were alright. Like, you could chat to some of them, have a* [relationship]. *But some of them, from* [the] *time you start like misbehaving then they don't, they just put you in the group of, like, "*not gonna be able to concentrate*" so* [they] *don't*

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[70] Despite admitting to having beaten one of his teachers.

[have to] *bother with you that much or... some teachers I was alright with and there was some I just, wasn't, yeah*"

In other words, there was a dislike for teachers who appeared to employ stereotyped thinking towards Core participants which then resulted in them receiving less support in class compared to other pupils or than they may have liked. TS similarly felt unsupported when discussing his struggles and mounting frustration with his schoolwork. Finally, WM admitted to having "*...an issue with authority...*" and was subsequently just rude to his teachers regardless of how they behaved towards him.

Also, given the strong, positive bonds that Cores generally described having with parents and other family members, even when there was some family instability, they were able to recall a loving relationship with at least one family member who they saw as an authority figure. However, there are few explicit references made regarding Cores' perceptions of their parent(s) as authority figures. The clearest such statement comes from self-confessed "*daddy's-boy*" JS:

"*...my Dad's really strict... if he said something you'd have to obey him. And looking back now, I think that was great, you know what I'm saying, think that really helped. So once he went* [away with the army] *my Mum was, she was she was pretty strict, but she was, kind as well so, guess she used to let me, leave me a bit more free then. So, I guess... extra time I guess,* [I] *made the wrong decisions...*"

Other examples were offered by TS, who expressed a wish that he had listened to the advice of his father more (e.g. about staying out of trouble and committing to his education), and LS, who described having to be polite to police officers (which was not his usual response to them) if/when they came to his home, as he was reluctant to be rude to anyone in front of his mother (one of the few parents in his home area willing to talk to, and cooperate, with the

police). However, the presence of a parental authority figure did not necessarily guarantee a positive (i.e. pro-social) influence. For example, CJ experienced a strong paternal (and criminal) role-model throughout his life, but described a deteriorating relationship with his father driven by the fact that "*...I'm grown up, and then he's like, he thinks he's the man of the house...*" This shows a potential clash of male egos and competition for status at home – CJ questioned his father's authority in their chaotic household, and subsequently felt forced out into the streets, which, in turn, led him to associate with deviant peers.

Perhaps understandably, the authoritarian out-group to which Cores expressed clear opinions was the police. Generally speaking, Cores did not have a high opinion of the police or Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs – or, as LS called them, "*fake police*"), and cited having poor relations with them – all Cores indicated that they generally disliked the police, and that this opinion was shared with the majority of community residents. However, surprisingly, this dislike did not automatically translate into a lack of respect for the *authority* of the police. Almost all Cores were able to cite at least something positive about the police, with most making statements that seemed to indicate that they valued their presence and/or believed that police have an important role in society, if not in their community specifically. TS, JW, LS, JS, and CJ all made statements along the lines that the police were "*just doing their jobs*", which they recognised as crime prevention. Further to this, JW and LS went so far as to admit having almost friendly relationships with specific police officers who they regularly encountered patrolling their local area.

The biggest bone of contention surrounding gang-police relations was the use of stop-and-search practices, with all participating Cores raising these as a concern. The sticking point was less rooted in Cores automatically reacting against an authority figure and more an apparently valid and reasonable dissatisfaction with how (some) officers *expressed* their authority. This led some to question when a police officer's authority is legitimate and when

it is not. When police officers were working within the limits of their authority, Cores described being willing to cooperate with them. The key factor here was whether they believed that police treated them with respect, by being willing to talk to them. When an officer initiated contact (either through stop-and-search, routine enquiry, or arrest), Cores often described a willingness to cooperate (albeit reluctantly) provided that the officer was open-minded, was willing to listen to their side of the story, and was willing to calmly explain the reason for contact. However, they recalled feelings of frustration if officers refused to hear them out or, if they did, when they then disregarded what they told them. Police officers who were rude, applied stereotypes to Cores during interactions, and who initiated stop-and-search procedures for no clear reason and without explanation, also incited frustration and anger. Under these circumstances, Cores suggested that their cooperation was unlikely, and that they were more likely to play-up to officers, antagonise them in some way, or run away from them. This view was perhaps best summed up by JW:

"All of them are trying to do their job init, trying to stop crime and that, but there's a certain way you do it… I won't dislike you but if you do it in a way I don't like, you're not treating me with no respect, I'll hate you."

Peer selection.

The final stage of the Trigger Phase concerns peer selection. Social cognitive processes influence to whom young people are socially attracted. Opportunities to associate with a range of different peer groups were available, which Cores generally distinguished according to whether they were likely to exert a good or bad influence. This was most clearly described by LS:

"…some of them were just friends from school and then, the one's that like I knew from outside school, kinda… like the bad friends, so, like, yeah. So friends that, friends that were

in school were good, got on with their work and just... um, didn't really get into much trouble

but... yeah friends I had on the outside, kinda getting into trouble, things like that. That's

when I started doing things, getting more in trouble..."

 Two themes emerged from analysis in relation to peer selection: 1) seeking norm validation; and 2) extending the family.

- Seeking norm validation.

As described above, childhood experiences and personal traits help to shape cognitive processing, influencing such concepts as access to, and ability to work with, available opportunities for (social) advancement, views on criminality and victimhood, and feelings and responses towards authority (figures). By going out into the world (e.g. through formal means, such as school and activity groups, or through informal means, such as unstructured playgroups with local children and neighbours), these social cognitions and the behavioural responses that the (emerging) Core gang member has developed (or is still developing) will be challenged. As such, associating with a wide range of peers allows the individual to test their view of the social world around them. If this view is challenged then they may adapt it to reflect the norms they have been exposed to, or seek out new norms to confirm their pre-existing beliefs. This second tactic was used by TS who, with the rest of his gang, would purposefully travel to the roughest part of town where the norms developed in the group's identity were more culturally engrained.

- Extending the family.

A reasonably common theme within the gang literature is that gang members come to view their fellow gang members as a surrogate family. That is, based on the assumption that gang members have typically experienced unstable family backgrounds and/or possess weak

family bonds, these young people join gangs to experience support and meet the affiliation needs that are not met in the home environment. However, as described earlier, Cores generally grew up in relatively stable family environments and described having strong bonds with (if not all, then many of their) close family members. It was suggested that it is the experience of being socialised into a stable, positively evaluated family group which allows prospective gang members to successfully integrate into social (peer) groups outside of the family, thus facilitating the path to Core membership. As such, it would be reasonable to assume the "surrogate family" thesis of gang membership may not be accurate for participating Cores. Since they felt that they receive most, if not all, the positive boons associated with family membership from their actual family, they therefore had no need to seek these benefits from an outside source. This is not to say that Cores did not view their peer groups and gangs in terms of family, however, but rather that they viewed them as an *extension* to their biological family rather than a *replacement*. This is demonstrated most clearly by CJ, who specifically uses the term "*extended family*" when describing his peer group on account of how much time they spent together and how big a part they played in his life. CH (and with regards to a single peer within the group, DB) also described his peer group as being "*like family*", and that "*they could come to my house when I weren't there, like, just to wait for me... Like my mum knew them, whole family*", indicating a good level of interaction and approval between the family and the group.

End of Trigger Phase.

Thus, at the pre- and early stages of gang membership, and the conclusion of processes comprising the Trigger Phase, Cores were generally open to, and actively were, associating with any/all peer groups that they had access to, regardless of their pro- or anti-social leanings. Such associations would grow as the individual was introduced to friends of their own friends, who would then introduce their own friends, and on, and on (e.g. as described

by SL, LS, CJ, and WM). DB, however, introduced a caveat to this process specific to his gang peers, suggesting that they would only be willing to "*link-up*" with other groups and individuals if there was a profit to be made from it – if there was the risk that they would be dragged into someone else's conflict, then a link-up would be declined.

Phase Two – Directives.

Structural features.

The second phase of the Core Gang Member Model is an entirely new addition to existing gang theory. In terms of structure, it roughly parallels the Trigger Phase described above. However, where the Trigger Phase is concerned with young people becoming aware of, and subsequently identifying with, the various social groups to which they are drawn, this Directional Phase illustrates the processes involved in making a choice between these contrasting groups, identifying with one group at the expense of the other. This choice may be active (in that the young person may actively decide to throw in their lot with one group and limit ties to the other) or passive (in that circumstances dictate which of the groups the young person comes to spend the most time with and thus identifies with/becomes more attached to).

Having evaluated, engaged, and identified with distinct peer groups, these peer associations will be subject to continued pressure from environmental and social forces, and the individual characteristics of the prospective/developing gang member. Some of these factors may be linked to those experienced prior to peer selection (i.e. they may continue to influence individuals from the Trigger Phase to the Directional Phase) while some of these factors may be unique to the Directional Phase (i.e. they may have developed as a function of social cognitive processing and peer selection occurring during the Trigger Phase). At this point, given the salience of group identification, intra-group processes which exist within

each of the groups to which young people identify will interact with their individual social

cognitive processing, ultimately determining which of the groups they come to identify with

most. Here then, the (active/passive) decision is made, with the individual making a

commitment to one of their groups while distancing themselves from the other.

Thematic content.

Figure 4.4 displays the emergent themes which fit within the categories comprising the

Directional Phase of the Core Gang Member Model.
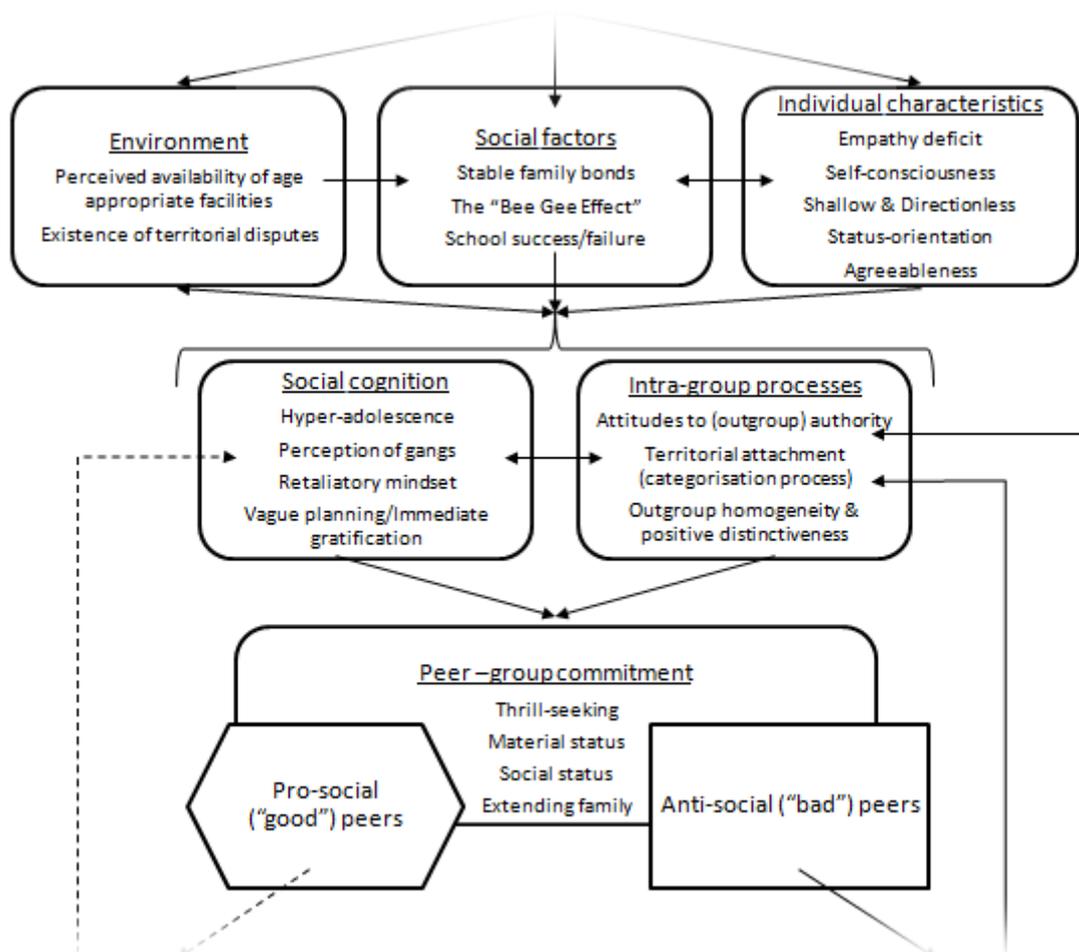
Figure 4.4. The Core Directional Phase.

Environmental themes.

Two themes emerged from the data which were characteristic of the continued environmental influences which Cores (and their multiple peer groups) were exposed to. These concerned: 1) the perceived availability of age-appropriate facilities within their community; and 2) the experience of territorial disputes. Generally speaking, the previously described environmental themes of neighbourhood organisation and family structure remained static between the Trigger and Directional phases, and thus did not appear to contribute towards peer-group commitment.

- Perceived availability of age-appropriate facilities.

As described in the Trigger Phase, Cores liked to keep active and feel constantly engaged. However, there was a general consensus that there was a lack of adequate social resources and facilities available to them capable of meeting these needs. This perceived lack of facilities took the form of: 1) a complete lack of awareness of such facilities; 2) knowledge of the availability of such facilities, but lack of direct access to them (e.g. they were deemed to be too far away); or, most commonly, 3) knowledge of the local availability of such facilities, but an unwillingness to use them.

The most common reason cited for an unwillingness to use facilities was the belief that they had outgrown them (e.g. TS describes how "*There's a youth club and all that lot, but we all grown out of that and stuff, rather be on the streets and stuff*"). As with all adolescents, participating Cores' interests would change as they got older, and as their social cognitive processing and peer interactions evolved (as presented in the Trigger Phase). It could be that participants had used facilities so regularly in the past that they no longer found them enticing, or that the activities laid on and facilities provided were deemed to be geared towards a younger (or in some cases older) age group (e.g. DB and CJ, who rated local,

organised youth activities as being pitched to young people no older than 12 years old). In essence, Cores paint a picture of their age-group having fallen through the net – they wanted to be active and engaged, but the opportunities (if any) made available to them did not meet their needs. As such, they described having to go out and find their own things to do, which was often achieved by either misappropriating local resources and facilities and using them in unintended ways (e.g. local parks and sports grounds became places for groups of young people to congregate, drink alcohol, smoke cannabis, and meet girls, rather than for play or sports: e.g. JW, LS, and WM), or engaging in behaviours which, while stimulating, would not be considered socially acceptable (i.e. gang membership and delinquency). Cores cited a range of activities and facilities that they would have been willing to use if available (e.g. youth/community centres offering more than just table tennis; music studios/use of recording equipment; adventure play-areas; paint-balling; BMX and motorbike tracks, etc.), further indicating that it was the (mundane) nature of the facilities on offer that was unappealing and which drove their unwillingness to participate, rather than an innate unwillingness (i.e. based on typical adolescent defiance or need to make a statement of independence). Indeed, when new activity opportunities did open up, Cores described a willingness to participate with the rest of the community, rather than segregate themselves (e.g. despite problems with other residents, WM and his peers would still always attend the annual local fair with them).

Initially, this discrepancy was a simple matter of fact – it was the nature of the area that there was little (enticing) to do, and it was Cores' personal need to have plenty to do. However, having now become slightly more entrenched in their pro- and anti-social peer groups (at the Trigger Phase – peer selection stage) and, as a result, seeing their own attitudes, beliefs, and adherence to norms reflected back at them in the attitudes, beliefs, and adherence to norms of their fellow members, this simple matter of fact began to take the shape of a personally-relevant social issue. Specifically, the lack of available social facilities

was less about a perceived general lack as about a perceived targeted lack – there were facilities available, but they were suited to everyone else's needs but their own. It was this sensation that thus began to place a strain on these young people (as will be described below with regards to social neglect).

- Territorial disputes.

As Cores' membership of (particularly anti-social) peer groups became more personally salient, they developed a growing awareness of other such groups in and around the local area. In particular, rivalries and conflicts between groups were observed, and associations between different groups and specific locations (in the form of group territorial attachments) were made. Such issues began to have an important influence on Cores' experiences, with all participating Cores stressing the importance of territorial disputes for their emerging anti-social activities.

Perhaps the earliest such awareness was displayed by LS when describing the mugging he experienced at the age of eight (as described under the Trigger Phase – social cognitive factors: victimisation). A relatively straightforward mugging escalated to LS having a flick-knife held to his leg when a group of young muggers discovered LS and his elder brother were travelling to an area the group had a conflict with. While instigating an awareness of local territorial conflict, this awareness was reinforced for LS (who was relatively unaffected by the incident) by his brother's (who was described as being more shaken by it) subsequent behaviour, including knife-carrying and an adherence to territorial thinking. For instance:

"*...like, he'll* [LS's brother] *tell me "*ah, don't bring certain people to the house*." Like I'd say to, ah, my friends, "*come chill at mine*" like, but he wouldn't like them 'cos they're from a area where he don't really like them...*"

For other Cores, this growing territorial awareness was more gradual. For SL, territorial groups were relatively enduring and wide-spread, with one large group attached to territory in one half of his town and another large group attached to territory in the other half, with one specific road acting as the dividing line between them – if, by chance, one were to stay on their side of that road when growing up then contact with the other group, and awareness of the rivalry, would have been limited. In contrast, TS's awareness grew as multiple smaller groups emerged all around the wider community (e.g. "*It got to the point where there was a big amount of groups in that area. Like 15 lads here, 15 lads there, 10 here, 5 there...*"). For DB, territorial awareness emerged when his anti-social peer group attached itself to (and would congregate on) a specific street in the neighbourhood, with the group deriving its own name based on an abbreviation of the street name. Finally, for CJ and WM, territorial awareness grew out of the salience of existing territorial gangs and "*gang wars*" (to use CJ's term) in their local areas. WM described a long tradition of "firework wars" which would indoctrinate local young people into existing territorial rivalries. Each night between Halloween and Bonfire Night, members of each gang would line up on their side of the road which acted as the dividing line between their territories and start "*...having, like, shootouts with the fireworks... We were out to hurt each other but it was more, like... a joke.*" However, what was initially seen as a joke would become much more serious as they got older and became more involved with their own group. In a sentiment echoed by CJ[71], territorial conflict would place restrictions on where WM and his friends could and could not go, forcing them to take precautions when doing even the most mundane of activities:

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[71] Who was reluctant to see such conflicts come to an end: "*to be honest if it if the rivalry's weren't there, there wouldn't be much much to do, kind of thing, it'd make it more boring than it already is... Even though it's serious like, it could be a life or death situation, then it's something to do at the same time kind of thing...*"

"When I go to town I jump in a taxi, park up outside the shop and make the guy wait 'cos I'm not walking around the town like, it's that emotional right now… Shit happens init… it's just normal for us lot."

Thus, a developing awareness of territorial disputes, principally/solely influenced by affiliation with anti-social peer groups, would result in Cores' first steps toward committing to the anti-social group. The perceived threat posed by anti-social out-groups may promote solidification of the anti-social in-group and intensification of ethnocentric attitudes and behaviour (i.e. interpersonal friendships across group boundaries, such as between Cores and their pro-social peers, would diminish, consistent with Realistic Conflict Theory: Sherif, 1966).

Social themes.

Three themes emerged from the data which were characteristic of the social influences which Cores were exposed to. The first of these themes is a continuation of the importance placed on stable family bonds, as described for the social themes described in the Trigger Phase. The second theme, which has been dubbed "the Bee-Gee effect", may be considered an extension of the family bonds theme, as the Cores' concerned parents (fearing that their child may be falling in with a bad crowd) worked to create a rift between them and their anti-social peer groups. The third theme is an evolution of the Trigger Phase theme of Cores' academic records, specifically highlighting how the balance comes to tip more in favour of school failure than success.

- Stable family bonds.

As per the Trigger Phase, Cores described having relatively stable, mostly positive bonds with their parents/guardians/close family members. For the most part[72], these bonds remained stable as they moved from the Trigger to the Directional Phase, and thus they maintained an influence on Cores' continued development. That is, even when the individual started associating more frequently and intensely with anti-social peer groups and/or began getting into trouble with the Criminal Justice System (CJS), even when the family expressed unhappiness or dissatisfaction with their behaviour, the Core member's bond to the family (and vice versa) remained strong and supportive. For example, TS continued acting as his father's carer while his gang-related behaviour was escalating, and he subsequently expressed disappointment in himself that, despite the strength of their bond, he continued to offend and failed to take his education seriously despite his father's protests. Following the incident in which he was stabbed, DB described his main concern as being how upset his mother would have been if anything (worse) were to happen to him, more so than any concerns for his own well-being. CJ was aware that his mother was upset that his actions sent him to prison. He described a situation in which he became upset at upsetting his mother, and his mother then became more upset knowing that CJ was upset! SL, meanwhile, ensured that no one in his family was aware of his gang associations or activities in order to protect them. He described the anger that his brother felt, and the sadness of his mother and sisters, when everything came to light. Thus it would seem that having continued, strong family bonds is not necessarily a guarantee of protection against association with deviant peer groups and gangs. It *is* the strength of this family bond, however, which brings about the second social theme of the Directional Phase...

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[72] LS is the only participant to describe a (temporary) breakdown in his family bonds as he began to associate with deviant peers.

- The "Bee-Gee" effect.

Once the family became aware that participants' peer associations and behaviour were becoming potentially problematic, the decision would often be made to send them away, distancing them from the environmental and social factors that would appear to be pulling them down a negative path. This technique is described as the "Bee-Gee" effect because this was same the technique used by the parents of the popular 1970s pop-group The Bee-Gees – as children, the three brothers were particularly troublesome and so were sent from their home in the UK to live with family in Australia. Here, they settled down, and disengaged from anti-social activities in favour of pro-social pursuits (including, for better or worse, singing). It is a technique which is dependent on the young person coming from a stable family background with strong family bonds – if the family wants the best for them, and they have the means and motivation to help them achieve it, they will be willing to go to extreme lengths in pursuit of this goal, even if it means splitting the family apart.

In most cases of the "Bee-Gee" effect observed, the participant was sent abroad, either to boarding school or to live with family members. For instance, JW spent two years in Ghana (split between living with his aunt and boarding school) from the age of 13, while JS spent a year in Africa living with his father, also at age 13. LS was sent to live with his father elsewhere in London and stayed there for two years not long after starting secondary school. Generally speaking, those Cores who were sent away reported that the tactic would be moderately successful. For instance, they described improved engagement with educational opportunities and a reduction in (if not outright desistance from) troublesome and criminal behaviour and contact with police for the duration of their time away. Ultimately, however, they returned home, most commonly for financial reasons (i.e. the family who remained behind in the UK could no longer afford the school fees or cost of living: e.g. JW and JS), or simply because the young person was homesick (e.g. JW).

Unfortunately, they reported that, once home, they quickly fell back into old patterns of behaviour, often at a higher frequency and greater severity than before they were sent away. For JW, this occurred after a short period of acclimatisation in which he kept himself back, just observing his old friends and how they and the neighbourhood had changed in his absence. He described how "*Everyone* [had] *just got older... and people just got, people just got lost in the fashion of money.*" Prior to being sent away, he described there being the "*big boys*" (i.e. gang olders) and the "*little ones*" (i.e. gang youngers). As one of the "little ones", he and his peers would see the "big boys" making money and subsequently their "*...mind frame changed...*" – the youngers decided to emulate the olders, abandoning playing football in the park for engaging in (illegitimate) money-making activities in the park. Having been removed from the environment at this point, when JW returned he observed that his fellow "little ones" were now closer to being the "big boys" and were acting accordingly. JW soon caught up, however, in a sense experiencing social facilitation into his peers' socially learned behaviour. JS attributed the escalation of his offending upon his return to the UK to another source – the police. He described a noticeable increase in local police activity pre- vs. post-"Bee-Gee" effect, and a noticeable increase in the amount of contact he had with them:

"*It's 'cos I was older you know as well so... Um, I guess maybe when you're young, you don't really... they're* [the police] *not really on to you so much 'cos you're, you know, you're young... as you get older maybe they see you as a, maybe they see that you pose more of a threat so,* [you are] *more likely to get stopped...*"

Since the "Bee-Gee" effect occurred during a critical period of adolescent physical development, many Cores may leave as children but return as full-grown men. To the police then, this is a new face (or at least an old face that has grown up a great deal) for them to keep track of in the area, about whom they have little-to-no information. Subsequently, the newly-returned young person may experience an enhanced level of police scrutiny, in the

form of stop-and-search, which in turn may enhance their perception of being labelled as a trouble-maker and thus enhance the potential for a self-fulfilling prophecy of gang membership to occur.

- School failure.

Ultimately, most Cores faced permanent exclusion from school and were sent to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).[73] PRUs are Local Authority-run establishments which provide an education for children of compulsory school age who (for a range of reasons) are unable to attend mainstream schools. Some Cores were sent to PRUs within months of starting secondary school[74] and remained there, such as SL and TS. Some were excluded at quite a late stage, such as CJ and CH. Others found themselves attending multiple schools, PRUs, and prisons sequentially (e.g. WM, DB, and JS[75]). Finally there was LS, who was neither excluded nor sent to a PRU but failed to complete mainstream education as he was sent to prison just before he was due to sit his GCSEs. Reasons for exclusion included fighting (e.g. CJ), suspected gang affiliation (eventually resulting in actual gang affiliation; e.g. SL), violent assault against another pupil (e.g. CH) or teacher (e.g. JS), and bringing weapons onto school premises (e.g. JS again, his second exclusion from his second school).

A PRU education negatively impacted on participants' prospects, with most failing or not even sitting their GCSEs. Attitudes towards their PRU experience ranged from ambivalence to aversion[76], which contrasted with their more positive evaluation of their time

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[73] Typically, in response to initial questioning about their school experience, the fact that they were excluded would be the first point of information raised.

[74] Which, as previously mentioned, was described as a turning point, when exposure to engagement in troublesome behaviour seemed to accelerate.

[75] In JS's case, he was able to secure a college place after finishing mainstream education, but failed to complete it due to starting his current jail term.

[76] That said, SL stated that he preferred his PRU experience due to there being fewer people there compared to his school.

in mainstream education. Participating Cores described a lack of structure to the institution

and being left to their own devices – CJ had three lessons planned a day but played snooker

instead. There was also a view that tutors were either unable or unwilling to support their

(educational) needs, with TS saying:

"*They send you there so you'd get, back into school, but they let you do your own thing – they*

won't say a thing if you mess around... Obviously if they caught you smoking, there'd be

*consequences but you'd say to them "*I'm gonna go out and have a fag*" they wouldn't bother*

us... [it was] *like they didn't wanna catch us.*"

Given the range of reasons why young people may be sent to PRUs (e.g. deviant behaviour,

long-term ill health, bullying experiences, etc.) it is possible that participating Cores may

have come to view themselves as belonging to a stigmatised youth collective, which may

have impacted on their self-esteem. Participants would describe the social structure of the

PRU as being clique-like, given that they would tend to congregate with more similar peers

(i.e. they would associate with other individuals who had been excluded from mainstream

schools, as opposed to those who attended for other reasons). As such, PRUs were seen as a

place for developing criminal peer networks (particularly when participants attended PRUs

with individuals they had previously counted among their anti-social peer groups, such as TS

and WM) and, perhaps more critically, a place which limited their contact with school-based,

pro-social peers.

Individual themes.

Three themes emerged from the data which were characteristic of the individual

characteristics possessed by (a majority of) Core participants, and which appeared to

contribute to their commitment to anti-social peer groups. These concerned: 1) an inability to

empathise with the targets of criminal/anti-social acts; 2) a lack of direction in life (or lack of depth to life aims and goals); and 3) a pre-occupation with attaining a high level of status.

- Empathy deficit.

Possibly as a result of their prior beliefs about victimisation, Cores displayed empathy deficits which allowed them to engage in criminal and delinquent activities without concern for the widespread consequences of their actions. For instance, SL described how in the immediate aftermath of the gang-related assault/robbery for which he was convicted he felt "*kind of happy about it*" but that "*if anything like that happened now I wouldn't be involved in it. To know how I'd feel now...*" thus indicating a self-directed emotional focus, and lack of concern for the feelings of others (e.g. his victim). DB also expressed such an emotional focus, describing how it was only since going to prison that he had come to "*regret*" his actions. He gave no consideration to those he had stabbed (at random), merely stating that "*I didn't really feel, scared, I felt, relieved after... like it was, then it was* "oh well, stuff happens*" so, did not really, care...*" Similarly, having stabbed a rival gang member, CJ commented that "*it didn't really faze me that much. It's just like, as soon as I knew I wasn't gonna get arrested that day I just forgot about it...*" CJ did, however, express some concern for how his mother would feel knowing his actions, indicating some ability/desire to empathise with those he was close to. Finally, TS recognised that his lack of victimisation meant that he did not know how people feel when he would victimise them (paradoxically, empathising with the fact that he feels unable to empathise).

- Shallow and directionless.

The pursuit of material goals (or material status) was described as a key motivator by Cores but, coupled with their school failure and limited sense of being able to achieve something with the opportunities available to them, there appeared to be little consideration of the means

appropriate to attaining these goals. Thus, there was often a shallowness to Cores'

motivations for this pursuit, in that they wanted to attain material goals for the sake of having

material goods, rather than a great desire specifically for the specific goods or to use them for

some purpose. That is, Cores perceived status in having valued goods, and being able to

display them. In this context, strengthening commitment to anti-social peers and gang

membership, therefore, was seen as means of attaining these goals – JW (most clearly

expressing a sentiment described by many Cores) described how "*cars, money, clothes, the*

jewellery, the girls and that... all those things come easy, come so easy, it's unbelievable" if

affiliated with the right group. For some, in order to attain these goals, committing to anti-

social peer groups and gangs may not have been seen as a choice, with TH commenting

"*obviously I got no GCSEs, I can't go and get a job... might be able to go get a job in*

construction or something but then, they ain't gonna pay me the money that I want..."

Further, Fringes' vague approach to life reformed into a general lack of direction.

With no clear means of attaining their goals other than via the gang, the potential for Cores to

simply drift through life increased.[77] Anti-social peers could, therefore, be seen as more

attractive to prospective Cores owing to a perceived similarity in their lack of direction. In

adhering to social controls (such as education), pro-social peers may be seen by Cores as

having a direction in life, thus introducing a new gulf between them. With pro-social peers

seen to be achieving desired goals through a direction Cores could not relate to, anti-social

peers offered them the ability to attain those goals via alternative, more personally-achievable

means in the given social environment. For instance, CJ described how "*it was just, all*

happened to do the same kind of stuff and enjoy the same kind of things, so we all ended up

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[77] However, a lack of direction does not always imply a shallow desire for material goals. For example, TH described how he rejected the direction provided by engagement in education, but pursued material goals out of a need/desire to support his family.

doing majority of things just out of, "yeah come on let's go do that then."" Thus, associating

with anti-social peers offered some direction, as depicted by LS:

"there's a sense of... knowing that you've got like a purpose, 'cos if you weren't really doing

nothing you er... you ain't going to college, you ain't in school, [you need] *something to do,*

like you wanna be... kinda wanna think that, you're part of something... so like, someone calls

you [inaudible] *we're like "yeah" like... um it's just... just caught up in the hype."*

     - Status-orientation.

As well as a perceived status that came with possessing and displaying material goods, Cores

also valued social status which came with being popular and having influence. For example,

TS described how he was *"...like the big man when I got kicked out of school."*[78] As

described above, SL felt happy after attacking a rival gang member, but the incident (a

retaliatory strike following his rival posting a derogatory video about SL on the internet) also

improved his status. He felt *"...high-powered like... obviously no one's gonna disrespect me*

no more so... it was then, everyone knew like yeah... just got more recognition from that like."

This was particularly important to SL, who valued the recognition that others gave him for

his gang membership more than his membership itself: *"it wasn't what the group give to me it*

was... other people around like. It was like we even had fans sort of, you know."

     Publicly "hanging out" on the streets was one of Cores' principle occupations when

with anti-social peers. It was at this time where status was most relevant, where it could be

displayed, earned, or lost in front of their peers and the community. This is reflected in

WM's previously discussed belief that there was no such thing as a victim of crime where he

was from – victim status was seen as a negative status, and thus would require action (in the

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[78] While this was how he and others saw himself at time, his notion of status changed as he grew up. He describes coming to have realised that it would have been more grown up (and he would have been the bigger man) to have stayed in education.

form of retaliation) in order to redress the balance and regain positive social status. However, such behaviour could also bring negative consequences. Behaviours which were acceptable among the group could be perceived as reflecting poorly on them outside the group, shown, for example, by TS's awareness that when "*we do a few drinks maybe on the streets, it makes us look bad.*" Also, as previously described, Cores were highly critical of police stop-and-search practices and one of the reasons for this was the impact being seen to be stopped by the police could have on their reputation. While the public nature of (material and social) status displays would enhance status, LS indicated that the public nature of police contact would have the opposite effect:

"*It just pisses me off like... when they stop you in a place where everyone can see so I look like a criminal, like I've just done something or whatever, but I'm getting stopped-and-searched for no reason... I can have family members like going passed in a car or something* "*yeah that's [LS]" like, "why's he getting stopped-and-searched..?*""

JS expressed similar sentiments:

"*Imagine walking down the high road and the police pick you and makes you feel a bit like... pisses you off and you just hate them more... imagine going out, knowing you're gonna get stopped-and-searched you know what I'm saying, the first cop car you see is gonna be pulling you over without a doubt... yeah, made me feel like I'm putting out a bad impression you know.*"

Social cognitive themes.

As per the Trigger Phase, the interaction between the individual, social, and environmental categories and themes emerging in the Directional Phase influence an individual's developing social cognitive processing. Five themes emerged from the data which were characteristic of

the social cognition of Cores as their affiliations with gang members began to strengthen. These concerned: 1) hyper-adolescent experiences; 2) growing awareness and evolving perceptions of youth gangs; 3) a developing sense of social neglect; 4) variations in blame attributions and locus of control; and 5) an emerging retaliatory mindset.

- Hyper-adolescence.

The concept of hyper-masculinity, or the endorsement of ideals of toughness and a willingness/ability to fight, has been applied to the study of both street and prison gangs, with mixed support (e.g. Hughes & Short, 2005; Wacquant, 2000; Wood et al., 2014). Based on the evidence presented by Cores in this research, gender may not be the only demographic characteristic around which beliefs and expectations may be heightened for gang members. The term "hyper-adolescence" (initially coined by Goldstein, 1991, to describe early adoption of unsanctioned adult-like behavior) is used to describe how the experiences and responses of Cores may be exaggerated versions of what otherwise may be fairly typical adolescent experiences and responses, or, as TH put it, a tendency to be "*mad mature for their age.*"

For example, while it is typical for teenagers to rebel and to push against and test boundaries imposed on them, this rebellious behaviour appeared heightened for Cores. This was demonstrated by TS:

"*I was in and out of court, in and out, in and out... court was a joke to me... and, been in and out seven or eight times that day – erm not that day, that week. They never sent me to prison. And that was my fault, that they can't send me to prison, so I'd do something a bit worse. And they sent me to prison* [laugh]. *So er, shot* [myself] *in the backside really!* [Laughter]"

Further, connections Cores made with peers were seen as incredibly deep, with CJ, CH, DB, and LS all making reference to their friends being more like family or brothers to them. As

indicated by depictions of their use of violence, engagement in territorial disputes, and reactions to insult (and thus also the value placed on social status, which is threatened when an insult goes unchallenged), disputes also tended to be treated much more seriously by Cores than may be expected, and dealt with much more severely (including with the use of potentially lethal force). Each of these indicates that Cores have a tendency towards exaggerating what may otherwise be fairly typical adolescent processes of self-concept development, peer affiliation, and disagreement/conflict resolution. However, as to whether this tendency is innate (i.e. that Cores' exaggerated reactions promote involvement in extreme groups, activities, and conflicts) or learned (i.e. that Cores' involvement in extreme groups, activities, and conflicts results in the development of exaggerated reactions), the current research cannot speak.

- Perception of gangs.

As interactions with different (types of) peer groups evolved, and awareness of territorial disputes in the local area increased, so too did the issue of gangs start to reveal itself as being of great local significance. For instance, SL and WM were raised in areas with well-known, territorially-defined gangs and so were aware of such issues from a young age. JS first became aware of local gangs because of "...*their dress code and all that... that image, you know what I'm saying, and the impression that they put out.*" As described, LS was mugged at knife-point at the age of eight, which was attributed to being gang-related. LS also commented that "...*it's kind of hard to avoid gangs, and it's very easy to join one...*", illustrating that awareness of gangs is to be expected when they are so salient in a given environment. As such, Cores had a general awareness of gangs before they could legitimately be described as gang members themselves.

Cores were reasonably clear in their definitions of what would constitute a gang, and these definitions were by and large consistent with the Eurogang definition (described in Chapter One). Three of the Eurogang network's defining characteristics were regularly invoked in Cores' own definitions of gangs, specifically that gangs are groups (or teams[79], according to JW) of young people who commit crime. The street-oriented nature of gang activities was referenced by some, although was not a key factor. The durability of the group was not explicitly stated in any of the Cores' own gang definitions: however, when talking about their own gang associations the long-term nature of their relationships with their fellow gang members was often emphasised.

Two other elements regularly featured in Cores' definitions of gangs, both of which give their definitions a reasonably unclear relationship with the Eurogang definition:

1. Virtually all Cores cited the "fact" that gangs have names. Some (e.g. SL, WM, DB, and LS) went so far as to state a belief that it is only when a group can be distinguished by the application of a specific name to it and its members that it can legitimately be described as a gang, with LS commenting that "*if you call yourself a name then you know you're a gang, 'cos you're, you've got a name, so...*" Group names, therefore, mark the boundary between a group of friends and a gang. This is somewhat consistent with the Eurogang network's view. While having a name does not feature in the Eurogang definition in any way, it does feature as a Level One Group Characteristic (Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina, & van Gemert, 2009). This means that any instrument designed to assess an individual's gang status is required to measure whether or not the group to which they belong possesses a name;

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[79] Based on Kozlowski and Bell's (2003) definition of the term (admittedly in a work context), when applied to gangs, "team" suggests a more formalised structure, with more focused aims, goals, and methods, than the typical use of the term "group" may imply.

2. As described above, almost all Cores were able to identify the presence of territorial affiliations and rivalries before their gang member status was confirmed. It is no surprise therefore that participating Cores often defined gangs in terms of their control of territory. For some, it was territorial conflict that defined their own group as a gang (e.g. WM, CH, JS, JW, and SL).

Other factors in their definitions included: (reasonless) inter-group conflict (e.g. DB, WM, JW); recognition by others that the gang is a discrete entity (e.g. WM and SL); group size (e.g. LS suggests any group with less than five members would not be considered a gang); and style of dress (e.g. LS, DB [whose own gang was signified by wearing a yellow bandana], and SL [whose gang would wear black and blue Nike Airforce trainers, with a white and blue hoodie, and a blue bandana]).

- Social neglect.

A commonly cited risk factor for gang membership is the experience of parental neglect – children raised in disorganised family backgrounds, in which parents/guardians show little interest in them, are more likely to seek gang membership, as a means of attaining a surrogate family. As has previously been described, however, participating Cores were generally raised in stable family environments where strong family bonds were established. Asset information reveals that no Cores had ever been through the care system (see Table 4.2). While there may have been some evidence of inconsistent supervision or lack of parental guidance in some cases, these did not necessarily reflect evidence of neglect. For instance, these issues may have been temporary or driven by circumstance (for example, TS, who had to care for his father rather than the other way around) as opposed to parental disinterest.

Instead, the source of any feelings of neglect that Cores may have felt appears to have come from society at large, rather than from within their immediate family. For instance, as

described above, Cores described feeling that they had slipped through a net with regards to their social needs. If and when social resources and facilities were available to them locally, they perceived that these were geared towards the needs and interests of much younger children or older, grown adults. With regards to education, a common sentiment among Cores was that, having been transferred to a PRU, they lost the structure that came with a mainstream education (even if their truancy behaviour meant that they would often deny *themselves* this structure) and were instead left to fend for themselves, with tutors who were either unable or unwilling to provide them with adequate support.[80] Both of these commonly cited experiences are indicative of a belief that society at large did not care about them, and was unwilling to support them in any meaningful way. In fact, the only social agents who did appear to express an interest in Cores were the PCSOs, and, since the interest Cores received from them (such as in the form of stop-and-search practices) was often viewed as persecutory, they would generally *prefer* to be neglected in this case.[81]

- Blame attribution and locus of control.

As a consequence of their ongoing experiences and developing interpretations of the world around them, the notion of blame starts to become apparent (i.e. the Core member begins to attribute responsibility to various sources for the state of their lives), which raises some interesting points with regard to Cores' locus of control. Analysis revealed that Cores did not unilaterally lash out at others for all the ills in their lives. Rather:

1. Cores externalised blame for ongoing problems, that is, for the broader aspects of their lives which they sense have led to things having "not gone right" (which is distinct from the sense that things have "gone wrong") for them. This is evident from

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[80] See also TS's experience of losing out on job opportunities he was keen to pursue after being failed by his YOT worker.

[81] Although, as described for Cores' attitudes to authority, there are variations, with JW citing a willingness to cooperate with police "*officers that care*" but not those who do not.

the notion of social neglect that they reported. Blame is attributed to outside agencies, such as the police, local authorities, (PRU) tutors, local community members, rival groups, etc., for limiting their ability to: live up to "traditional", socially acceptable norms and expectations; and behave in a socially acceptable, social control regulated manner. For example, TS blamed his YOT worker for not securing him farm-work, or his teachers for failing to assist him when he struggled with schoolwork. In essence, it could be seen that Cores externalised blame for the absence of protective factors (from criminality and gang membership) in their lives.

2. Cores internalised blame for the onset of new problems, that is, for specific issues and events in their lives which they perceived as having "gone wrong" (which is distinct from the perception that things have "not gone right"). For example, TS blamed his YOT worker when opportunities did not come good (i.e. his life was not going right), but blamed himself when he allowed opportunities to pass by himself (i.e. his life was going wrong).

This is perhaps an outgrowth of the stable family backgrounds and family bonds that appear to have dominated Cores' lives. These positive family bonds then provided Cores with an understanding of right (i.e. socially acceptable) from wrong (i.e. not socially acceptable), and what is expected of them and what is not, from an early age. When they were aware that they were not acting (or were unable to act) in what was considered the "right way" (e.g. by struggling academically in school, or by failing to engage with local social resources and facilities), then Cores placed the blame for this on outside sources. On the other hand, when they were aware that they were acting in what was considered the "wrong way" (e.g. by playing truant from school, or by engaging in criminal offending), then Cores accepted the

blame for these issues themselves.[82] For instance, most Cores were happy to admit their criminal guilt, including TS (who stated "*yeah, it was all my fault* [laughs]*, which is a little bit shit really!*"). In essence, it could be seen that Cores internalised blame for the presence of risk factors (for criminality and gang membership) in their lives. This then presents a mixed account of Cores' locus of control. They displayed a sense that the potential for good things in their lives was outside of their control, while the presence of bad things in their lives was within their personal control.

- Retaliatory mindset.

A further social cognitive development that became evident from examination of Cores' data was the presence of a retaliatory mindset. That is, when faced with some form of opposition or antagonistic force, Cores would be unwilling to let it go and would instead feel compelled to act against it. This mindset then was a culmination of a number of the experiences and processes described so far, from a growing commitment to peer groups, to growing frustration at their sense of social neglect, growing awareness of territorial rivalries, and a growing understanding of gang issues.

As a *retaliatory* mindset, this implies that action occurred principally in response to some provocation. The initial antagonistic force would often be extremely provocative (e.g. CJ – "*...one of my friends would get stabbed by a different gang and then we'd just go and do something back to them kind of thing...*"), perceived as provocative (e.g. SL – "*he... took the piss out of me so I'm gonna beat him up.* [That was] *All that was in my head...*"), or come to be seen as mundane (for example, the "firework wars" described by WM in which a rival gangs would fire rockets at each other over a period of a week, and which were viewed as a

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[82] While Core gang members may have shown a willingness to blame themselves for the "wrong" in their lives, this is not to say that they did so whole-heartedly. Several participants, having accepted blame for their actions, would then make statements consistent with an attempt to morally disengage from those same actions, principally via the strategies of minimising and distorting the consequences of these actions.

joke). Cores' responses to provocation may also then be seen as an expression of hyper-adolescent behaviour (i.e. typical adolescent conflict taken to extreme, potentially lethal, levels).

Two sub-themes were identified related to the development and expression of a retaliatory mindset, both of which suggest that this mindset is rooted in Cores' status orientation (as described under the Directional Phase – individual factors):

1. Needing to impress (but not being able to via traditional means). Retaliation in this sense may also be used as a method of impression management, or as means of saving face. For instance, SL was convicted of a violent robbery and assault (committed with a number of his fellow gang members) against a lone member of a rival gang which had recently released a derogatory video about SL's gang online. The assault (which was filmed with the intention of also releasing online) was therefore a tactic used by SL's gang for re-gaining some of the respect and status they perceived they had lost due to the initial video. Thus, it was a relatively straight-forward tit-for-tat action, intended to level the playing field between rivals and that served a self-presentational motivation – it was not retaliation of the life-or death, or of the "it's just a joke", varieties reported by CJ and WM;

2. However, the second sub-theme relates to some Cores not knowing when to stop. SL's story continues as one of his fellow gang members proceeded to threaten their rival with a gun, an action that, in SL and the others' views, overstepped the line.   CJ linked the need to retaliate with the experience of anger, which could be viewed as the means through which such escalation can occur (i.e. when responses are clouded by intense emotion). However, he also felt that the emotional component of retaliation is a side-effect of, what is primarily, a behavioural impulse – that is, gang issues work predominantly at the behavioural (or motivational) level rather than the emotional.

The development of a retaliatory mindset may therefore be strongly linked to Cores' growing awareness of, and involvement in, territorial disputes that result from their budding attachment to their anti-social peer group. CJ illustrates the link most clearly:

"If I have a rivalry with one area then, we just wouldn't go to that area unless we're going to retaliate because, you can't just go through that area and nothing will happen or nothing, so just... it probably, limits us to where we can go, without, problems starting and that like..."

CJ also proposed an explanation for territorial gang conflict, attributing it purely as a function of the retaliatory mindset – *"the only way it's* [i.e. territorial conflict] *gonna stop is if people... I don't think it'll ever stop, unless.. one group stops retaliating, which is not gonna happen – teenagers retaliate."*

Group process themes.

In conjunction with their individual social cognitive processing, group processes experienced as a member of both pro- and anti-social peer groups become salient at the Directional Phase. Three themes emerged from the data which were characteristic of the group processes which influenced Cores as their affiliations with gang members began to strengthen. These concerned: 1) attitudes to (out-group) authority; 2) territorial attachment (as a categorisation process); and 3) positive distinctiveness.

- Attitudes to (out-group) authority.

Attitudes to authority were described as an influential social cognitive construct at the Trigger Phase, and these attitudes will continue to evolve as the young persons' associations with their peer groups intensify. With an emerging social identity rooted in their group memberships, interactions and relations with members of authoritarian out-groups may come

to be used as a yardstick against which that social identity can be assessed and (crucially) enhanced. For instance, the surprising finding that Cores did not possess outright anti-authoritarian attitudes or whole-hearted, irrational hatred of the police described earlier may be put down to a social identity-based tactic of impression management and self-presentation. That is, given Cores' status orientation and desire to look good at all times, they will manage their reactions to police behaviour (i.e. in terms of cooperation versus antagonism) and their general attitude towards them in such a way that they come out of any encounters with their image intact or, better yet, improved. This is perhaps best demonstrated by LS's (previously described) tendency to be rude and abusive towards the police and PCSOs when out on the street with his gang, but polite and considerate when he would encounter them with his mother. He would manipulate his behaviour towards this authoritarian out-group depending on whichever of his social identities (and the expected behaviours associated with that identity) was most salient.

While evaluations of, and behaviours towards, the police can be used tactically in this way in order to self-promote in any given situation, it may also be in Cores' best interests to maintain a fairly regular level of respect for police authority. In belonging to an anti-social, criminal gang, young people will effectively be placing themselves in direct opposition with the police, and thus will subsequently be comparing their gang to the police. Therefore, in abusing and belittling the police, they will not be doing themselves, as a gang, any favours with regards to promoting themselves as a serious group worthy of respect. That is, they need to promote some sense that the police, as a group, are a worthy adversary to their own group – the gang will not attain (or maintain) a desirable level of respect or social status if they persistently "dumb down" and deny a degree of respect to any group that they are in opposition to and thus a reflection of. The use of slang terminology for the police may be a means of promoting the police, and thus self-enhancing – for instance by referring to police

as "the Feds" (as LS would persistently). That is, by imbuing the local police with an aura akin to that of the FBI in the USA, he was effectively building up his own status by promoting the status of an "enemy."

- Territorial attachment as a categorisation process.

Just as attitudes to out-group authority were described above as a group process-oriented extension of attitudes to authority (Trigger Phase – social cognitive factors), so too can territorial awareness (Directional Phase – environmental factors) come to be extended with the continuing development of the young persons' group associations. Specifically, in becoming aware of territorial rivalries and fostering engagement with their (in particular, anti-social) peer groups, "gangs" become a personally salient category, and territory becomes a heuristic tool intended to categorise individuals as members of outside gangs.

For some, such as CJ and WM, this territorial attachment developed early and would be culturally transmitted (i.e. territorial rivalries between their own and local areas may date back to a time from before they were even born). An example of this would be the traditional Halloween to Bonfire Night firework wars described by WM. For others, this attachment may be a little more fluid, as in LS's case. While he was aware of the territorial aspect to gangs and crime from his mugging experience at the age of eight, he remained reasonably open to affiliating with others from outside of his immediate community (despite his brother's feelings). This may be linked to his described belief that not all territorial disputes are gang-related and that, rather, non-gang members may use knowledge of territorial heuristics as an excuse for their personal criminal activity.

- Positive distinctiveness.

As they are progressively drawn to their anti-social peer groups/emerging gang, and become progressively distant from pro-social peers, the prospective Cores experience a strong motivation for the gang to attain positive distinctiveness (e.g. see Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). That is, Cores desire that their gang be seen as: 1) *distinct* from similar out-groups; and 2) *comparably favourable* to similar out-groups. In attaining positive distinctiveness, Core gang members will possess a "positive" social identity, in that by feeling that the gang is held in high regard, they as individuals will be held in similarly high regard by association. A positive social identity will thus enhance self-esteem and social status, meaning that Cores are motivated to ensure that the status of the gang remains high. An effective means of achieving this is to ensure that the negative attributes of comparable groups/gangs are highlighted, resulting in the reinforcement of inter-group biases and a likely escalation of territorial gang disputes.

The desire for positive distinctiveness is a key element of Social Identity Theory's (SIT: Tajfel & Turner, 1986) perspectives on: individual behaviour in group settings; and development of ingroup cohesion and outgroup hostility. As such, it has some resemblance to Social Dominance Theory (SDT: Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) which, via the concept of social dominance orientation (see Chapter Two), also describes how individuals behave in accordance with a desire to dominate members of lower-status groups. While there has been much discussion in the broader research literature as to whether SIT or SDT is the more valid account of such action (e.g. Huddy, 2004; Rubin & Hewstone, 2004; Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004; Turner & Reynolds, 2003), and under what conditions (e.g. with Redmond, 2011, suggesting that SDT is more appropriate for explaining members' behaviour when their low status group is under threat), they are distinct in that SIT suggests behaviour is more situational in nature while SDT suggests it is the result of a stable personality

attribute. Given that participating Cores' depictions of intergroup relations tended to emerge in the context of existing gang memberships rather than *pre*-existing their gang memberships (i.e. suggesting a situational rather than personality-based interpretation of the development of, and engagement in, such relations), and that their inherent status orientation would often preclude Cores from presenting themselves as a member of a low status group, SDT and a desire for positive distinctiveness would appear to be a more valid representation of intergroup relations in this case than SDT and possession of a high social dominance orientation.

Peer-group commitment.

The final stage of the Directional Phase concerns peer commitment. As the individual's social cognitive processes continue to develop, and interact with social processes that occur within the peer groups to which they belong, they gradually come to identify with certain of their peer groups over others. Given the population sampled in this research, participating Cores ultimately committed themselves to the peer group(s) that they considered to be a bad influence, and rejected their friends who they considered to be a good influence. Four themes emerged from our analysis, each of which suggests a specific motivation behind the individual's commitment to a specific peer group: 1) thrill seeking; 2) a desire for material status; 3) a desire for social status; and 4) a crystallisation of their extended family. These motivations are presented in order of apparent importance (i.e. the frequency with which they came up in interviews).

- Thrill seeking.

The most commonly cited reason for committing to their bad peers was that this group offered the greater opportunity to have fun. As previously described, Cores needed to feel constantly active and engaged, were dissatisfied with the facilities and resources available to

them that were intended to keep them occupied and entertained, and had a tendency to blame others when they felt that their needs were not being met. Essentially, they were bored by their lives and felt marginalised by society. By affiliating with others who shared these feelings (i.e. their bad group of friends), they discovered a norm validating outlet for these feelings (i.e. the processes involved in initial peer selection, in the Trigger Phase). Over time, the processes described throughout the Directional Phase built to the point that the group began to engage in activities of their own which fed the developing individual impulse for immediate gratification. SL described how he "*...used to get a lot of adrenaline from that*" (i.e. meaning gang-related activities), while CJ was resistant to the idea of ending gang associations and activity because it would mean less excitement in their lives, stating that "*...to be honest, if the rivalry's weren't there there wouldn't be much to do, kind of thing, it'd make it more boring than it already is so... I wouldn't change it to be honest.*"

- Material status.

Status can be achieved through one of two forms according to the Cores' views. The first, and seemingly most important of these, is status through material possessions. It is status based on image. A common theme among the Cores was a strong desire to look good, by wearing fashionable clothes (with a specific emphasis on trainers) and jewellery, driving nice cars, owning the latest technology, etc. Joining deviant peer groups aided young people in achieving this desire, as offending (e.g. through property or drug crime) provided them with the means of procuring the goods capable of imbuing them with this status (and did so much more quickly and easily than would be possible via legitimate adolescent means).[83] Thus, making money was a primary motivator for gang membership (both their own and others')

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[83] In JW's words, "*when you get older, you need money,* [but] *like you can't just get money from your mum all the time...*"

according to JW[84], LS, and JS. DB suggested that the nature of gangs was evolving as the desire for money and material status came to prominence, stating:

"I don't think people are still like gangbanging and stuff like right now, people are more into their money... they're still like, affiliated in a way like that, but they won't always be... going to do this and that, they're more like, money-motivated..."

The desire for material status was reinforced by membership of the group, as it was a desire valued by their fellow group members. Further, being seen to associate with others in the group, who all displayed ownership of accessories widely-regarded as status symbols, reflected back on the individual member. Offending and anti-social peer group membership therefore enhanced their image and material status.

- Social status.

The second form of status, of which the opportunity of attaining was enhanced by deviant peer group membership, was status through reputation. It is status based on power. Membership of an anti-social peer group could provide individual members with the opportunity to make a name for themselves within their local area, often through violence and conflict with others.

- Extending the family.

As described previously, given the perceived stability evident in Cores' family backgrounds, the notion that (some) individuals were motivated to join deviant peer groups and gangs as a means of accessing a surrogate family was not supported by this research. Of the motivations explicitly mentioned by Cores, finding a family in the group was the least supported. When deviant peer groups were discussed in terms of being family-like, they were viewed as being

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[84] As previously stated, he was quoted as saying that "*...people just got lost in the fashion of money*" when describing the escalation of crime and gang membership among his peers.

an extension (or addition) to the family that they already had. While initially a motivational aspect of peer selection in the Trigger Phase, by looking to forge connections with people outside the family group using the socialisation abilities developed through membership of their perceived stable family groups, by the time they came to commit to the their bad peer group these connections had been set, the closer members of the group seen in family-like terms, and there may have been interaction between them and their real family. Thus, the extended family had been reached.

End of Directional Phase.

Thus, having previously developed associations with multiple peer groups in a range of settings and exposing them to a range of influences, the processes comprising the Directional Phase would ultimately lead (or force) Cores to reject their pro-social peer associations in favour of associating solely with anti-social peer groups.

Phase Three – Maintenance.

Structural features.

The final phase of the Core Gang Member Model is the Maintenance Phase. Having committed to one social group over any other, the factors present within this phase may describe how individuals maintain their commitment to this group and/or how they may ultimately break away from it. As such, consistent with Unified Theory (Wood & Alleyne, 2010), this phase is dual process in nature, with each route characterising commitment to either "good" or "bad" influence peer groups (depending on what has occurred in the Directional Phase). As described above, however, the emphasis of this research is on within-group processes which affect gang membership, with all participants drawn from a

population having adhered to bad influence processes. As such, processes linked to

commitment to a "good" influence group are described only tangentially at best.

Thematic Content.

Figure 4.5 displays the emergent themes which fit within the categories comprising the

Maintenance Phase of the Core Gang Member Model.
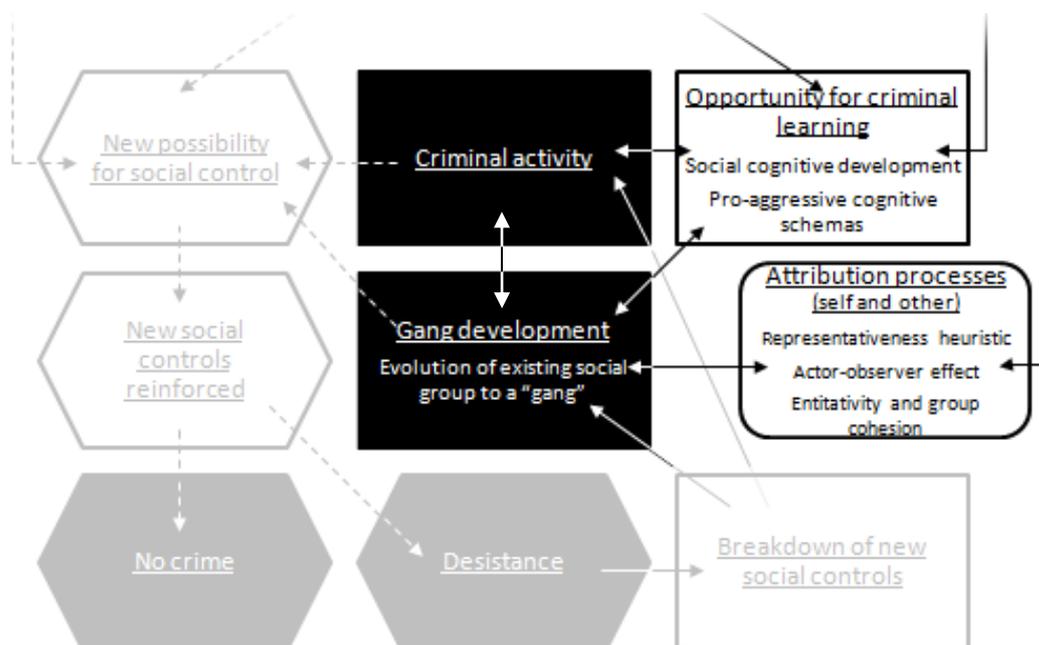
Figure 4.5.   The Core Maintenance Phase.

Opportunities for criminal learning.

Having committed to their "bad" group of friends, an individual's exposure to opportunities

for criminal and anti-social learning is enhanced (as per Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, &

Chard-Wierschem, 1993, and Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, & McDuff, 2005). That is, having

grown progressively more attached to their anti-social peers over a period of time, they will

have increasingly engaged in anti-social and delinquent activities already, but their new, full commitment to the group will see a significant rise in commitment to criminal opportunities that are available to them. Commitment will also then see a significant rise the amount and severity of crimes they commit. Simultaneously, their exposure to opportunities for social control (via the influence of pro-social peers) is inhibited (as per Battin-Pearson et al.'s, 1998, findings, and Pyrooz et al.'s, 2013, key theory underpinning the embeddedness concept).

In committing to, and identifying with, the group in which anti-social norms are salient, the individual can be said to be a fully-fledged member of a deviant peer group, and both behaviour (in the form of engagement in delinquent and criminal behaviour), and social cognitive and intra-group processing (in the form of the reinforcement of adherence to anti-social and criminal norms), changes for the worse. Both effects are bi-directional in that: as opportunities for criminal learning increase, engagement in criminal behaviour (and adherence to criminal norms) increases; and as engagement in criminal behaviour (and adherence to criminal norms) increases, so too do opportunities for criminal learning.

Gang development.

Opportunities for criminal learning and actual criminal behaviour also influence gang development. The term "gang development" is used here in place of "gang membership" as used in Unified Theory to highlight the dynamic nature of gang affiliation. A common aspect of the participating Cores' gang experience was that none actively set out to be a gang member – that is, none could at any point have been described as "wannabe" gang members (see Hagedorn, 1998; Spergal, 1995). There was no single moment where Cores went from non-gang member to gang member by joining or being selected into a gang - rather, the gang gradually evolved out of the existence of the bad influence group to which they already

belonged. This is consistent with both Thrasher's (1927) original conception of the gang and more recent empirical work (e.g. Delaney, 2014). That is, Cores all belonged to long-term deviant peer groups which, over a period time and often originating from typical childhood playgroups (with JW, CH, and CJ in particular citing the initial play dimension of their deviant peer groups), evolved to fit the (Eurogang) definition of a street gang. This evolution may have been; 1) voluntary (i.e. initiated by group members) or involuntary (i.e. in response to the labelling of the group as a gang by outside sources, e.g. police); 2) explicit (i.e. members were aware that the group's evolution) or implied (i.e. members were categorised as gang members before they really knew it themselves); and 3) accepted (i.e. members were happy for their group to have gang status) or questioned (i.e. members did not believe that the term gang could legitimately be applied to their group).

Ongoing social cognitive processes influence individual members' responses to this newly acquired status of gang member, as they come to question aspects of self and others.

Attribution processes.

Based on objective measures (i.e. the Eurogang definition), in all cases the deviant peer group came to meet the criteria for being defined as a gang. Given that Cores described their gangs as being a natural progression of the anti-social peer groups to which they already belonged, subjectively speaking, classifications of the group's gang status were fluid in the eyes of their members. Depending upon the perceived cohesion and entitative state within the group, sometimes they would self-nominate as being in a gang and sometimes they would not.

Among those who felt that their group was not a gang (e.g. LS, JS, and CJ), concessions were made that it was likely that others (such as other gangs, police, community residents, or passers-by) would say that they were a gang. The most commonly cited means by which they felt gang-hood was attributed to them was by their clothing. JS described it as:

"They're dress code and all that... that image, you know what I'm saying, and the impression that they put out. I guarantee if I was to go out in a suit and tie and walk around I wouldn't get stopped. Maybe because I wear and tracksuit..."

JS went on to explain his frustration with this, stating that *"they say never judge a book by its cover you know what I'm saying but that's exactly what they're* [public and police] *doing..."* JW went further, and was particularly scornful of those he saw as judging him:

"People look at us and sort of think, that, bad boys like. They look at us, in a certain way, and like, they feel sorry for us sort of like. But I feel sorry for them 'cos they don't know that, what they're they thinking about... just stereotyping. Like, obviously, most people walking, they'll look at us, they'll think... we have no education... they think... um, either our family or our mother our parents are not supportive like, not like, working you know or whatever, [to] *keep me, off the roads, or... they just think that, automatically they're going, to a place, to cause violence, random violence... People like that, I just hate them bruv, don't give a fuck about them people... just stereotype..."*

There were still others who would admit to their group having all the self-defined characteristics of a gang, but would find ways of arguing that the group was not in fact a gang while maintaining that other groups with the same characteristics were a gang (e.g. JW, DB, and TH). For instance, TH commented that:

"We are kind of a gang init, but that, we ain't like. My views on a gang is... people that like go off into different areas like, causing commotion like, stabbing people stuff like that. Obviously we don't, but like we have done that, but we've done that for reasons init... like I think that gangs just go there for like, nothing."

The attribution of gang-hood to the group, by both themselves and by others, can, therefore, have a significant influence over the status, membership, activities, and group relations experienced by Cores. Indeed, as previously described, SL felt that his school's attribution of gang-hood to him, and his subsequent exclusion, was unfair, but that this then became the catalyst for his gang membership. Despite a self-confessed, strong commitment to a group of anti-social peers and engagement in gang-like activities, there was a reluctance among Cores to admit their objectively-identified status.

End of Maintenance Phase.

Strictly speaking, there is no definitive end to the Maintenance Phase. As per Unified Theory (Wood & Alleyne, 2010), having joined/found themselves in a gang, it is likely that Cores will either: 1) continue to associate with the gang and engage in criminal offending; 2) adhere to social controls and desist from gang membership and criminal activity for some time, before experiencing a breakdown of social controls and re-engagement in gang membership and criminal offending (effectively transferring them to Fringe membership); or 3) adhere to social controls and permanently desist from gang membership and criminal offending. However, given that at the time of their incarceration all participating Cores were still associated with their gangs, the current research can only speak to the first of these outcomes.

Model Summary and Conclusion

To conclude, a close examination of the lives of Core gang members who participated in this research revealed a number of important elements which contributed to placing them on a trajectory towards Core gang membership. While not intended as a validation study, it was nonetheless concluded that Unified Theory (Wood & Alleyne, 2010) offered an existing, reliable, and simple framework around which the themes and categories which emerged from GT analysis could be arranged. The key theme, or core category, around which many of the

other themes and categories revolved concerned an early commitment to (or affiliation with) both pro- and anti-social peers. Core gang members were shown to be exposed to a greater degree of pro-social influence and opportunities for social control than has generally been inferred from existing theories of gang membership *per se*. Further, in illustrating that potential Core gang members have access to multiple sources of varied influence, the process of peer selection is less limited, and highlights a greater role for individual, social cognitive, and group processes, than has previously been suggested. Instead, participating Core gang members would select peers across a number of groups, before opting to reject some and commit to others, and then work to maintain that commitment. However, in order to fulfil the aim of this thesis to examine differential gang membership and explain specific factors which might account for variable commitment to gangs, Core gang members can only provide half of the story. In the following chapter, a GT analysis of the interview data collected from Fringe gang members will be presented and a comparative model, the Fringe Gang Member Model, devised.

Chapter Five

Fringe Gang Members – Trigger, Maintenance, and Reactionary Factors

Having elaborated a framework capable of describing and explaining factors and processes which contributed to Core gang members' development, attention now turns to Fringes (defined as those who tend to drift in and out of gang activity: Klein, 1971; Klein & Maxson, 1989). As stated in Chapter Four, the principle item "*How would you describe your position in the group?*" (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993) was used to distinguish Core participants from Fringe.[85] In this case, the *less* integral the participant rated their position in the group, the more likely that they would be categorised as a Fringe.

This chapter presents analysis of the information provided by Fringes, similar to Chapter Four's analysis of Core data. Fringe data were also analysed using Grounded Theory (GT) methodology, to develop a framework[86] capable of explaining Fringe gang membership. As with the Core Gang Member Model, this Fringe Gang Member Model reflects the lives of those young people classified as Fringes and explains how they account for their (negative) associations and behaviours. However, unlike the relatively homogeneous Cores, Fringes presented a more complex range of issues. After briefly discussing their heterogeneity, participating Fringes' demographic details will be described, followed by an overview of the structure of the Fringe Model as a whole. Specific phases of the model will then be looked at in turn, detailing not only the structure but also the content of each category of the model and how they may explain Fringe membership. As per discussion of the Core Model, relevant

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[85] Again, other items (assessing description of their role within the group, closeness to other members, frequency with which they met, etc.) were also included to support evidence of their Fringe membership.

[86] While discussing factors which he believed contributed to gang membership, MS (a Fringe participant) commented that "*It just all links up, all links up*", suggesting that interactional theories and frameworks (as depicted by Thornberry, 1987, Wood & Alleyne, 2010, and the current thesis) may present the most ecologically valid accounts of gang membership.

quotes from interviewed participants will be presented as evidence to support the model's design.

Heterogeneity

As a category, Fringes vary in terms of their family, social, educational, and criminal backgrounds and, to a lesser extent, in their attitudes, beliefs, and social cognitive processing. Consistent with this, there was a rough correlation between the presence of these characteristics and the degree to which participants were gang-involved. Whilst all those included in this analysis met the criteria for Fringe membership, it was evident that some had closer ties to the gang than others, and correspondingly displayed a higher proportion of characteristics presented by Cores.

Therefore, a distinction was made within the Fringe cohort to preserve the heterogeneity of the category (i.e. since there was still a clear distinction between Cores and Fringes overall) whilst allowing for meaningful comparisons between participants to still be drawn:

1. Inner Fringes are those whose association with the gang is more limited than that of Cores, but who maintain a reasonably regular connection to the gang;
2. Outer Fringes are those who would traditionally be defined as peripheral gang members (i.e. those who tend to drift in and out of gang activity).

As Figure 5.1 shows, in adopting a three level structure of gang membership, the Fringe Model moves any proposed theory of differential gang membership closer to the concept of gang embededdness (Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Piquero, 2013). It also bears some similarity to the concentric-ring method of assessing gang embeddedness/centrality (e.g. Melde, Diem, & Drake, 2012).
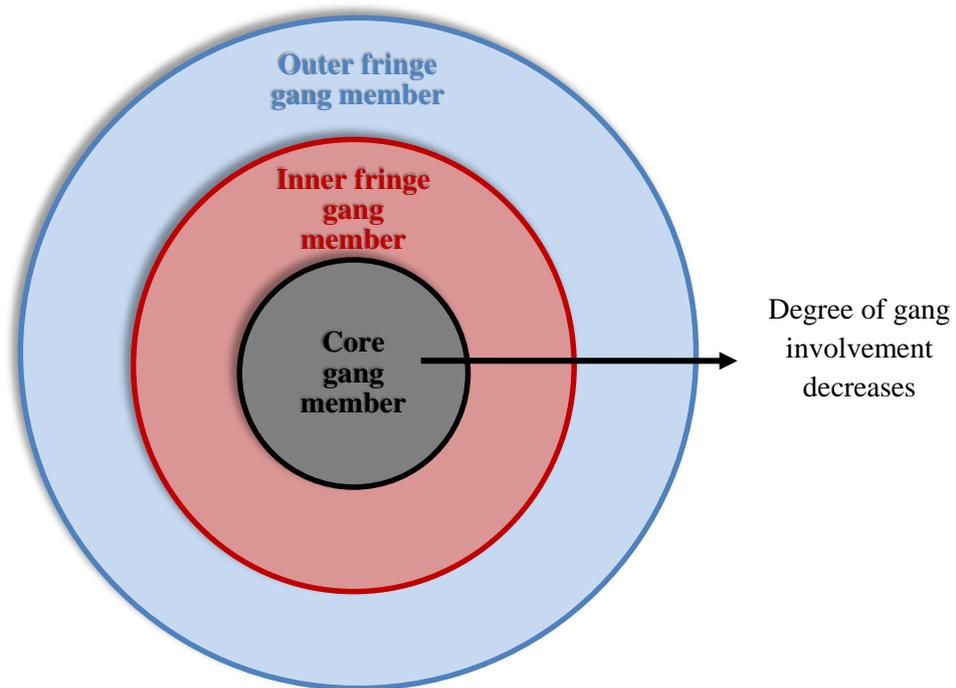
Figure 5.1.   The relationship between Core, Inner, and Outer Fringe membership

and level of involvement in gang-related activity

Fringe Gang Member Demographics

In total, ten participants were identified as being Fringes. Their mean age was 17.44 years

(SD = .635), ranging between 16.58 and 18.08 years. Two were White, five were Black, two

were Mixed Race, and one was Pakistani. Seven lived in the Greater London area, while

three lived elsewhere in the UK – one in a suburban town west of London, one in a suburban

town north of London, and one in a small city on the south coast. Their mean age at first

conviction was 14.28 years (SD = 1.30). Five were incarcerated for property offences (two of

which involved use of weapons), three for violent offences, one for drug and firearm

offences, and one for kidnap.

Six Fringes were identified as being Inner Fringes, based on the perceived extent of their involvement in gang-related activity. Their mean age was 17.53 years (SD = .636, ranging between 16.58 and 17.88 years. Two were White, three were Black, and one was Mixed Race. Four lived in the Greater London area, while two lived elsewhere in the UK – one in a suburban town north of London, and one in a small city on the south coast. Their mean age at first conviction was 14.08 years (SD = 1.281). Four were incarcerated for property offences (two of which involved use of weapons), one for violent offences, and one for kidnap.

Four Fringes were identified as being Outer Fringes, based on the perceived extent of their involvement in gang-related activity. Their mean age was 17.52 years (SD = .764), ranging between 16.58 and 18.12 years. Two were Black, one was Mixed Race, and one was Pakistani. Three lived in the Greater London area, while one lived in a suburban town just west of London. Their mean age at first conviction was 14.67 years (SD = 1.528). One was incarcerated for property offences, two for violent offences, and one for drug and firearm offences.

Table 5.1 displays individual demographic details and criminal history information for each Fringe. Table 5.2 displays information regarding individual Fringes' life experiences (i.e. their communities, their living arrangements and family backgrounds, educational histories, adopted lifestyles, contact with the care system, and drugs histories), as detailed by their Asset reports.

Table 5.1

Fringe Gang Member Demographic Details and Criminal Histories

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Location	Index Offence	Sentence	Previous Convictions	Previous Custodial Sentences
MS	17 years & 8 months	Mixed (White/Black Caribbean)	East London	Possession of a Firearm, & Cannabis	Section 91 Duration: 3 years	Yes From age: 15 years	None
VA	16 years & 8 months	Black (Black British)	North East London	Robbery with an Offensive Weapon	Unrecorded Duration: 3.5 years	Yes From age: 13 years	One
RS	18 years & 1 month	Black	South West London	Attempted GBH	DTO Duration: 12 months	Yes From age: 16 years	None
RZ	17 years & 3 months	White (White British)	Eastern England	Robbery	Section 91 Duration: 3.33 years	Yes From age: 16 years	None
BL	17 years & 11 months	Black (Black British)	West London	False Imprisonment & Blackmail	Unrecorded Duration: 7 years	Yes From age: 15 years	None
IK	17 years & 11 months	Pakistani	South East England	5 x Robbery & 2 x Attempted Robbery	Extended IPP Duration: 4 years	None From age: N/A	None
JM	16 years & 5 months	Black (Other)	North East London	Wounding with Intent	Unrecorded Duration: 2 years 1 month	Yes From age: 13 years	One
MB	17 years & 11 months	White (White European)	South East England	Assault	DTO Duration: 12 months	Yes From age: 14 years	Two
AM	17 years & 11 months	Black (Black British)	West London	Burglary in a Dwelling	DTO Duration: 14 months	Yes From age: 14 years	One
DY	16 years & 7 months	Mixed (White/Black Caribbean)	North London	Robbery & Opportunistic Attack	DTO Duration: 18 months	Yes From age: 12-13 years	Two

NOTE. All ages correct at time of interview. Participants presented in red are inner fringe members; those in blue are outer fringe. A Detention and Training Order (or DTO) is given to juvenile offenders who have been convicted of crimes warranting relatively short-term incarceration (e.g. less than two years); a Section 91 sentence is assigned when a juvenile offence is deemed serious enough to be dealt with at Crown Court (it can be treated as a juvenile or adult case and will carry a custodial sentence of over two years); a Section 226 is commonly known as an Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (or IPP), and are assigned for individuals who are deemed to be a danger to the public (and thus should not be released until the Parole Board determine they are no longer a risk) but whose crimes are not serious enough to merit a normal life sentence.

Table 5.2

Asset Information for Fringe Gang Members

	Asset Details	MS	VA	RS	RZ	BL	IK	JM	MB	AM	DY
Hometown	Signs of drug dealing		••								
	Signs of racial tension							✕			
	Lack of transport access available										
	Lack of age appropriate facilities available										
Living arrangements	Deprived household (i.e. dependant on benefits, free school meals, etc.)		•	•			•	•		•	
	Unsuitable household										
	Living with known offender										
	Disorganised household (i.e. has many people coming and going residentially)		•			•			•		
	Absconded/stayed away from home										
Family Relations	Family involvement in criminal activity in previous 6 months		••		•		•		••••	•	
	Family involvement in drug abuse or alcoholism in previous 6 months										
	Inconsistent supervision										
	Lack of interest shown						•				
	History of witness to abuse										
	History of witness to domestic violence		•								
School/College	Lack of attachment to education		✕	✕	•	•	•	✕	•	•	
	Negative attitude to education					•	•				
	Experienced bullying as victim					•					
	Experienced bullying as perpetrator				•	•	•		•	•	
	Poor relations to teachers					•					
	Poor parental interest in school										
Lifestyle	Participates in reckless activity	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Has nothing to do in spare time		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Lacks age appropriate friends			•							
	Lacks an adequate legitimate personal income		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	
	Associates with predominantly pro-criminal peers		•••	•••	•••	••	•	••	••	••	
	Lacks non-criminal friends			•							
Care History		•		•							
Drug History		•	•	•				•			

NOTE: The presence of risk factors in individual participants' lives are indicated by a dot. The presence of a cross indicates that while Asset information was available for the participant, information regarding that/those specific risk factors were not. Columns presented in red indicate the participant is an inner fringe gang member; columns presented in blue indicate the participant is an outer fringe gang member.

The Fringe Gang Member Model

Figure 5.2 displays an overview of the Fringe Gang Member Model, based upon the GT analysis of Fringes' interview responses. In terms of its structure and major themes, the model bears similarity to the Core Gang Member Model described in Chapter Four. As such, the Fringe model can also be divided into three sections, although, given observed differences between Cores and Fringes (to be discussed in this, and the next, chapter), the overarching themes of each section (i.e. Trigger, Directional, and Maintenance factors) differ slightly from those of the Core Model.

Instead, the Fringe Model is divided into: 1) the Trigger Phase; 2) the Maintenance Phase; and 3) the Reactionary Phase. Each will be considered in turn, initially focusing on the structural features of the phase, followed by the thematic content in each phase. Where relevant, attention will be given to emerging themes which appear general to Fringes and those which appear specific to Inner or Outer Fringe membership.

Phase One – Triggers.

Structural features.

As per the Core Model, Fringe Trigger factors are those underlying features (environmental, social, individual, and social cognitive) which may influence propensity to join a gang or social group. Structurally, the Trigger Phase is identical to the analogous phase of the Core Model described in Chapter Four.[87] However, and as will become evident below, there are some significant differences between the Core and Fringe Models in terms of thematic content within each Trigger factor.

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[87] i.e. personal characteristics interact with environmental and social factors experienced, thereby influencing social cognitive development and subsequent social cognitive processing. Social cognitive processes then influence multiple peer group selection.
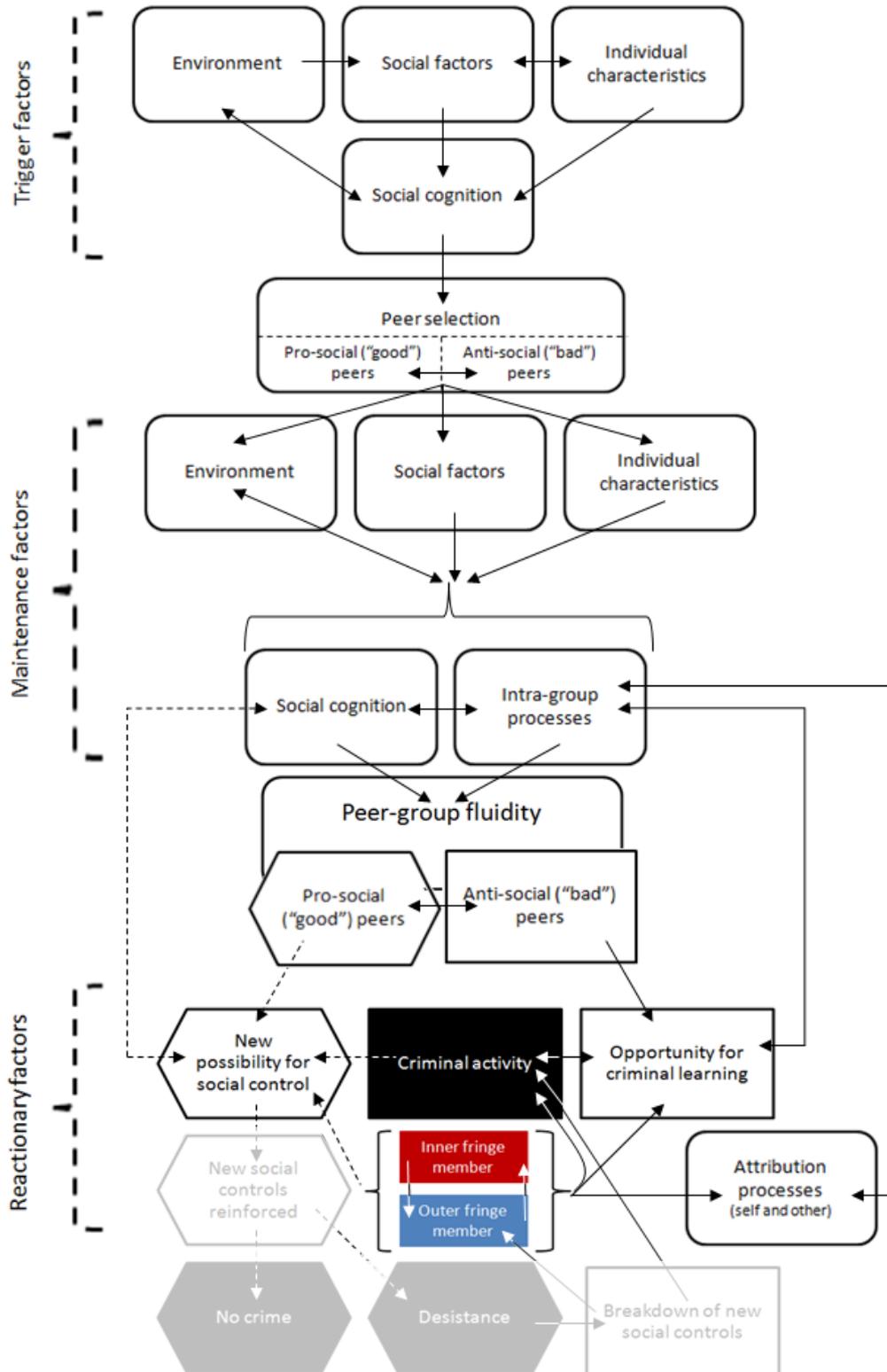
Figure 5.2. Structure of the Core Gang Member Model.[88]

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[88] The shading and shape of each box reflects similar processes to those described for Unified Theory (Figure 2.1). Faded boxes indicate Unified Theory processes which the current data were not able to speak to.

As with Cores, Fringes reported that, when selecting peers, they did not limit themselves to a single social group, but rather associated with two distinct social groupings (pro- and anti-social peer groups). Similarly, these groups were typically evaluated (for example by MS, RS, BL, VA, and RZ) in terms of their influence (i.e. positive or negative).[89] However, there were some subtle differences between Cores' and Fringes' characterisations of their multiple peer groups – namely:

- Pro-social peers were perceived as a collection of individuals who could potentially exert a positive influence (e.g. in balancing schoolwork with social activities). Unlike Cores, however, Fringes indicated that associations with this group were not limited to school hours;

- Anti-social peers were perceived as being a collection of individuals who could potentially exert a negative influence. Being rooted in the local community in which they were brought up and/or currently lived (with little-to-no association within school hours), these negative influences would tend to revolve around public loitering (or, in MS's words, "*road-riding*"), underage drinking and smoking (and relatively low-level drug use in some cases), and low-level crime and delinquency.

For instance, MS describes how different groups brought about different activities:

"*I used to play football... I'd come out of my road and go to the park, play football, and once I stopped playing football I'd go out, meet other friends and cause trouble with them... do silliness really, like stealing bikes, or doing little teenage mischievous things. But the group of friends that were on my road I wouldn't play football with...*"

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[89] Although the tendency to explicitly describe them as "good" or "bad" groups (as Cores did) was not as evident for Fringes.

Nonetheless, Fringes (RS in particular) indicated that there was some degree of interaction between their pro- and anti-social friends. That is, Fringes predominantly associated with pro-social peers during school hours, before meeting up with anti-social peers after school. Pro- and anti-social peers might then mingle for a brief time, because they both lived in the same area (e.g. RS and MS). However, pro-social peers would soon head home, leaving the Fringe to continue associating with predominantly anti-social peers. Fringes gave no indication of any tension between these two sets of peers, but neither did they suggest why their perceived pro- and anti-social peers opted not to associate with one another more than they did. This does, however, support the notion that not all young people who live in gang-affiliated environments necessarily become gang members themselves, even if they interact with each other.

Thematic content.

Figure 5.3 displays the emergent categories and themes which fit within, and may be considered facets of, the broader categories/factors comprising the Trigger Phase of the Fringe Gang Member Model.

Environmental themes.

Three themes emerged from the data which were characteristic of environmental influences which Fringes were exposed to. These themes concerned: 1) the transient nature of their lives before gang membership; 2) the state of the neighbourhood(s) that they most strongly identified with; and 3) the (relative lack of) structure in their family.

- Transience.

Fringes experienced a relatively large degree of upheaval in their lives, with only one (RZ) having always lived in the same area. The remaining Inner Fringes had either regularly
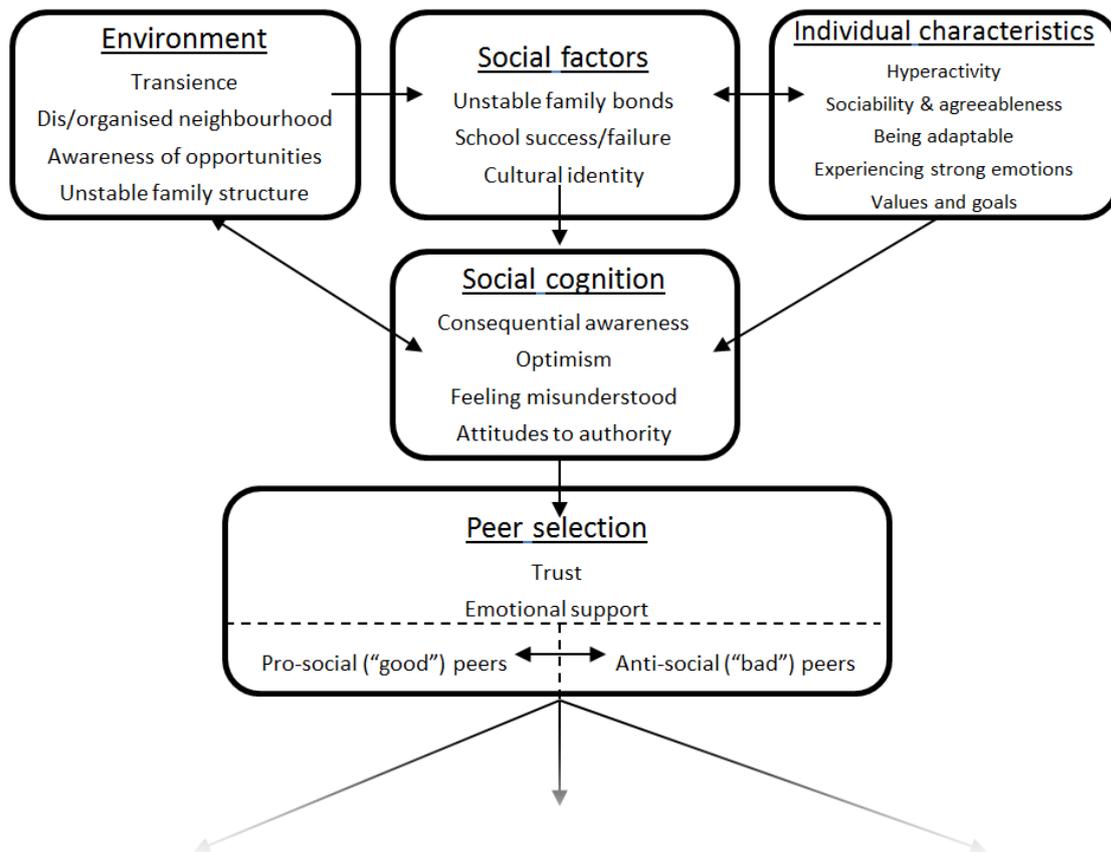
Figure 5.3.   The Fringe Trigger Phase.

moved around within the UK (e.g. MB) or had spent a significant proportion of time living

outside of the UK (both VA and AM lived in Jamaica during early to mid-childhood, for

seven and five years respectively). BL, while having been born and lived most of his life in

the UK, had spent two separate periods of time living abroad (in St. Lucia and Canada). The

Outer Fringes showed either transience within a relatively confined area (e.g. MS and RS,

who had both lived in several locations within the Greater London area), had been born

outside the UK and moved here in mid- to late childhood (e.g. IK, originally from Pakistan),

or both (e.g. JM, originally from Jamaica, and who had subsequently moved around within

the Greater London area a great deal).

As such, Fringes' exposure to localised environmental conditions was generally quite fragmented, thus influencing a number of subsequent factors. For instance, Fringes displayed a relative lack of attachment to the areas in which they, their gang affiliations, and their offending behaviours, were principally based. As such, they found the idea of gang territorial rivalries to be "*ridiculous.*" Evaluations of the principle areas were also mixed, and their enculturation into community norms was fairly limited. For those who had spent a proportion of their lives living, or who had been born, outside of the UK, issues of culture could especially influence socialisation experiences, adding an additional impediment[90] to their ability to successfully integrate into the wider area, or specific peer groups.

- Neighbourhood organisation.

As with Cores, Fringes' depictions of community life (specifically the communities in which they currently lived/principally identified with, and in which their offending behaviour was principally located) suggested that there was at least some degree of social organisation present. However, Fringes' evaluations of the stability and cohesiveness of the home community were mixed and they showed a generally ambivalent attachment to the area. Some Fringes described having relatively strong/positive community associations (e.g. RZ, BL, AM, and MS), others were more ambivalent about other residents (e.g. RS), while others presented a mixed picture. For instance, IK described knowing his neighbours ("*I know who they are though, I know like, what they do and all that... not just faces*") but also that people generally preferred to keep themselves to themselves. MB, on the other hand, suggested that there were strong/positive associations among some residents while the rest would also "*keep themselves to themselves.*" In term of neighbourhood evaluation, the most commonly cited sentiment was that their home areas were "*alright*" (e.g. VA, BL, RS, and MB), while others

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[90] With JM and IK, for example, citing language barriers initially affecting (e.g.) their school and peer experiences.

were somewhat more positive (e.g. describing areas as "nice": RZ, AM, JM). MS described

his area as being busy, overcrowded, and not somewhere he would like to spend his life,

while IK described his area as simply "*normal.*" Several Fringes (e.g. MB, RS, and AM) also

explicitly linked their home areas with the onset of their offending behaviour. For instance,

RS stated that "*...there's a bad side of* [home area] *and there's the good side of* [home area].

I live in the good side."[91]

Fringes gave the impression of their home areas as having average-to-high crime rates

(e.g. MS – "*Like on a scale of one to 10? I'd say at least like nine*"), and crimes generally

were serious (and varied) in nature (e.g. RZ – "*Robberies, burglaries, drug dealing...*

weapons everywhere... just loads of different little things"). BL commented that there was

"[A] *bit more than what's normal... I wouldn't say too much... the main crime, all kinds of*

things were happening" while MB said "*nah, but when there is like... it'll be a serious one*

like..." Others suggested that crime was specifically associated with smaller areas within the

wider community. For instance, RS described how "*I saw pretty much everything, when I*

was younger... people getting beaten up, drugs blah blah blah" (a sentiment echoed by JM,

MS, and VA), but that there was no crime in the area he subsequently moved to. Similarly,

AM commented how:

> "*...certain parts of the area there was crimes, certain parts there wasn't. But, on one side*
>
> *you got the park, the most knife crime and drug crime like in the park, and people selling*
>
> *drugs and people getting stabbed and that...*"

However, RZ highlights a potential discrepancy between the typical resident and those

initiated into the local criminal culture, suggesting that criminal awareness is dependent on

perceptual salience:

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[91] AM also described coming from a good (or, to use his word, "*posh*") area with little police presence.

"...there's a lot of crime, but, it's not really seen, if you know what I'm saying like... if you was just a normal person walking down the road you wouldn't think there was a crime going on right there, it'd just look, like, [casual]. *But... 'cos you know what's going on, you see it everywhere..."*

In terms of the presence (and perception) of social facilities in the neighbourhood, Fringes' experiences were similar to those of the Cores. While Fringes were objectively aware of access to social facilities nearby, few were used, leading to subjective perceptions that there was little to do. As with the Cores, this perception was often driven by a sense that they had outgrown or had become bored with frequent use of the available resources. RZ described how he felt he was too old to use the local youth club and that *"if you ain't going to college or doing anything like that there ain't really much to do."* AM and MB both described having nothing to do despite having a range of resources nearby. MB, in particular, had access to facilities which many other participants (particularly Cores) cited as examples of desirable but missing from their own neighbourhoods:

"...after a certain amount of time there's nothing to do though so, you just get bored round there just don't do things... so you've got the beaches, you've got the fair... ice skating, go-karting erm... [local landmark] *Tower... all stuff like but, obviously, well I've done probably all of it and then, after a while it just, you go and do the same things over and over it just gets boring... there's a group in there like, called* Motivate*, like they're good and that 'cos, they take you to Wales camping and like, they they just take you to do all this climbing and velodrome cycling and that like. So obviously that's good, but then, that's probably one of the only good things about* [hometown]*"*

MB further described how he and his friends would often travel to nearby towns in search of more enticing activities. This sentiment was echoed by MS, who used the proceeds from his

drug-running activities to buy himself a car (despite only being 15 years old) to get out of his relatively deprived (in social-terms) neighbourhood.

Youth clubs and facilities featured heavily in Fringes' beliefs about having access to positive social resources. JM, consistent with arguments put forward by Cores, highlighted the need for young people's input so that *appealing* opportunities could be developed, which, for him, included access to music facilities and youth clubs with safe environments (i.e. somewhere "*where they don't have to watch their back every minute*"). IK had such places (both permanent such as parks, shops, and cinemas, and temporary, such as a nearby funfair), located in a local park which contained a bowling alley, pool tables, arcade machines etc. This was particularly popular with the local young people – IK would often go there (especially in the winter), although there were age restrictions on certain days which prohibited his attendance.[92] Similar to his description of moving from a high-crime (hometown A) to low-crime (hometown B) area, RS also described a difference in terms of access to resources:

"[There is] *more to do in* [hometown B]. *'Cos I'm older now there's better opportunities in* [hometown B]. *Like if I lived in* [hometown A]*, I'd probably be in and out of prison, 'cos* [hometown A's] *really bad... they needed like youth clubs like, role-models to have, but they didn't... in* [hometown B] *they have loads of stuff to keep people off the streets, but just like there's nothing* [in hometown A]"

However, BL[93] took the opposite view:

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[92] On such occasions "*...then we'd just go in the park, sit on the bench, just crowd the bench (laughs), just talk, chat shit and erm... and just smoke sometimes... [If] there is things to do, it's on the high street init... just like to go there a lot at night 'cos, er, I don't really know why but, like to go there...*"

[93] Who was fairly unforthcoming when asked whether there were any local facilities he would use, merely saying "*I guess you could say so... [I] just go out with my friends, the usual really.*"

"All these youth clubs and stuff like that don't think any of that would help. Why would that stop anyone doing crime? It's a place to go but when it closes it closes... In a way it could even make crime worse 'cos you're just gonna have loads of criminals together really..."

As such, a mixed picture of neighbourhood organisation is presented. Consistent with Cores, Fringes appear to infer some social disorganisation in their principle environments[94], but that these environments were not approaching a state of full social collapse. Thus, the hypothesis presented in Chapter Four, that the local environment should have at least some social organisation for gang membership to occur (Katz & Schnebly, 2011), is strengthened. With such variation in Fringes' depictions of their environment, Fringe membership could be linked to either: 1) residing in socially organised communities which provide conditions for gangs to emerge but also opportunities for social control; 2) residing in a more socially disorganised community, placing restrictions on the ability for a gang to fully emerge (which may result in gangs composed of solely Fringe members); and/or 3) Fringe members' transience limits the extent to which they are able to integrate fully into either the community or a gang.

- (Relative lack of)[95] family structure.

Family structures varied greatly and, in many cases, were consistent with the disorganised/broken home conditions stereotypically associated with gang membership.[96] Among the Inner Fringes, RZ was the exception as he grew up at home with both (married) parents, and four siblings. BL's parents were separated – he lived with his mother and

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[94] At least in terms of awareness of local crime, community bonds, and social resources. Other characteristics of social disorganisation (such as ethnic heterogeneity, poverty, and population turnover) were rarely touched upon by Fringes, perhaps because their transience and relatively recent arrival in the communities meant that they had little awareness of such issues.

[95] In the sense that Fringe's family structures are comparatively more unstable than those of the Cores.

[96] i.e. see. Eitle, Gunkel, and van Gundy (2004), Hill, Howell, Hawkins, and Battin-Pearson (1999), Klemp-North (2007), LeBlanc and Lanctot (1998), Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina (2006), and Thornberry, Krohn, Liozotte, Smith, and Tobin (2003).

brother, but saw his father as many as four times a week. Both his parents worked with special needs children, and his mother had previously been a foster carer. AM lived principally with his mother, step-father, and three brothers, although had also lived with his father (when he met him for the first time at age 11) in Jamaica for some years. MB's family was relatively stable, comprising his mother, step-father, three brothers, and three sisters. However, MB had no contact with his real father, who was violent to the family – MB's transience resulted from fleeing whenever his father located where they were living. VA was raised by his grandmother, but lost contact when she returned to Jamaica at the start of VA's prison sentence.[97] He had no contact with his father, and little with his mother or sisters.

Regarding the Outer Fringes, IK lived at home with his elderly father, (third) step-mother, a baby half-sister, and an older, developmentally disabled half-sister.[98] He had three older half-brothers, who each lived in a different house on the same street as him. IK's mother lived in Pakistan, but they maintained regular contact by telephone, and he visited as often as possible. JM did not know his father, and contact with his mother was variable (a situation he did not see as out of the ordinary, compared to his friends) – she abandoned him (for an undisclosed reason) when he was eight years old, and he spent eight months sleeping rough. JM had older brothers and sisters but "*...they're too involved in their own lives to worry about* [me] *'cos they've got so much bills to pay, and they've got their own kids to bring up and all that.*" As such, he was eventually taken in by a friend's parents.[99] JM did, however, eventually reconnect, and live, with his mother again. RS lived with his mother (a

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[97] Although he did not begrudge her for leaving, saying "*I was like... good luck* [to her] *init, it's like stress free init.*"

[98] IK was not pleased with his family structure: "*...and my dad he's like... he must've reached 70 by now yeah... and that lady, step mum, she's old enough to be his daughter... this is what I what I think is messed up, my disabled sister, she's 42 yeah, and my step-mum she's er, in her late 30s... I don't know what's going through my dad's head but, to me, that's completely wrong...*"

[99] For which JM continued to feel deep gratitude and a sense that he "*owe*[d] *them.*"

senior professional at a London hospital), sister, and nephew. His parents separated before he was born, but his father lived only a few minutes' walk away and they regularly visited each other. His father had remarried, and had two daughters. Finally, MS lived with his single mother, but had contact with his father (and half-brother) who lived nearby, and regularly visited his grandmother who lived away from his area. He described himself as coming from a "*good family.*"

Therefore: only one of the ten Fringes came from a (biological) two-parent household; three came from two-parent households with one biological and one step-parent (with variable contact with the "absent" biological parent); three came from single-parent households (although maintaining contact with the "absent" parent and their step-families); two came from households with a (neglectful) single-mother; and one was raised by a single-grandmother.

Consistent with the hypothesis suggested in Chapter Four that the relative stability of Cores' families may allow them to commit more fully to peer groups, it is possible that the comparatively reduced stability in Fringes' families may lead them to experience difficulty with commitment to peer groups (i.e. due to lack of experience with stable groups and previous socialisation into unstable groups). Further, while by no means a perfectly linear trend, the pattern of family stability is edging towards Inner Fringes displaying more stable family traits (consistent with Cores) than Outer Fringes. This suggests that the degree to which an individual embeds within a peer set may be positively correlated with the stability of their family background, although more data from Inner versus Outer Fringe members would be required to confirm this. As described for the Trigger Phase (social factors) of the Core Gang Member Model, however, it is posited that *(emotional) bonds and attachment within a family group may be as, if not more,* influential than the structure of the family environment, and this may be just as true for the Fringes...

Social themes.

Two themes emerged from the data which were characteristic of the social influences on participants. These concerned: 1) the strength and valence of bonds and relationships within the family group; and 2) the individual's school record.

- Family bonds.

Continuing the theme of the influence of family on the path to gang membership, a great deal of variation existed in the strength of Fringes' family bonds. Roughly speaking, the more unstable the family environment, the more unstable were the bonds between family members, and thus they were more likely to be Outer Fringes.

Given the apparent stability in (Inner Fringe) RZ's family environment when compared to other Fringes, it is not surprising that he appeared to be the most satisfied with his family relationships. He described strong, positive bonds with his parents who, despite being disappointed in his actions (many of which they only discovered following his arrest), continued to support him. He was even pleased at being electronically tagged and put on a pre-sentence curfew because he could then "*...go home* [and] *spend more time, play about with my little brothers and that,* [which] *brought us like a bit more closer. We've always been close but they get to see more of me then.*" AM described being close to his mother and siblings (despite having moved out of the family home), but having a strained relationship with his step-father. He did, however, describe a motivation to improve relations, with his step-father offering to help AM find work on his release.[100] AM also formed a strong connection with his father while they lived together in Jamaica. When his father passed away

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[100] AM's step-father ran a building company and, given that he was working towards gaining qualifications in carpentry and bricklaying during his time in prison, AM was keen to accept the offer of work.

unexpectedly, AM was deeply affected by the loss.[101] Neither MB, nor BL, nor VA were

particularly evaluative about their family lives. MB had also moved out of the family home

prior to his conviction but maintained contact – he was acutely aware that his younger brother

saw him as a role-model,[102] and described dropping everything to help if/when his brother

was ever in trouble or being bullied. The most important thing for MB about his release was

being with his family again, since he did not "*...want to be away from them any longer... I've*

been away from them too long..." BL simply stated that he and his mother had the "*...best*

relationship.", although he also revealed that they were quite distant, not doing much or

spending much time together. VA simply said that he and his sisters "*...don't get on too*

well." This is not surprising since VA had been convicted of assaulting one of them. Asset

information provided more details of VA's family relations, noting that he cared deeply for

his grandmother (indeed he seemed particularly offended that prosecutors tried to "*make out*

like she's lying" when she provided him with an alibi), and had a strained relationship with

his mother (a persistent drug user, and the reason why he maintained a hatred for drugs and

drug users).

Outer Fringes showed even greater variation in family bonds than did Inner Fringes.

IK had a particularly troubled relationship with his father, describing a complete lack of

emotional connection between them and an inability to understand one another. IK was

scared of his father (who regularly hit him), and he also disapproved of his father's latest

marriage (although "*I don't wanna say to* [him] *'cos I don't want to be rude*"). IK displayed

an apparent jealousy of young people with "normal" parents:

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[101] AM described a belief that it was his father's death which prompted an escalation in his offending – his immediate reaction upon learning of his death was to go out and commit an (undisclosed) crime.

[102] As such, MB, his mother and step-father concocted a cover story as to why he was no longer around, to keep the truth of his prison sentence from his little brother.

"...like, couple of normal parents yeah, you see them go out once in a while, have dinner and

that, or, you see a dad and mum in a pub with their child or, just watching them play in the

park... my dad's never ever done that [nervous laugh] *literally never ever."*

This prompted IK to escape his house as often as possible.[103] The nature of the family bonds

in IK's immediate household upset him, especially when compared to his experiences when

he would visit his mother in Pakistan, describing her as "*...a normal mum basically – she*

shows love, we talk about a lot of stuff, so I can be honest with her, and just, a normal

relationship with her..." As described previously, JM was abandoned by his mother and

forced to sleep rough when he was eight years old. This obviously severely impacted their

relationship: "*Me and my mum's bond is just, kaput really init, 'cos she was not there at all*

for me, when I was younger..." This feeling extended to the wider family (i.e. his brothers

and sisters), and he questioned why he should care about them when they didn't care enough

about him to take him in when he needed them.[104] Like IK, JM shows some jealousy of those

with more traditional family backgrounds:

"*'Cos to me, I think... the way how I grew up was totally different to almost everyone in this*

place [i.e. prison]*, like everyone had their mum's around, everyone grew up with their mum's*

init. Every day I hear people talking about their mum's and that, but really, I don't I don't

talk about my mum that much 'cos our bond is not that strong..."

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[103] He did, however, feel some connection to, and responsibility for, his elder, disabled sister, describing how she used to look after him and how as he has got older he wanted to do the same for her.

[104] Consistent with his feeling of owing his friend's family for taking him in, JM appears to value those who support him and does not value those who do not. Regarding his own family, as a child he would often think "*ah, what's happening, like, why's everyone left me?*"

RS and MS, meanwhile, described positive family bonds, with no indication of (persistent[105])

neglect. RS was deeply appreciative of the advice and support his mother had given him

throughout his life, and in particular for her decision, for his benefit, to move the family away

from a high-crime area. He also had a healthy relationship with his step-mother, calling her

regularly from prison to ask after his half-sisters. At the time of interview, RS was scheduled

for release within the week and he was looking forward to being back in the family

environment:

> *"...I rang my mum,* [she was] *like "*Ah *[RS]* you need to come home, your nephew's being
>
> bad*"... and I'll speak to my nephew, he's cussing in his baby language, can't even*
>
> *understand him, and I'm like "*yeah coming home Tuesday, can't wait blah blah blah*"... days*
>
> *just drag, can't wait."*

Finally, MS felt that he had a good relationship with his mother and step-family, although

described drifting from them somewhat when he "...*started doing my foolishness.*" He was

protective towards them and this influenced his behaviour. While he did not believe any of

his family were vulnerable, he would be concerned if they were out in certain areas

(specifically citing concern for his mother when out shopping) and would call them to make

sure they were alright. MS displayed a strong belief that it was the area in which he was

raised which influenced his later offending behaviour, and that his family were a protective

factor from (potentially enhanced) offending:

> *"In my area there's kids that um come out at 11 o'clock, little year 7's and they're all out.*
>
> *When I was that age, even though I was kind of bad, my mum wouldn't let me out. Even*
>
> *though I was a bad guy, I was quite troublesome, my mum wouldn't let me out - I had that*
>
> *little bit more discipline."*

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[105] Asset information describes a short, though significant, period of time when RS was neglected by his mother, who was mourning her father's death.

MS followed this up by commenting how:

"I'll be in that area, that environment, and then I might go up to my Gran's for the weekend,

in a good environment, and I'll be sitting there and my cousin, he can speak French fluently,

sit there and like see the difference straight away..."

As with Cores, it is possible to visualise the interaction between the stability of the family

environment and the strength of family bonds for participating Fringes (see Figure 5.4). The

red-shaded area represents those family environmental and social conditions which may be

more conducive to producing an Inner Fringe gang member, while the blue-shaded areas

represent conditions which may be more conducive to producing an Outer Fringe gang

member. Coming from a background of reduced-stability and moderately-weak family bonds

would appear to put young people at greatest risk of Inner Fringe gang membership. Outer

Fringe membership may emerge from relatively stable and strongly bonded family groups or

from relatively unstable and weakly bonded family groups. For the former pattern, such

conditions (via enhancing socialisation skills) can promote the potential for gang membership

to occur, although typically these would be considered protective factors. As for Core JW, it

may be that the young people here experience significant pull in two different directions (i.e.

towards the family and towards peers and [criminal] opportunities outside of the family), with

gang membership more likely if/when the pull of peers (slightly) exceeds the pull of the

family. For the latter pattern, the experience of growing up in an unstable, weakly bonded

environment may stunt development of socialisation skills, impeding ability to socialise into

outside groups, and thus restricting such young people to the outer fringes. Future research

quantifying both family stability and bond strength is required to verify the accuracy of this
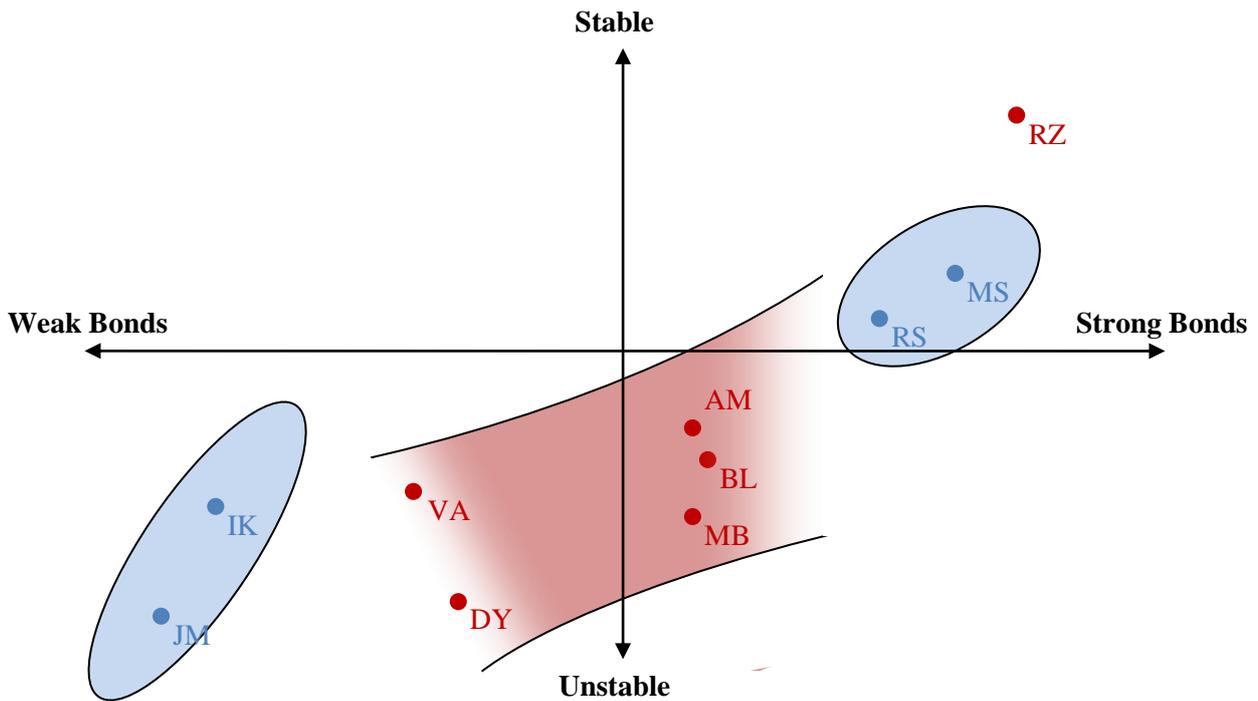
predicted interaction.

Figure 5.4.   Using family stability and bond strength interactions to predict Fringe gang

membership

- Academic records.

There was a great deal of variance in participating Fringes' school histories. This roughly

translated into a split between Inner and Outer Fringes, whereby Inner Fringes' school

records bore more resemblance to Cores than did Outer Fringes.[106]

Regarding Inner Fringes, MB attended four secondary schools (expelled from each for

fighting and/or threatening violence) before attending college until his incarceration. His

impression of educational experiences was generally positive, however, the social aspects

were equally important.[107] AM spent most of his secondary school years living in Jamaica,

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[106] However, as described in Chapter Four for the Cores, caution must be taken when considering Fringes'
school evaluations given the possibility of hindsight biases.

[107] MB was dismayed to learn upon starting his third placement that there were only two girls in the entire
school.

but returned to the UK at the start of Year 11 (age 15). He was particularly positive about the time he spent in school, especially when given the opportunity to be creative, such as in Drama and Design and Technology classes. BL was fairly vague about his time at school (his only stated positive as "*being in that environment*"), ultimately viewing it simply as something he just had to get on with. He started college after finishing mainstream education and passing all his GCSEs, but was excluded after only one week. The college was situated in a "rival" area, and it was decided that his presence was too much of a problem for the college. Finally, while RZ did not mention his schooldays at all, he did reveal that he attended college. He enjoyed the course and felt he was doing well, however, he also found it stressful. For the duration of his time at college he was under curfew[108], and described finding it difficult to manage his work within restrictions imposed on him.

IK stated that the reason he was brought to the UK was because of better educational opportunities compared to Pakistan. However, they were opportunities that were not fully taken:

"*I got on alright but* [nervous laugh]... *did cause a lot of trouble... the education, like GCSE and that, I got it, it's just English I got a D* [nervous laugh]... *I reckon I could do I could've done better - I skived the lesson too many times, to be with friends and just smoke and just just mess around init, have a bit of fun...*"[109]

JM described his time in late primary, and throughout secondary, school as being "*tough*." This can partly be attributed to the instability in his home life, although problems with teachers also influenced this experience. For instance, having been born and raised in

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[108] He was required to be at home between 7pm and 7am. His college day started at 8.30am and finished at 5pm with a 45 minute journey between home and college – as such, time was tight. It was an obvious point of pride for RZ, however, that he never once breached his curfew.

[109] IK also states "*I was too dumb to realise what I was missing init*", again indicating the possible presence of hindsight bias.

Jamaica, he felt that his UK primary school teachers were trying to change him, by criticising his Patois accent and telling him he needed to be more English: "*I used to wile out when the teachers told me that. I used to get in trouble and that, I used to throw chairs...*" Further, JM was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), but not until after he had left mainstream education – as such he described his secondary school teachers as being unable to understand him ("*...they thought I was a gone wrong child*"). RS, who also had an ADHD diagnosis, had a generally positive attitude towards school, commenting "*I enjoyed school but... occasionally, occasionally... it depends, it just depends on the day. Everyone has their moods and that.*" Despite moving out of his old neighbourhood at the age of 13, RS opted to continue attending his old school (staying there through to completion), and thus had to commute every morning. Unlike many participating gang members, RS did not characterise the transition from primary to secondary school as being the turning point in his awareness of crime and gangs, but rather the transition from secondary school to college. Finally, MS describes himself as being troublesome in school and unwilling to focus on his classes – he attended multiple primary schools, although he stayed at secondary school to the end. Consistent with his belief that it was the area in which he grew up that influenced his bad behaviour, MS blamed his behaviour in school on the school being in that same area.

In Chapter Four, it was inferred that school success was seen by Cores as a possible protective factor against anti-social peer group and gang membership (or commitment), and school failure potentially nullified this protection. The experiences of Fringes appear to strengthen this assertion. Generally speaking, Fringes' academic histories were more positive than those of Cores, and, roughly speaking, the less committed they were to the gang (i.e. from Inner to Outer Fringe) the more positively they evaluated school. Thus, the heightened commitment to school and/or college shown by Fringes (compared to Cores) may well have helped protect them from further gang/criminal involvement.

Individual themes.

Four themes emerged from the data concerning individual characteristics possessed by (a majority of) Fringe participants. These themes concerned: 1) an evident need to keep active; 2) sociable and agreeable traits; 3) experiencing strong emotions; and 4) having values and (relatively set) goals.

- Needing to be active.

As for Cores, a common sentiment among the Fringes was that they liked to be active and had a low boredom threshold. As MS stated, "*You wouldn't catch me just sitting down, if I didn't have a reason to be out I'd* [still] *be out.*" The need for activity was most clearly demonstrated by MB.[110] He was explicit in his feelings about how he and his friends were loath to just sit around. As described above, of all the participants, MB had perhaps the best access to facilities and activities, but familiarity had bred his contempt, and it was only access to the specialist "*Motivate*" programme that continued to hold his interest. Consistent with the link explicitly made by the Cores (see Chapter Four) of a need to stay active and engaging in delinquency (and to their perceived lack of age-appropriate facilities), MB says:[111]

"*They need more things, like, 'cos we're all active and that, we like to do things like, don't just like to sit around and that, so they need to get more things for like, for, teenagers, to... I don't think the council and that really look at things for young people in that area 'cos, if they did I probably wouldn't be here* [i.e. prison]*, 'cos I'd probably be doing like, other stuff and that...*"

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[110] As with Core WM, he found access to local resources more limited after he started getting into trouble and found himself banned from them.

[111] As an example of something he and his friends would do when they were bored, MB describes how "*we'll just go chill in my mate's back garden like, shoot some pigeons or something...*"

VA also explicitly mentioned a need to keep busy (citing that he attended school/PRU simply because it got him out of the house) and his dislike of just sitting around. He also directly linked this to his criminal offending: "*That would make me do crime, sitting there would make me do crime. Thinking, "ah, this is boring." Crime's kinda fun! I ain't gonna lie to you, it's kinda fun.*" AM also cited crime's "fun-factor" as being one of his principle motivators. Crime provided an opportunity to do something exciting once he had either outgrown or grown weary of the resources and facilities provided locally (like MB above):

"*For me to stay out of trouble, I need to keep myself occupied init, like, 'cos me, I'm the type of guy, I'll be chilling on the area, there ain't nothing to do, I just think, well I'm gonna do something like init.*" [112]

Fun did not always equate to crime, however – AM repeatedly spoke of the need for his local council to put an adventure playground back in his community. RZ, as the general exception to the rule, did not give the impression of needing to be constantly engaged – he liked to have his time filled but was generally laid back. If boredom struck, his typical response would be to smoke weed, describing drug use as something he did when there was nothing else to do, rather than something he would actively go out of his way to participate in. [113] Similarly, BL did not mention his reaction to boredom or a need for persistent activity. However he was appreciative of the daily structure the prison gave him. [114]

As for the Outer Fringes, the need to remain engaged can be inferred as strong for RS and JM given their ADHD diagnoses. JM did not discuss needing this but he did, however,

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[112] One of AM's regrets at being in prison was that he was not free to participate in the August 2011 riots in London – he felt that being involved could have been one of the most exciting experiences of his life.

[113] As such, having experienced boredom in prison and being unable to smoke, RZ had found new coping strategies which he hoped to use in the future, thus reducing his drug use.

[114] Particularly compared to other prisons he had been in, which he described as either being left to mess about during structured activity or not being given the option to do anything.

comment that "*...the youth of today needs something to keep them occupied, you know. The youth of today are... like, short attention span basically. Things don't interest young people these days for long because we've been through so much.*" RS participated in several (typically pro-social) activities. For instance, at the time of his conviction he was a trainee youth worker at a local youth club. He also played semi-professional football although was fired following his arrest.[115] As such, RS was a strong proponent of community provisions designed to keep young people active:

"*Football 'cos... I know loads of people what's good at football, they can make a future with football. Um... drama schools, activities and schemes, youth clubs to get people off the street. But there's not enough youth clubs, not enough. And they need to go college as well.*"

- Sociability.

Fringes described having the ability and desire to function as part of a social group. To this end, they actively sought friendships and presented themselves (either naturally or by design) in a way as to appear more socially appealing. For example, RZ said "*...yeah, everyone I meet, I dunno I get on with everyone*", a sentiment shared (almost word-for-word) with RS and MS. Similarly, MB described how "*...I find it quite easy like* [to make friends]. *'Cos I often, talk to people... it's like, somebody's there, I I can talk to them*" while IK commented:[116]

"*Honestly, some random people. I don't even know how I meet these guys* [laughs]... *I've met people by them coming up to me and asking me "ah have you got a light?" or something, and then, I'd give them my light and I'd start having a conversation...*"

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[115] However, the youth club was a well-known hotspot for drug dealing and, as described in Chapter Two, membership of a sports team is not necessarily a protective factor against criminality and/or gang membership (Begg, Langley, Moffitt, & Marshall, 1996; cited in Booth, Farrell, & Varano, 2008).

[116] Both MB and IK then went on to recount stories of meeting new people in this way, who subsequently went on to become close friends.

IK also noted how such situations can be the beginnings of something greater: "*friendship, it just grows init. Once you hang out with one person, then like a couple of people, then their friends they join along init, and then you just kind of share that and just become friends...*"

Curiosity about (or an ability to connect with) others may be linked to the upheaval many Fringes described experiencing in early life. Such backgrounds may highlight the need to be adaptable, learning new techniques for better understanding and integrating into new environments. Describing moving from one area to another, JM stated:

"*It was just a whole different environment like... and obviously 'cos I was living in there and 'cos I'm not gonna be moving anywhere for a while you just have to become accustomed to it init, you just have to pick up what's going on like...*"

This is consistent with how Core gang member LW (hypothetically) described how joining a gang can be the best means of finding out about and integrating into the local community.

- Emotionality.

Particularly evident when examined in relation to Cores' relative lack of emotion (see Core Model, Trigger Phase – individual factors: fearlessness), Fringes were generally quite emotionally sensitive, if not in a greater willingness to open up about specific emotional events in their lives (e.g. the phrase "*but I don't care*" was often used after discussing obviously negatively-emotive topics[117]), then in a tendency to use emotive phrases and terminology. For instance, AM was very open when discussing his happiness at meeting and living with his father in Jamaica, and grief when his father later died. However, such emotions were appropriate to the situation, and he could be dismissive of others' emotions if he deemed them inappropriate. For instance, when discussing the circumstances surrounding

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[117] In much the same way as described for the Cores, this strategy may be a self-preservation tool – by trying to deny or minimise feeling emotions such as fear or disappointment (having described experiencing these emotions in all but name).

his arrest and conviction he says how "*I was just in that van and that init. Like my co-d was there crying and that. I'm telling him "stop crying, what you crying for?"* As previously mentioned, IK described his father as a source of fear and his mother as a source of love. Thus, he experienced mixed emotions when he went to Pakistan to visit her:

"*It's upsetting really, you know, when I go there, yeah. I stay there for like, a month and a half, two months, whatever, and then I'd come back here, to that family* [nervous laugh]... *it's just upsetting honestly, thinking about. I wish I was there.*"

RS also described feeling upset, both for the transience he experienced as a child and when facing the consequences of his criminal activities ("*going to court for the first time, yeah that was upsetting. Thought I was gonna go to prison for like a hundred years!* [laughs]")

The (potential) consequences of their own and others' actions provoked the strongest emotional responses. For instance, JM described being scared of the consequences of gang conflict,[118] particularly when he returned to his home area to find all his old friends had become gang- affiliated in his absence. For MS, the immediate consequences of gang affiliation made him fearful ("*I wouldn't like to get, get stabbed, I wouldn't like it if it was just in my finger or anything, I wouldn't like to get stabbed*")[119] while the longer-term consequences (i.e. incarceration) produced an apparent sense of dejection ("*I got a very nice sentence, so in my head I kind of see it as, I don't know, it's a sad sort of thing to come back*"). For RZ, being aware of the consequences of his actions promoted feelings of frustration and disappointment:

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[118] Specifically, the potential for getting involved in someone else's (i.e. a fellow gang members) problems and thus attracting trouble to himself.

[119] Although he was also then quick to point out "*But the same time I'm not afraid sort of thing...*"

"It's a bit annoying to be honest, that I knew I was, smarter, than this, to end up here, do you

know what I'm saying. I don't mean smarter as in "do-it-and-not-get-caught" but smart

enough to say it ain't worth doing in the first place."

Finally, VA, who denied any involvement in the crime for which we was incarcerated, expressed anger and resentment at the person he felt was truly responsible for the crime but who escaped justice (*"He's just fucking doing whatever he's doing. Don't really care though, the past's the past"*). He also described the shock he felt when he witnessed his first violent crime.

Thus, experiencing strong emotions, or interpreting events in emotional terms, may serve to protect young people from deeper involvement with anti-social peer sets/gangs and their activities. Such emotional sensitivity does not suggest the kind of desensitisation effect that was evident in Cores occurred for Fringes. As such, Fringes (despite their protests of not caring) may be more wary of the negative emotional consequences of gang membership, and, thus limit their involvement to limit their negative emotional arousal.

- Values and goals.

As per Fringes' emotionality, when compared to Cores, they also displayed a somewhat greater adherence to "traditional", socially-desirable values and goals across several domains. For instance, while Cores were vague in terms of ambitions and life goals (Core Model, Trigger Phase – social cognitive factors), Fringes' goals were relatively more concrete. BL, consistent with his beliefs about just getting on with and completing education, had ambitions of studying Sociology at University, and subsequently wanted to go into property development.[120] IK wanted to become a pilot. RS was "*looking to make it professional,*

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[120] As a matter of fact, BL was pleased when the interview came to an end as he realised he would just make it back to his cell in time to watch his favourite TV show "*Homes Under the Hammer.*"

football. Got a big chance. If you're committed, then you'll be good..."[121] JM was heavily

influenced by music and described having a stack of papers in his cell full of poems, music,

and lyrics he had written and was waiting to record:

> "*I know that if I blow in the music industry, I know that I can get the voices of the youth*
>
> *heard so to speak on the road you know what I'm saying. So that's why I'm determined*
>
> [with] *this music, I'm determined with my music.*"

JM also stated that "*I never* [have] *Plan A without a Plan B... That's the one thing I like*

about me, 'cos I know that at least if something doesn't work out I'll have something else to

do" and as such he had signed up to study plumbing and electrical engineering, as Plan B in

case his musical ambitions failed.

Fringes also appeared to value fairness, possibly bordering on a Belief in a Just World

(Lerner & Miller, 1978), particularly when it was linked to their own offending and

convictions. For example, VA and BL both felt that they had been victims of miscarriages of

justice: VA, while admitting to possessing a gun that had been used in the robbery he was

charged with, denied involvement in the robbery itself, while BL described being in the

wrong place at the wrong time and was subsequently charged (under joint enterprise laws)

with an offence he wasn't directly involved in. As such, VA described how "*I just wanted to*

get possession of [a] *firearm, 'cos that's what I did init*", suggesting a belief that he should

have "got what he deserved" but that he had been given more than this.[122] Similarly, BL was

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[121] While becoming a professional football player is an unrealistic dream for many young and teenage boys, given that RS had previously played semi-professional football, had a trial arranged with a new club for the week following his release, and a cousin who played professional football having also been involved in gangs in his teenage years (and was thus something of a role-model to RS), there was a real chance for this ambition to become a reality.

[122] VA, when discussing crime in his community, simply stated that "*People do crime, it's their fault init.*" Thus, the fairness (or lack of it) he perceives in his treatment by the Criminal Justice System may be driven but this belief – if he does something requiring punishment, he does not want or expect to be treated differently from anyone else, provided the treatment is fair and justified.

willing to accept his sentence because *"there was a lot of stuff that I should of been here* [i.e. prison] *for and I'm not."*[123]

Helpfulness was another value expressed by Fringes. JM described (in great detail) seeing a woman who was struggling with heavy shopping bags and uncooperative children. Having carried her shopping home for her, JM and his friends went on to talk to her children:

*"We was like "*you lot should be doing this you know... just try and help out your mum whenever you can like.*" 'Cos I didn't grow up like that you know what I'm saying, so to see people... growing up like that and taking advantage of it... I know they didn't know no better 'cos they was kids but at the same time I just try to let them have a little understanding..."*

Similarly, MB described a willingness to help others (e.g. stopping to change a flat tyre on an elderly lady's car as he walked by), but felt that these actions were often overlooked by local residents: *"like if my community was open and that, then they would look at us differently because they would see, like... me and my boys like, we actually do things for the community and that like."*

Social cognitive themes.

The interaction between the individual, social, and environmental categories and themes described above influence an individual's social cognitive processing. Three themes emerged from the data which characterised Fringes' social cognition at the very early stages of their gang membership. These themes concerned: 1) consequential awareness; 2) optimism (or "making the best of a bad situation"); and 3) attitudes towards authority.

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[123] JM's description of feeling as if he owes his friend's parents, who took him in when he was homeless, and questioning why he should care about his family, when they failed to take him in, also speaks to a belief in fairness (i.e. he treats people the way he feels they deserve).

- Consequential awareness.

A relatively consistent theme which emerged for Fringes was the importance placed on being aware of the consequences of one's actions. Very often, even when the family environment and/or bonds were not particularly stable, Fringes indicated that this belief had been instilled by their parents/guardians. RZ was perhaps the strongest proponent of this need:

> *"...it's always stuck with me, like, the consequences of what you do. My mum and dad, they've always tried to show us that... do what you wanna do but, always make sure that before you do it you know what's gonna happen – that if you get caught for doing what you wanna do... know the consequences of your action because... there's no point feeling sorry for yourself after you've been caught if you knew what you was doing was wrong... They tried their best, they still do now, but... yeah..."*

AM was acutely aware of the consequences of his (criminal) actions, given that he characterised himself above all of his peers as being the most criminally active. However, he described feeling like he had nothing left to lose following his father's death, simply going out, committing crime, and living with the consequences.[124] In his "profession" (i.e. burglary), AM also felt that thinking about consequences could be dangerous, citing that he would never think about the risk of getting caught and going to prison, instead he would focus on the immediate need to get into the target premises and get out.

These views raise the possible distinction between lacking *awareness* of consequences and lacking *concern* about the consequences of one's actions (if only temporarily, e.g. because consequential concern has been deactivated or because it has been

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[124] If he was caught and arrested, he was caught and arrested – if he was not, he was not (and he had been lucky).

overridden in some way[125]). VA and RZ were both aware of people who would offend regardless of consequences. VA described how "*Some people just love it... they don't always care about coming in jail, some actually wanna come in jail init, so they'll keep doing something til they come in jail*" while RZ commented:

"*There's some people that just don't care, you know what I'm saying. They'd do anything, anywhere, fight with anybody, in front of camera, anything, they don't care you know what I'm saying... But, just gotta realise that if you gonna do that, where it's gonna end you up.*"

BL suggests a possible rationale for why some people may act in this way: "*I don't wanna be here but... I can get 20 years, come out when I'm like 50, still be fit still have lot, lot of my life ahead of me.*" Thus, while they are aware of possible (self-focussed) negative consequences of their actions, they may be unconcerned by these consequences by virtue of their youth. JM suggests that having consequential awareness can be a double-edged sword, and as such it maybe in their interests to deactivate this awareness at times:

"*...it's just a lose-lose situation, you just have to be prepared for the consequences, when you do things like that like. When I was growing up I was taught to think about things before I do it but, really and truly, to be honest, now I'm thinking back like, I never ever used to think about what I did before I done it. I just acted on what, I knew init,*"

This implies that, when trapped by negative circumstances, options are limited and one is forced to respond a certain way, regardless of the consequences (of which one is fully aware). Thus, one should be prepared for the consequences of their actions while trying not to think about them. To think about them in these circumstance may induce fear (an undesirable emotion Fringes appear prone to already, as described above), and, thus, the best thing to do

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[125] As will be discussed below in relation to impulsivity.

is just act (as described under Impulsivity below). Similarly, speaking hypothetically, MS commented:

"People don't think, but they get caught up in certain things. They ain't really got no sense sort of thing. I don't know what it is, it's kind of a – it is peer pressure slightly. I don't know, it's boredom, it's peer pressure, and there's fallout."

Finally, MB raised the issue of how the consequences of one's action can go beyond themselves, consistent with a trait of empathy (at least with significant other):

"I never used to, but since I been in jail I've been thinking about my family a lot and I've realised, like, I've hurt my family more than anybody I could, like, ever hurt. If I was to stab someone like, I'd hurt my family more... by coming to jail, being away from them for so long."

Thus, when young people are instilled with an awareness of the consequences of their actions, some degree of reluctance to become heavily involved in groups and/or activities likely to promote severe/negative consequences may develop. When other factors dictate that such involvement is unavoidable, awareness of consequences may urge individuals to attempt to keep this involvement to a minimum (i.e. they keep to the periphery of anti-social peer sets/gangs).

- Making the best of a bad situation.

Inner Fringes displayed a general sense of optimism in the face of challenging obstacles, a response that was often backed up by pro-active behavioural strategies intended to ensure that this optimism was justified. A previously discussed example was RZ's reinterpretation of his curfew as being an opportunity to spend time with his little brothers and strengthen their relationship. He also described using this as an excuse to get out of seeing friends when he

sensed that meeting them could lead him into (further) trouble. Being able to make the best

of a bad situation is contingent on accepting the consequences of one's actions (in hindsight

if not in advance), as described above. Accepting what has come before is a prerequisite for

progress (a view endorsed by RZ, VA, and JM), and progression is key to making the best of

a bad situation. With regards to his prison sentence, RZ described it as "*a long time but...*

there's no point sulking about it or saying I don't deserve it because, I done what I done – I

may as well just make what I can out of jail" (i.e. through engagement in educational

opportunities provided). AM displayed a similar sentiment ("*prison ain't a place that you*

should like init, but obviously, while you're here you might as well make yourself at home,

'cos you ain't got nowhere else [chuckles]*").* This same attitude can also inform negative

consequences, however, since, for AM, criminal activity was a means of making the best of a

bad situation, providing him with the money and clothes he did not have but wanted, and/or

he and his friends the fun that they felt they were missing out on with no enticing social

facilities nearby. BL, however, adopted a different method. Rather than accepting the

situation and adopting methods of improving himself within these confines, he would

cognitively restructure his perception of his social world in such a way as to make it seem

less bad (for instance, by downplaying the seriousness of violent action, such as by denying

that young people who have been violently attacked are the victims of a crime). Having been

the most ambitious of the Fringes (e.g. by hoping to go to university), it may be that BL felt

that he had lost the most through his gang affiliation and offending behaviour, and thus had

developed a more bleak outlook compared to the others' optimism. Thus, by not believing

that his ideal goals were achievable, he re-evaluated his situation so that he could more ably

cope with the daily exposure to disappointment.

For Outer Fringes, IK would focus on the benefits of living in the UK compared to

Pakistan whenever the time came to return home to his father after visiting his mother. JM,

like AM, had both pro- and anti-social outlets for making the best of things. JM learned the need to commit crime during his time sleeping rough, describing being out doing "*bad things*" to get money to buy food, and this mindset continued even as his situation stabilised. Despite being an extremely bad time in his life, JM positively reinterpreted these experiences, stating that it made him a stronger person. Pro-socially, JM's outlet was music:

"*...the only thing that helps me escape like, the way of life that I've lived and all the stuff that I've been through is music init. 'Cos I write music and that, and it helps me to release my anger, throughout the music that I'm singing you know what I'm saying. Music is just a getaway place for me init – music just helps me get away from all the rubbish that's going on in the hood.*"

- Attitudes to authority.

Compared to all the themes discussed so far, Fringes' attitudes to authority (particularly, as with the Cores, with regards to the police) were perhaps the most varied.

RZ appeared particularly respectful to authority where he felt it was due. Thus, he describes how he "*used to speak to most of them* [i.e. police officers]" and how he and his peers would "*fix up your attitude a little bit* [if it was real police coming round] *'cos you know if they wanna be pricks they could, so they could do you with anything.*" However, this respect did not transfer to Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who, RZ felt, were no different from any other member of the public and, thus, had no authority over them. Consistent with Cores' beliefs, RZ suggested that there were some circumstances in which the respect he afforded police would be withdrawn:

"I weren't bothered, they're just doing their job at the end of the day init... they've gotta, uphold the authority of the law but it's like, some of them take it too far. They don't have no, how can I put it like, they don't have no discretion..."

This belief (i.e. that the job of the police was to enforce the law, but that some officers might act beyond their authority) was echoed by JM (who described the police as *"the biggest gang"* he was aware of), MB (who got on well with some officers but not those who *"violate their position"*), and RS (who described differences between officers based on area. In his hometown A *"...instead of police helping the people in the area, they were just like, bend them up for no reason... just make them like more angry, at the police"*, while in hometown B *"...if you're doing something wrong they'll tell you that you're doing something wrong, they wouldn't just come to you for no sort of reason")*.

VA was particularly anti-authoritarian when it came to his attitudes to the police. However, this was driven by a series of negative encounters he had with them, as opposed to a general, unsubstantiated feeling of disrespect. He put his feelings succinctly in stating *"I don't trust police no more, they set me up... that's what they do man, just lie."* Similar to Cores, he expressed a willingness to cooperate with the police when he felt/knew he was in the right but, in his experience, felt that they overstepped their authority, exaggerating claims, and using their attribution of gang status against him, rather than relying on evidence. AM was similarly uncomplimentary about the police, but did not account for why this was other than it seemed to be expected of young people in his area to antagonise the police: *"Me, I don't get along with the police init so... I'm just rude to the police init. Me and my friends like, none of us like the police init so, we're just rude and that when we see them, yeah..."* There were exceptions to the rule, however, with AM being friends with some young people who did not get in trouble with the police and who showed them respect. It seems the respect

relationship between young people and the police was reciprocal – young people who showed respect to the police got respect back from the police.

Peer selection.

The final stage of the Trigger Phase concerns peer selection. Social cognitive processes influence to whom young people are socially attracted. Opportunities to associate with a range of different peer sets were available, which (as with Cores) Fringes generally distinguished between groups in terms of whether they were likely to exert a good or bad influence. Fringes were generally open to associating with any/all peer sets that they had access to, although full integration into these groups may be limited, either by choice (e.g. because the young person decided to limit their membership based on past socialisation experiences) or inability (e.g. because the young person is unable to make the most of their membership based on past socialisation experiences). Two themes emerged from analysis in relation to peer selection: 1) having people to trust; and 2) experiencing emotional support.

- Trust.

Feeling able to trust peers appeared to be a key consideration for Fringes. IK described having "*good five or six friends that, that are completely like, friends that'll be for life. I know that I can trust them with whatever*", while having others who are "*friends but like... I'm not 100% sure that I would trust them with my life or something like that...*" MS also described having "*certain people around me that I trusted*", while MB outlined the difference between his close peers and members of the wider gang: "*I'm not with them all the time, but with these boys I'm literally all the time I'm with them. We've got our backs and that like, anybody does stuff and we're there like, for them...*"

This emphasis on the need to trust peers seemingly originated from bad experiences Fringes had with others. For instance, MS described cutting himself off from some of his peers after deciding they could not be trusted: "*Someone snitched on me so, I just, can't be bothered with some people, bumming around... I don't want to be chilling with no loafers.*" Similarly, JM described the difficulty in getting away with criminal activity given the number of people who talk to the police.[126] MB told how "*you can't really trust people in my area like, even though you know 'em like. If it's the drugs and that you can't really trust them...*" Similarly, VA, when talking about his experiences to victimisation, said "*People took my stuff behind my back. Thought I trusted people init. Put stuff in the bushes, drugs and stuff, come back and it's gone. Or I hide money and it's gone... I watched them took it.*"

- Experiencing emotional support.

Consistent with Fringes' more emotional outlook on life, and very much rooted in the relative instability of their home lives, the potential for peer support was also an important consideration. JM described how:

"*there's so many of us in the hood that's like come from the same kind of background and that, obviously we're gonna bond together... you hang around with those people 'cos you feel that they understand, like you feel that you can talk to them and they'll know like where you're coming from and that init... so that's basically, I think, that's like how the whole group thing comes about as well like...*"

IK and MB, who both had similarly negative family experiences as JM, also valued supportive peer relationships. IK explicitly linked this desire to his own behaviour: "*when I was younger like, I just wanted some friendships with someone so, I just liked to go out a lot,*

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[126] As will be discussed below (Maintenance Phase – social cognitive factors: sense of control), JM often described a sense of "*feeling trapped*" – not feeling able to tell who can and who cannot be trusted is just one way in which this feeling may manifest.

and slowly from when I was young, it just grew so I started to go out a lot..." MB, meanwhile, described situations in which his evaluations of others may change, depending on the support they give to their friends (e.g. "*people who I think, like they're mugs and that, and then I'll see that they've actually got respect for their mates and that and then I'll be like ah, my opinion will change, be like "*ah they're actually aright.*"*") This value was expressed in MB's own behaviour, with him providing examples of his willingness to support his friends with (often delicate) issues.[127]

End of Trigger Phase.

Thus, at the pre- and early stages of gang membership, and the conclusion of the processes comprising the Trigger Phase, Fringes (like Cores) were generally open to, and actively were, associating with any/all peer groups that they had access to, regardless of their pro- or anti-social leanings.

Phase Two – Maintenance.

Structural features.

The second phase of the Fringe Gang Member Model is structurally reminiscent of the Directional Phase of the Core Model (again with some difference in the thematic content within each element of the phase). However, where Core Directives determined to which peer set (i.e. their pro- or anti-social peers) an individual would direct their commitment (with the subsequent, final phase detailing how they would maintain this commitment), these same structural elements in the Fringe Model actually describe how individuals *maintain commitment to both sets of peers*. This is perhaps the key observed difference between Cores and Fringes – while both types of gang member identified with two distinct friendship groups

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[127] e.g. "*I have conversations with them like, they'll open up to me about it I'll just be sitting there all quiet and that, thinking, and then they'll tell me like...*"

initially, Cores ultimately rejected their pro-social peers in favour of anti-social peers while Fringes maintained a connection with both peer sets *at all times*.

Having developed an identity based on membership of multiple social groups during the peer selection stage of the Trigger Phase, subsequent social cognitive processing will be further influenced by environmental, social, and individual factors. At this point, given the salience of group identification, intra-group processes will interact with Fringes' individual social cognitive processing. While the level of identification with one peer set or the other will fluctuate, ultimately the interaction of social cognitive and intra-group processes will lead the young person to work towards balancing their commitment with each set. Thus, they maintain a dual social identity that emerges from, and is maintained by, both pro- and anti-social peer influences.

Thematic content.

Figure 5.5 displays the emergent themes which fit within the categories comprising the Maintenance Phase of the Fringe Gang Member Model.

Environmental themes.

Only one theme emerged from the data in relation to environmental influences which Fringes (and their multiple peer groups) experienced – their awareness of the existence of territorial disputes in the area.

Transience in their early years affected Fringes' awareness of territorial disputes. Rather than a gradual dawning of awareness which predominantly came with living long-term in a single community, Fringes tended to become aware of territorial rivalries soon after moving into a new area. As such, their involvement in these rivalries was limited, as their personal history with, and attachment to, the area was limited. For instance, JM stated that:

"When I lived in [hometown A] when I was younger, everything was calm and chilled

out, like everyone knew each other and everyone was alright like. When I moved to

[hometown B] it's just straight into the fire like, everyone was beefing each other like,

beefing like arguing with each other and having fights and conflicts with each other and that.

And then, after a while like just, I ended up get caught up in it but, not as much as most of the

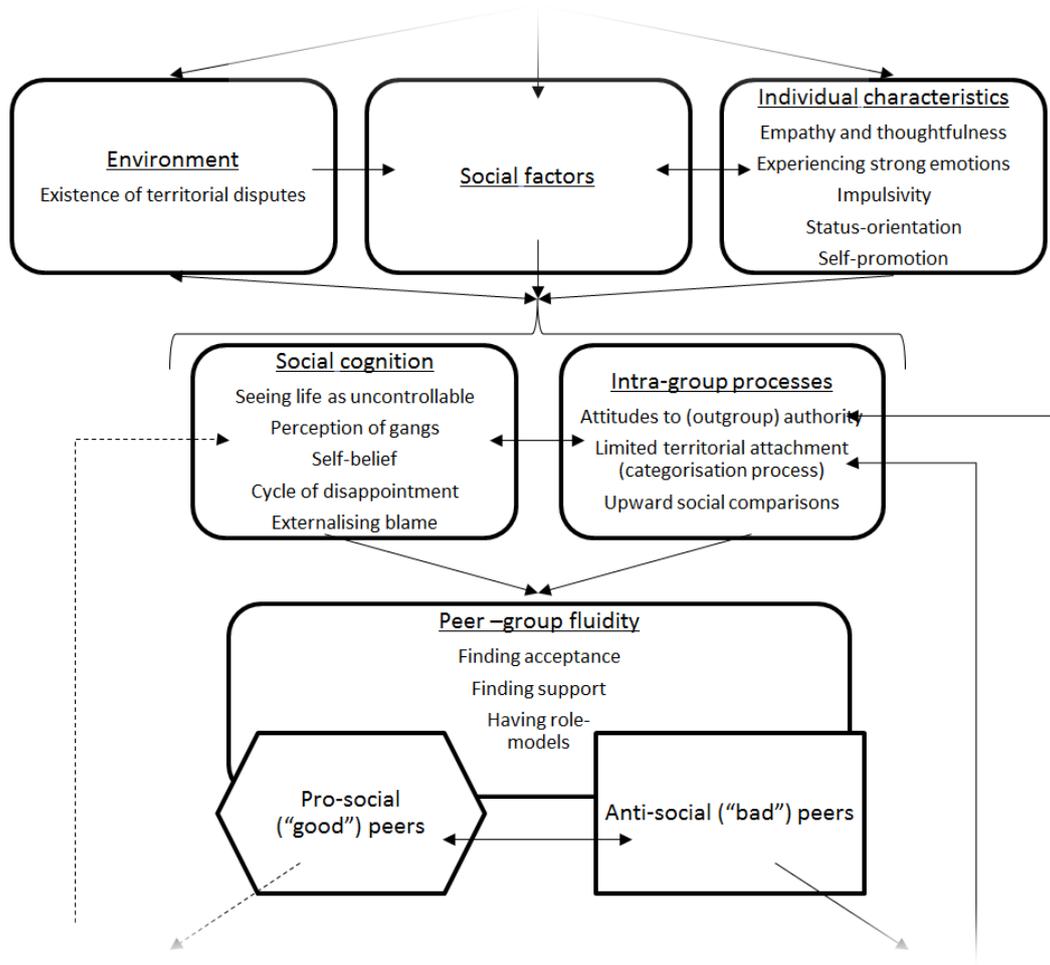*people that have lived there most of their life."*

Figure 5.5.   The Fringe Maintenance Phase.

While Fringes' awareness of, and involvement in, territorial disputes increased once they had moved into a new area at an age where such issues are more salient, this is not to say that they *approved* of such disputes. For instance, BL, RS, VA, and MS[128] were all disparaging of those who engaged in such conflicts, perhaps, again, because of their transience (i.e. their lack of connection or attachment to any one area led them to value the physical environment in which they reside less than those who have lived there a long time, such as Cores). BL described how "*I know them but... I just laugh at them really... have problems with people from different areas but, don't know where they're from* [which is] *stupid*" while MS commented how "*little kids who are troublesome and kids who... wanna be known for, um, going to this area or doing this, dealing with this situation. I don't know, it's so dumb. I can't even explain it 'cos it's so dumb.*"

RZ (who was the most Core-like of the Fringes, in terms of his family structure and bonds, and length of time spent living in a single area), presented a more positive view of territorial disputes, more consistent with Cores than his fellow Fringes. He suggested that "*it makes the community a bit stronger*", although, as a downside, he recognised that the potential for violence and the possibility of becoming caught up in fellow members' personal rivalries was high. MB described having engaged in territorial disputes in the past, but that between actively attempting not to antagonise others ("*we've been quiet, we've kept ourselves to ourselves*"). and ensuring that the group was still feared ("*...unless we need to. If we need to smack someone, we'll smack someone, we won't think twice*"), "*nobody's really got problems with, like, me and my mates anymore.*"

As such, with limited attachment to territory, a lack of long-term personal history with rival territorial gangs, an unwillingness to engage in territorial conflict, and feelings of

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[128] MS also implied that individuals engaged in territorial rivalries can extend this antagonism outside of the immediate situation, commenting that "*I ain't got no one from my area round here* [i.e. prison]*, got no dramas in here or nothing.*"

derision aimed at those who do engage, the chances of Fringes becoming solidified into the anti-social peer group and developing ethnocentric attitudes are relatively diminished. That is, conditions which initiate the movement towards commitment to anti-social peers over pro-social peers (as demonstrated by Cores in Chapter Four) do not emerge, thus promoting conditions favouring the maintenance of connections with both peer sets.

Social themes.

One (main) theme emerged from the data which characterised the social influences which Fringes were exposed to – their continued exposure to legitimate social controls. This commitment was displayed by all Fringe participants, however, the means of commitment varied. As such there are a number of subthemes (consistent with the Core Directional Phase, these concern access to school, family bonds, and the "Bee-Gee" effect) each of which appear inconsistently across the Fringe cohort, but all of which represent exposure to some form of social control.

The most important of these subthemes concerns maintaining commitment to mainstream education. It was rare for Fringes' to be classified as having failed at school. Only VA and DY were permanently excluded from school and sent to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). MB, although expelled from multiple schools for fighting, stayed in mainstream education until he started his prison sentence. AM was similarly sent to prison before completing school, however, this occurred later than for MB (AM's sentence started just before he would have taken his GCSEs) and AM was never excluded. BL was expelled late in his school career, but was allowed to take his GCSEs (passing all eleven taken) before starting a college course. RZ was also attending college, indicating that he had completed

mainstream education (although his school experiences were never explicitly discussed), however, he was forced to give up his course when sentenced to prison.[129]

Thus, while many Fringes' experienced some trouble at school, the majority *stayed* in school. This, therefore, is an important distinction between Cores and Fringes, since Fringes appear to experience more prolonged, and thus potentially stronger, exposure to traditional, mainstream education (and the day-to-day structure it provides). This in turn may support Fringes in their commitment to traditional values and long-term goals (see Trigger Phase – individual factors), develop their awareness of legitimate (educational and employment) opportunities, and improve their ability to present themselves as living up to socially acceptable expectations. Crucially, this also meant that Fringes were able to maintain (and possibly enhance) their association with pro-social peer groups. Both Cores and Fringes described their pro-social peer associations as predominantly school-based, so by staying in school (and avoiding PRUs' anti-social connections) Fringes were able to keep in close contact with sources of pro-social influence more easily. This, therefore, in conjunction with their relatively weaker ethnocentric attitudes (resulting from their disinterest in territorial disputes), sets up the conditions necessary to allow Fringes to ultimately shift between their pro- and anti-social peers and personal social identities.[130]

The "Bee-Gee" effect was less frequently applied to Fringes than Cores and, when it was, was less drastic (i.e. Fringes were less likely to be sent abroad, and were sent away for shorter durations), and less successful. For instance, BL spent two periods of time abroad, each for only a matter of months, and was sent home after showing no signs of improved behaviour. JM moved from one side of London to the other after his mother (after coming

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[129] However, the YOI where RZ was held ran the same course as part of its education programme that he had been studying in college, and so he was able to continue his training in prison.

[130] Compared to Cores, whose school exclusion limits contact with pro-social peers, whom they then ultimately reject.

back into his life) decided a fresh start would benefit his education. However, JM stated that soon "*the same pattern of behaviour started to repeat itself init...*" and they subsequently moved back to their original neighbourhood.

Individual themes.

Three themes emerged from the data which characterised the individual characteristics of (the majority of) Fringe participants, and which appeared to contribute to their tendency to maintain some commitment to both pro- and anti-social peer groups. These themes concerned: 1) feeling empathy and displaying thoughtfulness; 2) impulsivity; and 3) needing to impress.

- Empathy and thoughtfulness.

Perhaps owing to the strength of their emotional experiences and expression (see Trigger Phase – individual factors), Fringes displayed traits of empathy. Similarly, building on their adherence to (or at least their family-imposed belief in the need to engage in) consequential thinking, Fringes also displayed an ability to take the perspective of others, and thus seemed able to develop clear and reasoned ideas about their actions, their peers, and their environment.

In terms of perspective-taking, many of the statements made by Fringes concerned criminal offending (both their own and others) and the consequences of such. For instance, RZ, consistent with his relatively positive view of authority, expressed an understanding of why police engage in stop-and-search practices: "*They do it to collect information to see what this boy's like, to see who's sort of the ring-leader, who speaks out more you know all that sort of stuff.*" In attempting to see situations from the police perspective, RZ indicated

that gang-police relations could be better managed. Similarly, when discussing stereotypes associated with young people, AM described how:

"I can see where adults are coming from 'cos if you look in the riots and that... you see adults but you don't see, like, adults as much as you see groups of youths... So obviously, in adults' views, they'll point in the way that, us youths started the riots"

In taking such perspectives, Fringe's may be willing to accept negative consequences. One example of this would be BL's decision not to challenge his conviction given his belief that he should have been incarcerated for other crimes that he committed but had not been caught for. Another comes from MS, who felt that being given a relatively short sentence (although pleased with it) was "*not really setting a good example sort of thing*" given the seriousness of his offence.

Having an ability to empathise and take another's perspective could serve Fringes well. For instance, in the context of discussing his offending and the occasional need to do something bad to prevent something worse from happening in the future,[131] RZ commented that "*sometimes it's not about your mentality but others' as well.*" Thus, empathy can be used as a self-protective tool – by being tuned into the thoughts, feelings, and potential reactions of others, empathy can also be used as a guide to one's own actions. JM commented that his desire to help people (such as the mother with her children, as described above, and which made him feel happy) was driven his personal awareness of how difficult life can be. On the other hand, perspective-taking can induce negative emotions. RS described how, during his hearing, he "*...got upset 'cos I was just thinking to myself, "if the*

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[131] Specifically, referring to a fight that he had initiated with another inmate earlier on the day of the interview – having had a clean prison record up until that point, he attacked this other inmate as a pre-emptive strike to prevent an (anticipated) attack against himself.

Judge were in my shoes what would he of done?*" *'Cos, at the court he didn't ask me for my opinion, I didn't talk* [during the hearing]."

Related to Fringes' empathy and perspective-taking, they demonstrated a relatively deep level of thought on a range of issues. For instance, RS described how he would "*...just say to myself, "*you're in jail because of a drunk person*", that's just the worse thing ever*", indicating a clear thought-process regarding the circumstances which led him to prison. RZ argued against those who antagonise the police, commenting how "*in the right situation, they're usually there for anyone or everyone no matter how much hate you've got for them or whatever...*" He presented a hypothetical scenario in which a child went missing, concluding that, regardless of what someone may think of them, it is the police to whom they would most likely turn for help. BL presented a thoughtful argument supporting the use of positive reinforcement of positive behaviours (e.g. by paying property offenders to stop offending) over punishment. He supported this idea by pointing out that this may improve prison conditions by reducing overcrowding, and that the amount of money that would incentivise individual offenders to stop offending would likely be significantly less per year than the cost of keeping them in jail for the equivalent period. He did, however, acknowledge that paying criminals would not be popular and that, were the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to adopt such a plan, it would "*...make a mockery of the whole country I reckon.*" Finally, MS showed empathy with family members (at least) when he described his anger and hurt if/when they were victims of crime. When this occurred, he described how:

"*That brought up more inside me because I had to think... I'm probably out there doing stuff, and there's someone else out there doing the same criminal activity as me is victimising someone from my family. It's a weird feeling 'cos... I don't know like, you know, I'm not a person who goes out and robs like, I wouldn't go into a house and burgle. I don't like all*

that stuff because, you know, someone could burgle my mum or dad's or... and I don't like

that stuff... It affects me more 'cos obviously it's my family..."

- Impulsivity.

Fringes' (offending) behaviour was often suggested as being relatively impulsive: for instance, MB described himself as being "*...one of the calmest people until something goes wrong and then, I'm not calm, I'll be like "*WHAT?!*""* This would appear to contradict the observation that they are (or are taught to be) more consequentially aware. Continuing that theme, while consequential awareness apparently *is* relatively high in Fringes, they may have (developed) the ability to temporarily disengage this awareness, either consciously (e.g. through social cognitive means, such as use of moral disengagement strategies) or unconsciously. Fringes' impulsive tendencies may, therefore, bypass their consequential awareness, and their empathetic traits and perspective-taking abilities, such that, when an opportunity arises in which some need may be met, they will act without thinking. This would account for why Fringes offend even when they know the potentially negative outcomes (both for themselves and others) of doing so, or, as RZ put it, account for why they are "*...aware of right and wrong but do wrong anyway.*" In essence, having a trait of impulsiveness overrides the expression of the values they hold and have been taught, and the ability to meet their long-term goals. It is a trait that facilitates their ingratiation with anti-social peers and thus entry into a gang, by allowing them to engage in activities which are desirable for gang members. However, it also may restrict them to the fringes of the gang, by only *temporarily* suppressing those characteristics which may typically have prevented them from becoming gang-involved.[132]

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[132] This perhaps then places Fringes in opposition to Cores, whose apparent fearlessness with regards to gangs and crime may mean that they genuinely do not think about the consequences of their membership and behaviour, while Fringes may be more fearful and concerned with the consequences, but impulsive enough that they end up behaving in a criminal/gang-related manner regardless.

For instance, RZ described how "*instead of thinking* "well, yeah, I ain't got that, but it's not gonna kill me, not having the newest phone or... money.*" I was greedy. I wanted ... what other people had that I didn't.*" Thus he was aware of "sensible", legitimate responses to desires, but he still went out and offended to achieve these desires. When Fringes had legitimate desires, achievable only via engagement with legitimate social controls, their impulsivity could work against their ability to achieve these desires (e.g. BL had long term plans but described "*too much excitement*" preventing him from finishing college, while IK's truancy from school was characterised as opportunistic and unstructured[133], leading to undesirable, though not particularly troublesome, behaviour which prevented him doing as well in his GCSEs as he would have liked). RS described how he would "*...flip, couldn't help it.*" When explaining why he and his anti-social peers would engage in fighting so frequently, RS stated that "*I wouldn't say we're boys but, just... control, like not anger management but just, consequential thinking...*" Out of the moment, RS was hit hard by the consequences of his actions ("*I was stressing, getting upset, panicking, and then went to the court... I was happy when my solicitor said it's got dropped to ABH... If he'd have said ten years I'd have collapsed*"). He had used this sensation, and his subsequent prison time, to learn how to deal with his impulsivity, and felt confident that in future he would not act in such a way again, a sentiment echoed by MS: "*I got friends that are, like, caught up in the moment still... I'm not involved in that, you know what I'm saying. I used to be like, yeah, but... they're not my people, they're not my friends.*"

- Self-promotion.

Fringes, like Cores, displayed a status-orientation. For Cores, this was explicitly expressed through their group memberships and behaviour – their material and social status was enhanced through, and was a motivation for, gang membership. For Fringes, however, this

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[133] He would do whatever he could, go wherever he was able, with whoever wanted to go along with him.

orientation was implicit[134] – explicitly, they were reasonably dismissive of status and those who pursue it, however, they were prone to making self-promotional statements. As such, Fringes came across as if they needed to impress others, but were less open than Cores about having this need.

One of the subtlest forms of self-promotion displayed was Fringes' tendency, almost without exception, to respond to a query about their age by stating how old they were and then stating how old they would be at their next birthday, as if they were seeking status that they perceived as attached to age. In some cases this could be fairly natural, for instance if the next birthday was only a few weeks away:

- BL – "*Seventeen. I'm eighteen next week*";

- IK – "*Sixteen, seventeen in a month*";

- AM – "*Seventeen, eighteen in two weeks*";

- MB – "*I'm seventeen, eighteen next month.*"

In other cases, such responses were less justified:

- MS – "*I'm turning eighteen this year*", when interviewed four months before his birthday (he also described himself as having "*got kind of a older, older mentality already like, 20, 21")*;

- RZ – "*I'm seventeen now, eighteen in November*", a full nine months away at the time of interview;

- DY – "*Erm, I'm sixteen... turning seventeen*", when interviewed five months before his birthday.

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[134] Although, some explicit reference was made, specifically by AM, who described the importance of being known in the area in which he lived (i.e. social status) and that he committed crime for the material status it afforded: "*Me, I do crime for money and clothes, that's me init like, I like to always look fresh like, yeah...*"

It was almost as if these Fringes were uncomfortable about their youth and used their forthcoming age as a means to present themselves as more mature.[135] However, a range of other methods (of varying degrees of sophistication) were also used by Fringes as means of presenting themselves in the best possible light.

AM, for example, simply stated that "*everyone looked up to me in school. I don't know why but, yeah*", effectively placing himself in a social position superior to that of his peers, while using self-deprecation to deflect attention away from the tactic. MB would self-promote by making it clear to anyone willing to listen that he closely affiliated with individuals higher up the hierarchy of the gang:

"*There's fully grown geezers that I hang around with, their names* [are] *known throughout the whole of* [hometown]*... if someone says that name to me I'll just be like* "you can call him if you really wanna call him.*" I'll pass my phone over like, "*ring him ring him...*"*

Essentially, MB sought social status by-proxy, although appeared unconcerned by material status: "*It bothers me what people think, like, but, if it's about my clothes and that like, it's my clothes, it don't bother me.*" Similarly, MS would self-promote by emphasising the successes and wealth of his family. BL, meanwhile, took the opposite approach, by distancing himself from Core gang members (i.e. by making it clear he was not one of them) before putting them down: "*I think some people think it's cool for some reason... All weasels just like each other. They just think it's cool.*" Similarly, MB would often refer to gang members with relatively lower status than himself (such as Outer Fringe members) as

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[135] Cores did not appear to "age themselves up", responding to such questioning by simply stating their age in years at the time of interview. The only instance of a Core "manipulating" his age was done in such a way as to make him seem *younger*, as demonstrated by the following (good-humoured) exchange between DB (who was over six foot tall) and his escort as they arrived at the interview room:

Escort	*Here he is, here's the man!*
DB	*Who's a man?*
Escort	*You are, you're a man!*
DB	*I'm not a man; I'm a YP* [Young Person]*!*

"*fraggles.*" This was an apparently derogatory title and, being on the (inner) periphery of the

gang himself, he did not take kindly when other gang members would call *him* a fraggle.

Given how he would seek status by-proxy, any reminder of his position in the group would

be evidence against his self-promotion. Finally, however, self-presentational tendencies

could be used to support a change in behaviour. For instance, RS was keen for his mother to

see how he had changed for the better (in terms of his attitudes and behaviours) during his

time in prison.

       Social cognitive themes.

As per the Trigger Phase, the interaction between the individual, social, and environmental

categories and themes emerging in the Maintenance Phase influence an individual's

developing social cognitive processing. Four themes emerged from the data which

characterised the social cognitions of Fringes as their affiliations with gang members began

to strengthen, all of which interrelate.[136] These themes concerned: 1) feeling misunderstood;

2) their sense of control; 3) reactions to disappointment; and 4) perceptions of gangs.

     - Feeling misunderstood.

Fringes believed that they were (individually and collectively) misunderstood by the wider

public. Typically, much of this misunderstanding resulted from their criminal activities, anti-

social peer affiliations, and gang membership. As stated by RZ "*... I know it's hard to tell the

difference between a group of friends and a gang but, there is a difference...*" VA felt that

the way in which others viewed them (i.e. as a gang) did not reflect reality (or at least the way

he viewed himself and his group), and this lack of understanding had considerable

implications. For instance, VA felt the police intentionally misrepresented him and his peers

during criminal proceedings to enhance the severity of their punishment, while ("*stuck-up*")

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[136] And link to attribution processing, described below in the Reactionary Phase.

juries judged them with no real understanding of their lives. BL also felt that the stereotypes

that have developed concerning young people and gangs are not entirely accurate. He argued

that people "*...don't really understand what's going on so they just come to the first logical*

conclusion." This, he suggested, is that if a young person dresses like a stereotypical gang

member (i.e. see Figure 1.1) it is automatically assumed that they are a gang member, and

then treated as such without any real evidence. Instead, BL wanted young people to be seen

as "*Individuals... individuals with their own mind.*" He essentially suggested that a vicious

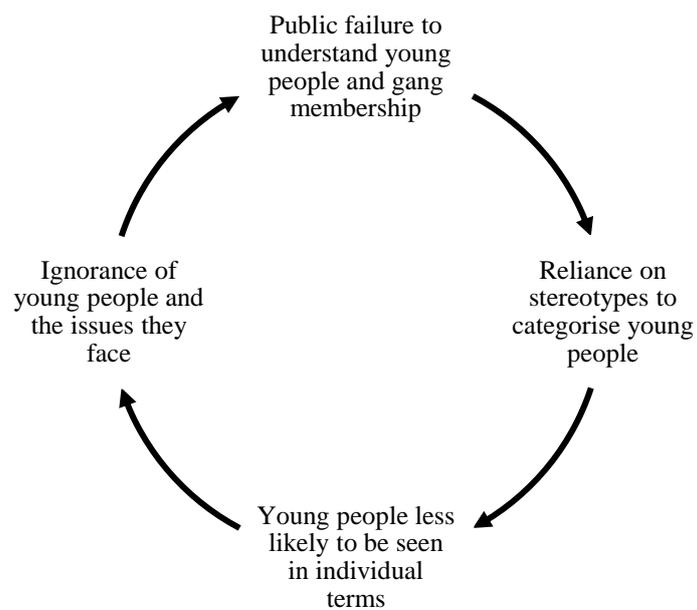cycle is present, as shown in Figure 5.6.

Figure. 5.6.   Cycle of misunderstanding.

As such, not only did Fringes feel misunderstood, they also felt that people *do not want* to

understand them. This would be consistent with RS's comments (made above under

individual factors: empathy and thoughtfulness) that he felt that the Judge in his case was

uninterested in hearing his version of events, and in JM's troubles with teachers concerning his accent and ADHD diagnosis (described above under Trigger Phase – social factors: academic records). This sense was made more explicit in JM's belief that "*if they took a step back and tried to understand what was going on, then maybe they'd, maybe they <u>would</u> understand what's going on* [laughs]." The feeling of being misunderstood, and the ignorance of youth issues that this breeds, thus, may represent the first step towards acceptance of a self-fulfilling prophecy of gang membership:

"*you just grow up, start to hang around with the people in school* [and] *outside of school and then, you just get classed as a gang. And then you think "alright, cool, well they're classing me as a gang, well, fuck it, why not be a gang?" Might as well init, give them what they want* [if] *that's what they're expecting... Can't beat them, join them, you know what I'm saying - if you can't join them, beat them, boom...*" (JM)

If this mindset emerges from an initial feeling of being misunderstood, the degree of personal control Fringes feel they have over their lives may begin to diminish...

- Sense of control.

The theme of control was regularly detectable in Fringes' expressed views on their lives. This emerged in two distinct, though related, ways: firstly, with regards to an apparent belief that their lives were (or life in general is) uncontrollable, and that they are trapped by circumstance; and secondly, with regards to a generally external locus of control.

Ironically for a collection of individuals who have shown a relatively high degree of mobility in their lives (see Trigger Phase – environmental factors: transience), Fringes would regularly talk in terms of "*feeling trapped*" (e.g. JM and MS most explicitly). By this they mean that they believed they have little control over their lives, and are constrained by

circumstances. Established traits and social cognitive processes influence Fringes' responses to this sensation. For instance, their generally optimistic outlook and desire to make the best of a bad situation, while typically seen as a positive characteristic, may promote anti-social behaviour when they perceive that the "best" they can hope for may only come via socially unacceptable means, as described by JM:

"...it's messed up, life is messed up. Like, you just gotta make the best out of the situation that you have basically... and, I made the best out of a bad situation. But, unfortunately, it wasn't up to the law's standards basically, you know what I'm saying..."

The feeling that life is uncontrollable manifested in a number of ways. For MS, it was in his dealings with older gang members. He described how his actions brought him to their attention: "*...obviously these are older boys sort of thing, you know... it's bigger action, bigger – how can I put it – like retaliation sort of thing...*" This suggests that he was perhaps underprepared when the consequences of his actions caught up with him. Having previously been in full control of his "business", he drew attention to himself and was now dealing with problems and threats from a higher level than he was used to – as the stakes were raised, his perception of control diminished. MS then purchased a gun in order to protect himself (an offence for which he was imprisoned), which may be seen as a reaction against this sensation of lost control – the gun gave him a new edge to use in his dealings with olders, placing them on a more even footing in terms of their ability to control/influence negotiations. For IK, lack of control originated from his family environment. He described situations where he attempted to break away from his father's influence which ultimately never came to fruition, such as by asking to move in with an uncle who lived elsewhere in the UK:

"I told him I want to live with him and this and that, 'cos of my dad, he's too much of a, I can't handle him no more init. And he thought I was just angry over the argument, he didn't

know the whole situation init, so he just thought "no, it's alright, just have a word with him, he's your dad..." so I had to come back here to my dad."[137]

Secondly, Fringes typically displayed an external locus of control – they traced both the absence of good things in their lives and the presence of bad things in their lives to external sources. For instance, when asked to account for his criminal action, RS said it was down to *"Situation yeah, the time and the place."* MS, JM, and MB each adhered to the notion that it was the area in which they lived that was responsible for their offending. Circumstance was also seen as more influential than intention by JM when describing troublesome behaviour in school:

"...it's just, one of those things where, you're either a good boy, or a bad boy, that's it. Well not a bad boy, like... I'd say either a good boy or, you just got caught up in the wrong-doings in life and to other people you seem bad, you know what I'm saying..."

In terms of blame attribution, in some cases, although Fringes admitted personal involvement for the actions that resulted in their sentence, they did not accept full responsibility for their actions. This was demonstrated by VA, both in his belief that the police had exaggerated his involvement in the robbery for which he was convicted,[138] and in his tendency to minimise his actions (e.g. describing an occasion where he beat up his sister as having *"a little problem"* with her). Similarly, RZ showed a tendency to accept criminal responsibility (e.g. *"there's no point sulking about it or saying I don't deserve it because, I done what I done"*) whilst simultaneously diminishing his involvement (e.g. *"apart from this and the last fight like, I've never got in any trouble"*) and laying blame on his anti-social peers for his own actions (*"it's one of them ones where I think it was just because of the people I was hanging*

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[137] And thus, as described above, spending a lot of time out on the streets as a temporary escape.

[138] *"Obviously, all I'm here for... not saying I'm guilty of anything or nothing. Guilty for half the case init, police exaggerated it and got me done for another half init."*

around with"). IK similarly described how his father blamed his friends for involving him in crime, a view which he also seemed to be adopting since he felt his behaviour in the prison was markedly improved compared to his behaviour when free with his friends. RS was able to externalise blame by morally justifying his actions ("*I was just upset 'cos it weren't my fault, I was standing up for something. Yeah, self-defence*") and externalise the personal consequences of his actions by placing them outside of his control (e.g. "*But the man, you know the Judges, it depends on the day how they feel, just give you something*"). Finally, BL and MB both externalised blame outright for the criminal acts for which they were incarcerated. BL was charged under joint enterprise laws, being present in a house when the police found a kidnap victim (who BL denied any knowledge of) locked in a cupboard, while MB described how:

"*My co-ds robbed somebody, and, obviously I met them literally like two seconds after like they done it and then like, I had a chisel on me like so that it, I got basically I got arrested for robbery, coming equipped...*"

- Reactions to disappointment.

Between Fringes' values and goals, emotionality, belief that they are misunderstood, and external locus of control, a complex social cognitive process emerges (see Figure 5.7). Fringes also possessed a strong self-belief, not necessarily in their ability to control their lives, but that things would work out for them in the end (i.e. their values and goals will be met with little personal effort). However, this self-belief can be a double-edged sword given the themes described thus far. Provided that their self-belief is reinforced (i.e. when circumstances dictate that their lives go the way they want, that values are upheld, and goals met) they may experience positive emotions, commitment to their pro-social peers, and adherence to social controls. However, when circumstances dictate that their socially
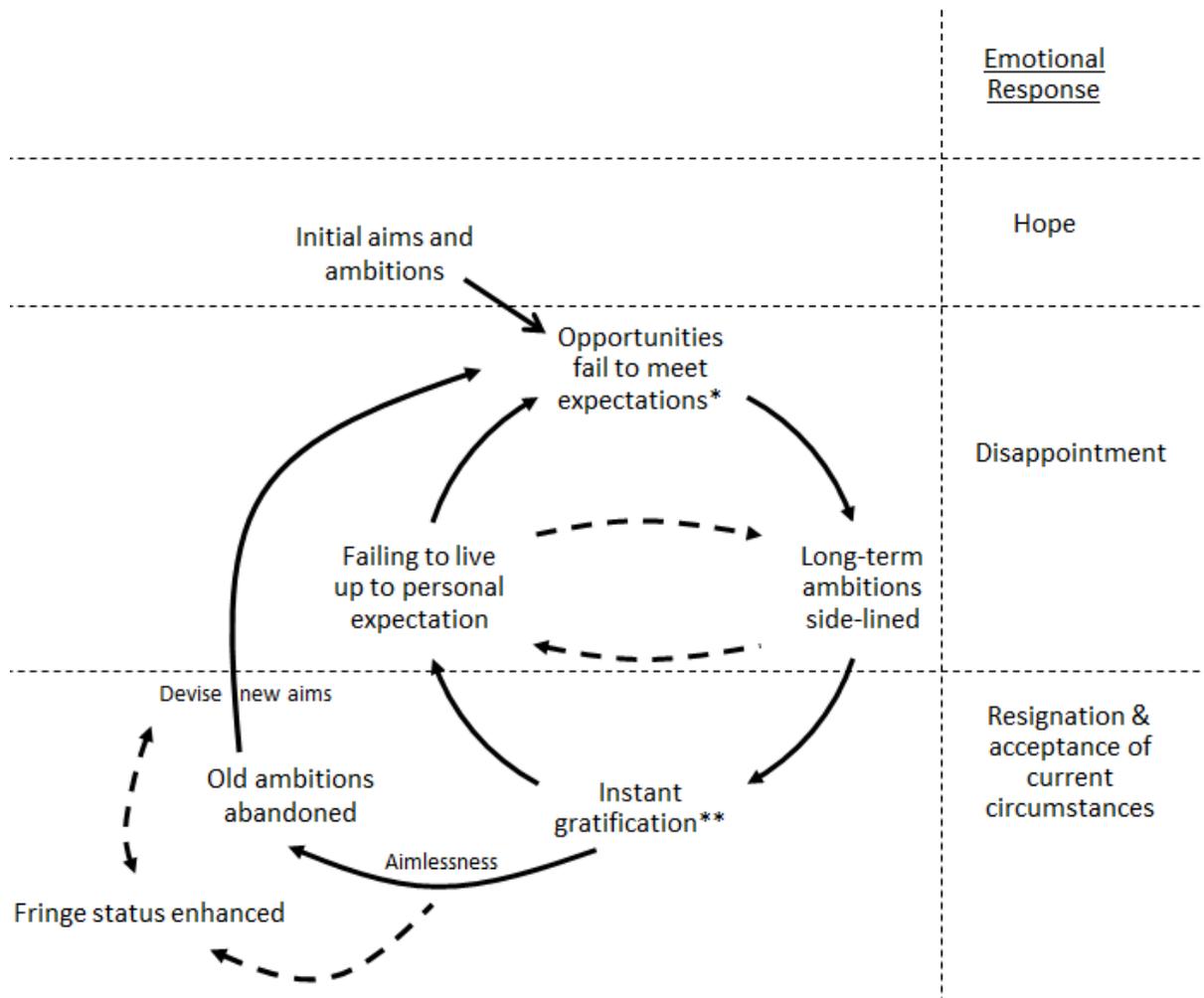
Figure 5.7.   Cycle of disappointment.

accepted aims and goals cannot be met, they may find themselves in a dissonant state, as their

self-belief conflicts with other social cognitive processes. Given their proneness to self-

promotion (i.e. the need to present themselves in the best possible light), failure to live up to

their expectations may be particularly difficult to bear as they may come to believe that

others are disappointed in them. Thus, they may feel dejected and experience disappointment

in themselves. Initially they may work to end this dissonance by some proactive means, such

as by seeking (legitimate) alternative means of living up to their self-belief. If/when these

alternatives fail also, they will come to accept how things are, abandoning their initial goals,

indulging their impulsive streaks, and committing to their anti-social peers in order to make the best of things.

This, then, is the mechanism through which the themes presented throughout the Fringe Gang Member Model converge to determine how commitment to pro- and anti-social peer groups are maintained and balanced against each other, which in turn drives Fringe membership. Thus, whether a Fringe member emphasises their links to pro- versus anti-social peer sets at any given time will depend on the interaction of their positive self-belief and whether the degree to which they believe negative circumstances in their lives are outside of their control.

- Perception of gangs.

Fringe's generally had some difficulty in defining a gang. RZ commented that "*if I can't explain it, and I sort of got knowledge about it, I can't really expect no one else to understand it you know what I mean.*" This was a sentiment shared by many Fringes.

Despite claiming that "*...I don't know what a gang is to be honest*", AM went on to describe a gang as being a self-defined team (rather than a group, similar to Core gang member JW) with a name, comprised of young people (although adults may also be members), whose principle activity is to bully and impose their will on others (thereby emphasising engagement in conflict over engagement in criminality). Within this context he described not being aware of any such "teams" at work within the immediate vicinity of his home, but was aware of, and had contact with, such teams in the wider London area. He was disinterested in maintaining close contact with them, however, citing that he "*...wasn't a fighting type...*" and, thus, indicating a belief that the goals and needs of gangs conflicted with his own personal needs and goals (i.e. making-money).

VA, however, claimed that there were "*millions*" of local gangs, directly linking their existence to specific communities to the extent that being in a gang and living (and growing up) in the community were synonymous. Attachment to territory and having a group name were, for VA, key to identifying the difference between a typical group of friends and a gang. Regarding gangs' preoccupation with territory, he was particularly scathing: "*What's the point of repping a postcode? Die for a postcode?! No, fuck that shit*" (a sentiment shared by BL, who talked about "*all this postcode nonsense*" with regards to why such a high proportion of his friends had been the victims[139] of knife and gun crime, and by MS who said "*Come and have a fight for a postcode like, I think that's dumb init... that's all America, Blood and Crip, that's all dumb*").

Consistent with a feeling of being misunderstood, VA questioned the way in which gangs are defined by outside agencies, believing that the characteristics are so malleable that (e.g.) the police will move the goalposts so to speak, to label as many young people with the category "gang member" as possible, so as to maximise their chances of getting a conviction. In a sense then, this introduces a further sensation of lack of control, as young (perceived) gang members lose control of their own social identity. Having a gang name is the easiest method of categorisation and, as such, VA commented that it was often the police who give groups of young people specific names, and thus elevated them to gang status.[140] BL gave individual group members more personal agency when determining when a group is a gang, although he was also critical of outside agencies and the media for calling "*...anything over two people a gang*". He described knowing (Core) gang members, referring to them as

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[139] Although he implicitly questions whether anyone who suffers the consequences of gang affiliation can be called a victim. When asked whether anyone close to him had ever been the victim of a crime he responded "*Um, three of my friends have been stabbed... one of them's been shot but mainly stabbed really, if that's what you call being a victim...*"

[140] See Hakkert et al. (2001). As will also be described later, VA distanced himself from his group of friends (going from Core to Fringe) in response to the police assigning them a name, and the group subsequently adopting it. Also, he displays different criteria for gang membership for his own group versus others, which will also be discussed.

"*idiots*" and "*weasels,* [who] *think it's cool...*", and a target of ridicule. He cited fear as being the primary motivation for joining gangs – they are "*scared on their own and think that 'cos they're with others they're alright.*" RS believed that Cores had "*no moral in life... they don't know what to do... 'cos mainly, erm, no fatherhood around no father around.*"

Structurally, BL was aware of large groups or gangs which were attached to specific territories (and subsequently would see groups from outside their own territory as the enemy, regularly arranging to meet up in the local park for "*stupid*" organised fights), but that each contained smaller subgroups within them. These territorial groups had become so embedded that he was aware of family members who would not speak to one another because they lived in different areas. This suggests that territorial gang-thinking was particularly entrenched, likely via cultural transmission, in and around the area where he lived. BL's view was more pragmatic however:

"*Just 'cos they're from different postcodes they're enemies... Even I don't understand that. Their parents could've moved somewhere else, they'd basically be in another postcode really, don't really make much difference... not many people* [in BL's area] *see it the same way as me...*"

Group process themes.

In conjunction with their individual social cognitive processing, group processes experienced as a member of both pro- and anti-social peer sets are crucial to the Maintenance Phase. One principle theme emerged from the data which was characteristic of group processes which influenced Fringes as their affiliations with gang members began to strengthen – their tendency to employ upward social comparisons.

A tendency towards making upward social comparisons appeared frequently in Fringes' discourse, both when discussing their own group memberships and also when speaking hypothetically about motivations to join a gang. This tendency was particularly evident when compared against Cores. This difference, perhaps, may be traced back (yet again) to Fringes' transience. Cores described their gang membership as a natural evolution of long-term peer associations and, as such, they often portrayed themselves as being equal to those around them (both within and outside the gang) – thus if social comparisons occurred it would be to confirm their relative status among equals. Fringes, however, when arriving in a new environment, would be dependent on their observations of, and interactions with, existing young residents to learn how best to fit in. The tendency, therefore, given their self-promotional traits and external loci of control, would be to compare themselves with the level of status they themselves may like to achieve. Further, given this tendency, Fringes may also then endorse a belief that all prospective gang members are influenced by upward social comparison.

The notion of role-models appeared prominently. With regards to role-models for gang membership, JM commented how:

"*young kids are... seeing people round them doing, things that they shouldn't be doing... and they look nice, getting nice clothes nice trainers and that, buying chains and that. And obviously, as a young kid, you see on TV all these good people have chains and nice clothes and that so obviously you think "oh these people are doing something good init... yeah, I'm gonna be like this person this person." So then you get involved in the stuff that they're getting involved in, not knowing that you can get in trouble for it init...*"

MS endorsed this view also, describing how gang olders can be a source of inspiration for young people in the community. With regards to their own behaviours, MB and his peers

explicitly described the dominant member(s) of their gang (i.e. those who they used to attain status by-proxy) as being their role-model(s). Fringes could also describe situations in which they may look up to and emulate anti-social/gang peers, but deny being influenced by them. For instance, RS commented how "*people that care what people think don't get far in life. With me, I don't care what people think, I just do what I do, don't care, yeah*" indicating that he was unlikely to experience peer pressure. However, he later described how his behaviour changed when his relationship with pro-social peers deteriorated once he started college and instead began to associate with a new group that he tried to impress. This lead to him being "*dragged into*" other people's disputes, and he gained his first conviction. This experience led to a shift – instead of looking up to his new peers, he instead began to make a downward comparison, ultimately returning to his original, pro-social friends.

Role-models can also be positive, however, and an absence of positive role-models was noted by Fringes as influencing behaviour. Given the relatively unstable family structures experienced by Fringes, the absence of fathers from young people's lives was considered the principal lack of positive role-model. RS continued to contradict his statement that he cared little for what others thought of him by comparing himself to his god-brother, a former gang member-turned-professional footballer. He also attributed some of the environmental differences between his hometown A and hometown B (as previously discussed in the Trigger Phase – environmental factors: neighbourhood organisation) to the fact that young people in hometown A had no positive role-models while those in hometown B did. Finally, given the importance placed on having role-models (and coupled perhaps with a little self-promotion), several Fringes were keen to put themselves forward as future role-models. This was evident in JM's admonishment of the young children who failed to help their mother with the shopping. By helping her himself, he was keen to show these children what they were taking for granted by comparing them to how he himself had grown

up without having a loving mother. MB was perhaps the most explicit in his desire to be a role-model:

*"I wanna become a role-model in my community. I don't wanna be known as "*oh yeah, there's *[MB]* like... the old *[MB]* like, do you think he'll smack this person for me..?*" I want to be known as like, I want people to think of me as like "*oh yeah, look it's *[MB]*, he's changed a lot 'int he like...*" Got a new perspective on life.*"

Thus, Fringes seemed keen that ultimately they become the target of upward social comparison, rather than engage in it themselves.

That Fringes engaged in upward social comparisons (thus emphasising their own perceived inferiorities when compared to valued others) also supports the notion that they may have regularly experienced a dissonance effect such as the one hypothesised to influence their specific peer group attachment at any given time (see social cognitive factors: reactions to disappointment, above). Making upward social comparisons may potentially challenge Fringes' self-beliefs and induce feelings of dejection (if the outcome of their comparison is personally unfavourable), thus shifting their group affiliations slightly more in the direction of their anti-social peer group.

Peer-group fluidity.

The final stage of the Maintenance Phase concerns peer commitment, specifically the fluidity with which Fringe members view and enact their commitment to peer sets. As the individual's social cognitive processes continue to develop, and interact with social processes that occur within the peer sets to which they belong, Fringes are motivated to ensure that associations with each peer set are maintained. Given this motivation, and the supporting interaction between pro- and anti-social peer sets (see Trigger Phase), the structure of

Fringes' peer associations may be seen as being more of a diffuse social network containing (low cohesive) memberships of (somewhat connected) peer groups (as opposed to cohesive memberships of distinct peer groups). As such, Fringes experience pushes and pulls (i.e. related to their reactions to disappointment and associated processes) and find their position in the network constantly shifting as their commitment to either their pro- or anti-social peer groups varies. At any given time, they will likely identify with one group over the other, but some connection with both will be maintained at all times. For instance, MS described how:

"they're [pro-social peers] *not involved in crime but... they um they socialise we* [anti-social peers] *socialise with them, socialise together... People who've got sense will hang around with them people as well. So they're the people that give you sense when you need it like, they will... "*come on what you doing, think properly*". You need them people around you"*

AM and RS in particular also explicitly described how the presence of such "sensible" peers worked to balance their over-arching peer network.

End of Maintenance Phase.

As described above, having identified with, and supporting interaction between, pro- and anti-social peer groups, the structure of Fringes' peer associations can be viewed as more of a diffuse social network containing (low cohesive) memberships of (somewhat connected) peer groups. Owing to the intricate balance between engagement with pro- and anti-social groups and the factors which make each appealing (which can be characterised as finding acceptance, support, and role-models), social cognitive and group processes become very important for determining which group will hold most sway over Fringes at any given time.

Phase Three – Reactions.

Structural features.

The final phase of the Fringe Gang Member Model is the Reactionary Phase. Here, the consequences of an individual's decision to maintain commitment to both groups of friends play out, as they experience continued pro- and anti-social influences (e.g. in terms of opportunities for social control and opportunities for criminal learning respectively) which feed into their behaviour to varying degrees. For the Core Model, this phase was dual process in nature (with those under the influence of pro-social peers following a pathway to a non-criminal lifestyle [not examined in this research] and those under the influence of their anti-social peers following a pathway to a criminal, gang-affiliated lifestyle). However, for the Fringe Model, the connections between different elements of the dual pathways become more prominent. Fringes' connections to pro-social peers may be more salient under some conditions (be that an extended period of time or a particular situation, depending on circumstance, and, thus, promoting opportunities for legitimate social control while constraining opportunities for criminal and anti-social learning), encouraging conforming behaviour (i.e. acceptance of legitimate means of obtaining valued goals). However, the potential for the connection to anti-social/gang peers to (re-)assert itself (facilitating Fringes' exposure to opportunities for criminal and anti-social learning, and, thus, facilitating deviant behaviour) means that Fringes find themselves slipping between the two different pathways. The opposite pathway may also occur, with the individual under the influence of their anti-social/gang peers at one point, before the influence of pro-social peers (re-)asserts itself, with the connections between the dual pathways allowing them to move from the path of anti-social action to the path of pro-social action.

Thus, Fringes can be said to be straddling multiple social identities. As with the Core Model, the anti-social peer group "evolves" to the point whereby it may legitimately be described as a gang[141], however, unlike the Cores, Fringes may not always have been present at the formation of the group (owing to transience). Ongoing social cognitive and attribution processes influence an individual member's response to this newly acquired status of "gang member" as they come to question aspects of self and others. This may help to determine the extent to which they associate, placing themselves either on the outer or inner fringes of the gang.

As per the development of the Core Gang Member Model, since all participants were drawn from an offending population, the anti-social/gang peer group generally exerted greater influence than the pro-social group. However, unlike the Core Model, given the commitment to both good and bad groups of friends, more of the pro-social pathway exists in the Fringe Model and so can be described in greater detail (e.g. with regards to the influence of social controls).

Thematic content.

Figure 5.8 displays the emergent themes which fit within the categories comprising the Reactionary Phase of the Fringe Gang Member Model.

Opportunities for criminal learning.

When anti-social peer associations are more salient, an individual's exposure to opportunities for criminal and anti-social learning is facilitated (as per Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, & Chard-Wierschem, 1993, and Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, & McDuff, 2005). That is, in perhaps a relatively short space of time, they will affiliate more strongly with their anti-social peers and become (more) aware of new anti-social norms. This enhanced commitment to anti-

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[141] i.e. in that it meets the five defining characteristics of a gang as proposed by the Eurogang network.
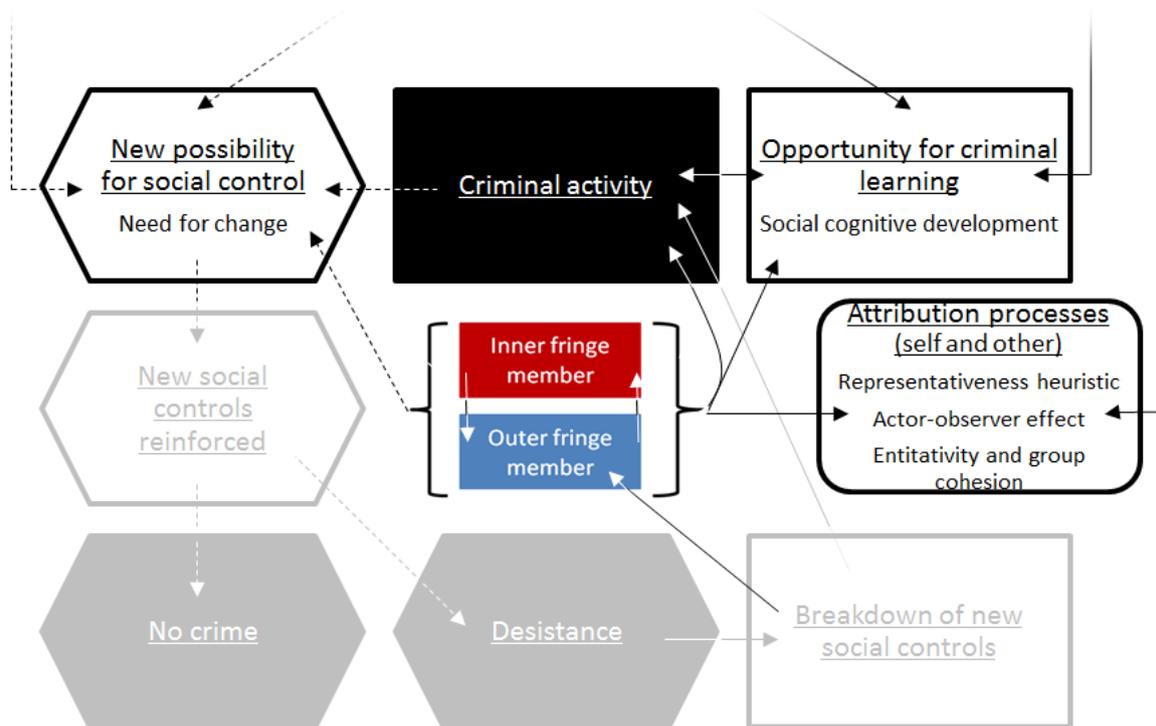
Figure 5.8.   The Fringe Reactionary Phase.

social peers will see them engage in criminal activity, perhaps for the first time. Simultaneously, their exposure to opportunities for social control will be weakened (as pro-social peer influences suddenly diminish).

In enhancing their commitment to anti-social peers, and weakening (though not breaking) their commitment to pro-social peers, Fringes' status as a member of the deviant peer group/gang will be confirmed. However, their lingering commitment to pro-social peers (and the underlying environmental, social, individual, and social cognitive and group processes responsible for this – see the Maintenance Phase) limits the extent to which they are (or wish to be) accepted, and so they remain on the periphery of the anti-social group. Both behaviour (in the form of engagement in delinquent and criminal behaviour), and social cognitive and intra-group processing (in the form of the reinforcement of adherence to anti-

social and criminal norms), change for the worse (though perhaps not as permanently as for Cores). As in the Core Model, both effects are bi-directional in that: as opportunities for criminal learning increase, engagement in criminal behaviour (and adherence to criminal norms) increases; and as engagement in criminal behaviour (and adherence to criminal norms) increases, so too do opportunities for criminal learning.

Gang membership.

As for the Cores, Fringes did not describe actively setting out to be a gang member – that is, none could at any point have been described as "wannabe" gang members (see Hagedorn, 1998; Spergal, 1995). For Cores, the gang gradually evolved out of the existence of their long-term, anti-social peer groups. Given their relative transience, (particularly Outer) Fringes generally became affiliated with the group at a later time when it was well on its way to becoming a gang. Based on the observed characteristics of agreeableness and adaptability, Fringes described the process of making friends as easy – they did not target (and/or were not targeted by) specific, gang-affiliated individuals for friendship, but, rather, friendships evolved naturally with new people that they encountered regardless of whether they belonged to a gang (or belonged to an anti-social peer group gradually evolving into a gang). Thus, for some Fringes, gang membership was a natural progression from their membership of existing, long-term, anti-social peer groups (as per the Cores), while, for other Fringes, it was a natural progression from their relatively new friendships with (individual) members.

Ongoing social cognitive processes influence individual members' responses to this newly acquired status of gang member, as they come to question aspects of self and others.

Attribution processes.

Perhaps as a combined effect of Fringes' empathy/perspective-taking, self-promotional tendencies, feeling misunderstood, and relative disdain for (Core) gang members and territorial gang rivalries, Fringes were particularly sensitive to, and had strong feelings about, the ways in which others perceived them and the attribution of gang-hood to them (despite the aforementioned tendency to follow-up any such statements with the phrase "*I don't care*"). For instance, RS stated that:

"*Stereotype's a big thing... Probably if you see like a, old elderly person walking on the road and there's a hooded youths standing stood in the corner, they'd automatically like cross the road or walk back. But not all, not all hooded people are bad, it's just the way you dress. It's not the way you dress but, the way you carry yourself* [that distinguishes gang from non-gang member]... *I don't, I care but it don't really get to me, not bothered about it*"

Consistent with the view that there is perhaps an overreliance on the stereotypical attire of gang members in attributing gang membership and behaviour to young people, MB described the following incident:

"*It's like, my mum was having a conversation with somebody, and I was in trackies and I walked passed like – I didn't realise my mum was there – and I walked passed with a couple of my mates and this woman was like "*look at all them chavs*" and that, and my mum was like "*that's my son!*" [Laughter] And then a couple of weeks later I'm in chinos and everything like, walking past the same person and she's like "*oh you look a lot better*" like 'cos basically she perceived me on what I was wearing...*"

Similarly, MS described how "*when I'm out, if I know the police are gonna pull me, I'll come out and wear jeans or something and try to blend in like*" suggesting that an awareness of stereotypical attributions can be used to Fringes' advantage.

Consistent with RS's belief that the way in which "*you carry yourself*" is crucial, RZ indicated that there is a difference in how groups are perceived and treated depending on their observed behaviour:

"*Just because we're a group of mates chilling there, maybe smoking a spliff, and we're not a group of mates going to the field and playing football, it's like... they wouldn't go to the football players and say "oh you lot can't all be in a group, gotta split up blah blah blah". But just because we were minding out own business... just, I don't know, they thought we was up to something*"

Similarly, MS described how:

"*If I'm wearing like, a £200 £300 jumper and it's got a hood, and I wanna wear that hood I'm gonna wear it init... And if I'm with my mum, I'll wear it init, I won't get looked at differently you know. But when I'm on my own, if I'm in a group, [inaudible – get] looked at straight away*"

Basing attributions on stereotypical information could have a number of consequences for Fringes. Emotionally-speaking, JM described feeling happy at how appreciative the woman whose shopping he helped carry was (as previously described),[142] however, "*she was like "oh so not all of you are bad kids." And after she said that to me... it burned me to think that "oh that's what she thinks of us" like, just bad kids and that init.*"

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[142] Particularly because "*...we got some dough out of it init, she gave us all like a fiver* [laughs]. *I was expecting nothing you know what I'm saying, I did it out the goodness of my heart, but that was just a perk you know what I'm saying* [laughs]. *So I enjoyed that, I enjoyed that.*"

Criminal behaviour.

On average, Outer Fringes were younger (by an average of approximately seven months) than Inner Fringes at time of first conviction. This difference is not statistically testable given the small and uneven sample sizes involved, but the direction of the effect is consistent with what might be expected with varying levels of gang membership – it would seem that the more loosely associated with the gang one is, the later one finds themselves in (actionable) trouble with the CJS. It may be that Outer Fringes may be more reluctant to engage in criminal offending, and/or are likely to offend less frequently (and thus limit their chances of contact with the CJS), than would their Inner Fringe peers. This may be as a result of having stronger ties to their remaining pro-social group peers – the presence of pro-social peer influences in young people's lives would serve as a protective factor (for criminal behaviour), but the strength of this protection will likely be contingent on the strength of the connection maintained with pro-social peer groups. A much larger, quantitative examination of Fringe membership would be required to confirm this.

Possibility for social control.

Between their ongoing commitment to social controls and maintained connection to pro-social peers, Fringes (compared to Cores) exhibited a greater desire and likelihood to adhere to social controls. Having followed the path to criminal learning and gang membership, and subsequently suffered the consequences (i.e. going to prison), Fringes were determined not to follow that path again. A number of different social controls were suggested as influencing their current and future behaviour, including:

- Cutting contact with anti-social peers/strengthening associations with pro-social peers. For instance, AM described a telephone conversation he had recent had with a pro-social friend in which he had learned of all the (socially desirable) changes

that members of the pro-social peer group had been through while he had been in prison ("*my friends' all working now like... one of my friends got a beau er baby, born like last week*"), which had inspired him to follow in their footsteps ("*so obviously now... just think Blood "*fuck that like*" I ain't coming back to jail. Obviously now I'm trying to break that circle init, and I'm the only one that can do that"*). Similarly, MS described having "*friends that are working and stuff... they might as well come out, but they're working, that's good, that's the route they take...*"

- Committing to partners. RZ had proposed to his long-term girlfriend before he was sentenced, and they were planning to marry on his release. JM and AM were also intending to commit to their girlfriends since they were/were planning on...

- Becoming a father.[143] JM's girlfriend was pregnant and as such he felt he needed to "*...be able to support my family in a legitimate way init... I can't spend my whole life dodging police and doing this and doing this 'cos I've got a baby to worry about now.*" Similarly, AM described wanting to settle down, keep himself to himself, and just be with his family and his girlfriend. He commented that "*she needs me*" – while his girlfriend had been pregnant when he went to jail, she had since had a miscarriage. Like JM, AM felt strongly that he would have to "*step up*" and change his ways with a baby to care for, and had been strongly inspired by the thought of becoming a father. As such, he suggested that "*when I come out obviously, I'm gonna make that baby again init.*"

- Employment. Consistent with their ambitions and engagement with educational opportunities, Fringes saw securing stable employment as perhaps the best opportunity for social control. RZ stated:

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[143] As mentioned in Chapter Two, becoming a father can be a crucial turning point toward (gang) desistance (Moloney, MacKenzie, Hunt, & Joe-Laidler, 2009).

"I wanna try get like a job or something. I don't want a shitty job, I want a job that

I know I'm always gonna have... I don't want one of where it's just part-time, in

the summer – I want a continuous job, throughout the year, with a definite income

every month, the same income. I don't want a job where it's all changing and this

and that so... that's why I'm trying to get my qualifications up."

JM, however, introduced a caveat to the role of employment in maintaining an

adherence to social controls, suggesting that any such opportunities need to appeal

to young people and that, to achieve this, young people need to have input into the

development of controls: *"We don't see jobs appealing 'cos, why work a job, when*

you can, sell drugs and make twice as, or triple what that person makes, in a day,

what they make in a month, you know what I'm saying"

Ultimately, however, while opportunities for social control may be present in the lives of

Fringes, and Fringes may value them, as depicted by MS, it is up to the individual as to

whether they adhere to them long-term:

"The area... gives you certain opportunities. You look at the opportunities, you pick one that

think "ah I'll be good if I do that." But, yeah, then you just think "ah don't really have the

energy for something else" like... it's up to you what you do."

End of Reactionary Phase.

As with the Maintenance Phase of the Core Gang Member Model, there is no definitive end

to the Reactionary Phase, although there is clearer evidence of the potential for gang

desistance with Fringes than with Cores. Fringes may: 1) continue to peripherally associate

with the gang and engage in criminal offending, while maintaining commitment to pro-social

peers and adhering to social controls; 2) adhere to social controls and permanently desist

from gang membership and criminal offending; or 3) eventually even reject their pro-social peers and commit fully to the gang (effectively transferring them to Core membership). However, given that at the time of their incarceration all participating Fringes were still associated with their gangs at a Fringe level, the current research can only speak to the first of these outcomes.

Model Summary and Conclusion

To conclude, a close examination of the lives of participating Fringe gang members revealed a number of important elements which contributed to placing them on a trajectory towards (Inner and Outer) Fringe gang membership. The resultant Fringe Gang Member Model was structured similarly to the Core Gang Member Model described in Chapter Four, aiding comparison between Core and Fringe members (see Chapter Six). The key theme, or core category, around which many of the other themes and categories revolved concerned a *persistent* commitment to (or affiliation with) both pro- and anti-social peers. While commitment to both sets of peers was maintained, the extent to which Fringes would affiliate with one more than the other would fluctuate across time, situation, and individual response to circumstance. As with the Cores, in illustrating that Fringe gang members have access to multiple sources of varied influence, the process of peer selection is less limited and the process of peer group commitment/rejection is more complex, and highlights a greater role for individual, social cognitive, and group processes, than has previously been suggested in gang research. In the following chapter, the similarities and differences evident between the Core and Fringe Gang Member Models will be highlighted, and used to infer hypotheses that may test a proposed theoretical explanation of differential (i.e. Core versus Fringe) gang membership.

Chapter Six

Core vs. Fringe Gang Members – Similarities, Differences, and Hypotheses

Throughout Chapters Four and Five, the experiences, attitudes, and attributions of Core and (Inner and Outer) Fringe gang members have been presented in such a way that the processes they described could be used to explain why they ultimately became a gang member and how the specific relationship each had with the gang emerged.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the final outcome of the analysis of information provided by participating gang members. Having proposed the above processes through the structure and thematic content of the Core and Fringe Gang Member Models, and having suggested some tentative hypotheses intended to account for the link between these processes and outcomes, comparisons may now be fully drawn between these models and the categories of gang member they each represent. Similarities between Cores and Fringes will be flagged, highlighting common themes which place young people at risk of gang membership *per se*. Differences which would suggest the factors (and interactions of factors) likely to determine the ultimate *extent* of that membership will also be highlighted. In performing these comparisons, and speculating about observed differences and their possible meanings, further hypotheses will be generated and existing hypotheses revised, thus producing an over-arching theory capable of accounting for why young people who are at risk of becoming affiliated with gangs may subsequently display such variable levels of commitment.

Structural Comparisons

Structurally speaking, the Core and Fringe Gang Membership Models are very similar, and provide a validation (with some small refinements) of the structure of gang processes

outlined by Unified Theory (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). In each case, environmental, social, and individual factors specific to young people interact to influence their social cognitive processing and subsequently their identification with multiple social peer groups. These groups are evaluated in terms of their pro- or anti-social influence. Within these peer contexts, environmental, social, and individual factors (some new, some long-term) continue to influence the young person's social cognitive processing and introduce a new dimension as group processes come into play. At this point, the young person's commitment to a/all peer group/s is crystallised, as is their exposure to pro- and/or anti-social norms and influences, and their (individual and group) behaviour (either through enhancement or facilitation) will alter accordingly. In the case of those following the path from anti-social peer group involvement, the potential then is for the group to evolve, or become indoctrinated, into a gang.

The principle difference in terms of structure between the Core and Fringe Gang Member Models is in relation to the degree of participating gang members' exposure to pro- and anti-social peer influences. Both types of gang member will initially identify with multiple social groups which represent either predominantly "good", pro-social members and influences, or predominantly "bad", anti-social members and influences. However, it seems that Fringes' experiences of multi-group membership are characterised by their groups being more interactive than are Cores' experiences. Ultimately, Fringes will (seek to) maintain connections to both forms of peer associate, thereby continuing to experience both pro- and anti-social influences throughout adolescence, with one or other having the greater influence at any given time. It is posited that this variable exposure to different sources of influence may be subject to temporary fluctuations in self-belief or self-worth, and the associated emotions these fluctuations promote. Cores, on the other hand, will ultimately come to reject

their pro-social peer group membership in favour of committing fully to their anti-social peers.

The proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership hypothesises that environmental and social influences are the most influential factors in determining whether or not an individual is likely to become a gang member *per se*. Individual and social cognitive factors then determine, in conjunction with environmental and social influences, whether an individual is likely to commit to the gang fully and become a Core, or whether they will only partially commit to the gang and become a Fringe. In some sense, it seems that Core membership may be the expected "default" setting for gang membership, whereby a young person at risk of gang membership is pulled towards it by external environmental and social forces, while Fringe membership is more of an aberration, a "malfunction" caused by the presence of extraneous variables preventing the default from activating. Or, in other words, where external forces may have pulled young people into gangs, internal forces push them towards the fringes (Figure 6.1). Situational/external constraints do appear to impose some effect on Fringes, however. While their Fringe status is seemingly predominantly a result of internal forces pushing them in that direction, whether one becomes an Inner Fringe or an Outer Fringe appears to be contingent on external, situational forces attempting to pull them further in, deeper into Core membership territory.

With this is mind, something can be inferred of the structural properties of Core and Fringe membership which may help to integrate two opposing notions in our understanding of gangs. While the core may be reminiscent of a coherent, bordered social group (or team), the fringes may be more in line with the more disorganised, fluid social networks described by (e.g.) Aldridge and Medina (2008) and Mares (2001). As we move from Inner Fringe membership to Outer Fringe membership, the frequency and strength of the connections within this network may diminish.
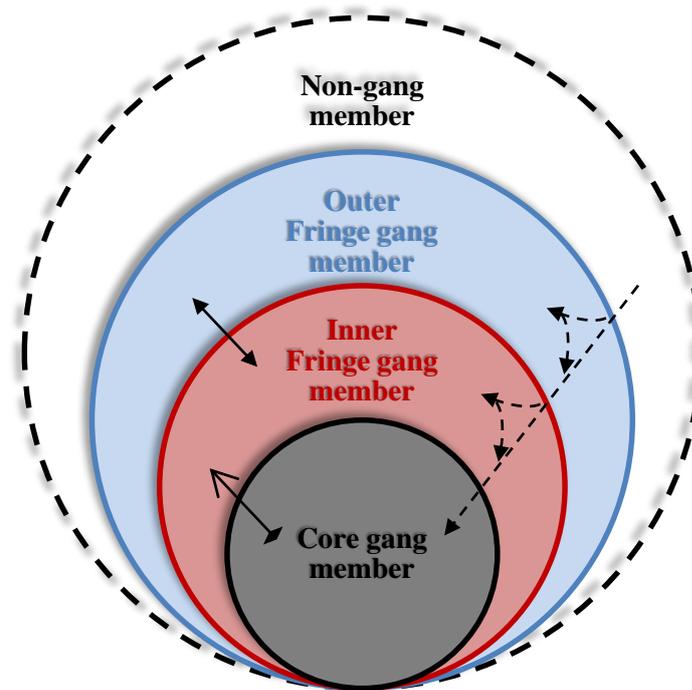
Figure 6.1.   Trajectories through gang membership.

Thematic Content Comparisons

In this section, similarities and differences in the content of the Core and Fringe Models will

be described. Similarities are inferred to be factors which influence likelihood of gang

membership *per se*, while differences will suggest factors specific to either Core membership

or Fringe membership.

Phase One – Triggers.

Environmental factors.

Cores and Fringes demonstrate some fairly significant differences in terms of environmental

factors they were exposed to at an early age. For instance, Cores' family structures were

typically more stable than Fringes' family structures. Cores' parents were more likely to still

be together or, when separated, maintain regular contact with one another, thus providing the

young person with a reasonably consistent maternal and paternal presence. Fringes' parents were more likely to be separated, often with limited contact with the absent parent. In some cases, Fringes may have no contact with parents at all, instead being raised by other family members, living rough, and/or placed in care.

Further, Cores generally provided a positive evaluation of, and evidence of attachment to, their home area. They were, without exception, long-term, usually life-long, residents of the area. They would describe a strong community spirit, with a stable population. However, Cores were reasonably dissatisfied with access to available local social resources, facilities, and activities – often this was a case of familiarity breeding contempt. Fringes, on the other hand, were unlikely to be life-long residents of the community in which they presently (i.e. at time of sentencing) lived and/or engaged in gang-related activities. Fringes' evaluations of the stability and cohesiveness of the community were mixed, and they showed a generally ambivalent attachment to the area. However, they described some positive awareness of, and willingness to use, social facilities nearby. In this case, by being relatively new residents in the community (compared to Cores), these local facilities may not have yet had the shine taken off of them from long-term use.

With reference to perceptions of crime, Cores indicated an early awareness of various forms of criminal activity in the local area. This exposure will influence normative beliefs about crime, conflict, and delinquency, as well as their emotional response to it. For Fringes, exposure to localised criminal norms will be fragmented on account of the comparatively shorter durations in which they have been resident in their home areas, although awareness of crime generally will be evident.

With regards to neighbourhood effects, consistent with Katz and Schnebly's (2011) findings, the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership hypothesised that some

degree of social organisation is required in communities for gangs to emerge. Perception of, and long-term engagement with, the community will influence the extent to which young people may become affiliated with gangs – the more embedded one is in the community, and the more social organisation they perceive, the more likely they are to become Cores. Weaker community embeddedness, and a relatively weaker evaluation of social organisation, will promote Fringe membership.

Social factors.

Consistent with observations regarding structure of the family environment, in terms of socialisation processes, Cores generally reported having strong and supportive bonds with members of their family, while Fringes generally rated family bonds comparably weaker (Figure 6.2). Taken together with structural issues, it is therefore hypothesised that Cores may be likely to commit more deeply to anti-social peer groups and gangs than Fringes as a consequence of having previously been successfully socialised into a (family) group from a young age.

Educationally-speaking, Cores were shown to have much more troubled school histories than Fringes, with evidence of a greater frequency of school exclusions. Fringes were apparently more committed to engaging in educational opportunities, but both Cores and Fringes suggested that they favoured the social opportunities afforded by school over the intended educational opportunities.

Individual factors.

Social factors have an interactive effect with individual factors, such that individual factors characteristic of a young person will be influenced by their experiences of social factors, and vice versa. As such, Cores demonstrated a general sense of fearlessness with regards to
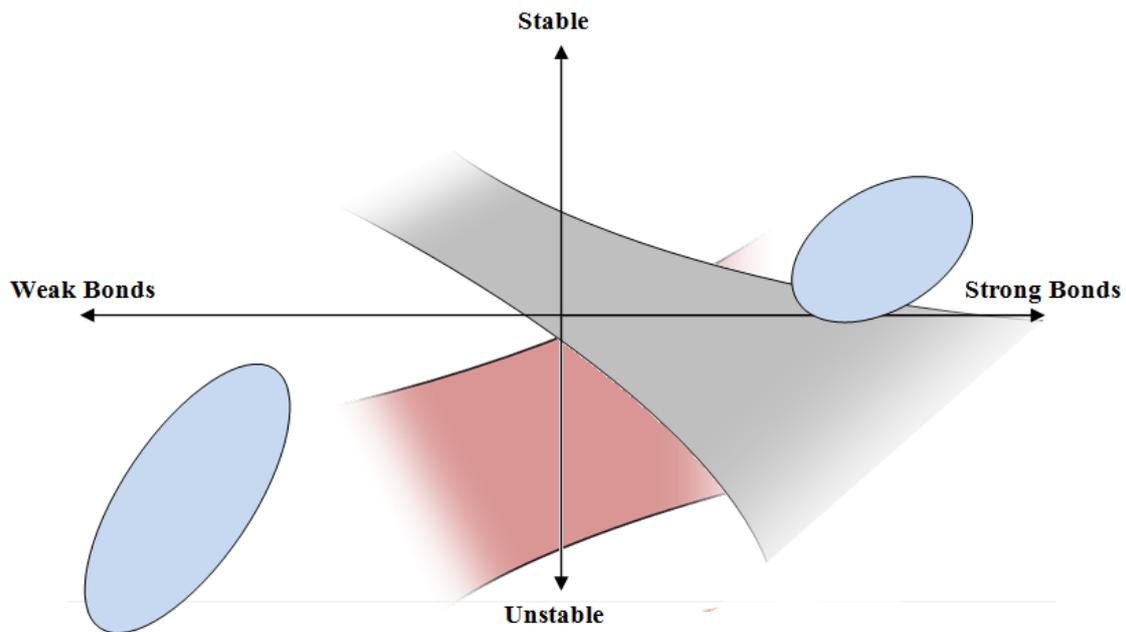
Figure 6.2.   Using family stability and bond strength interactions to predict gang membership.[144]

crime and gang engagement. This could be attributable to normative beliefs about crime

which developed from their early exposure to localised criminal norms. Fringes did not

display this fearlessness. This may in part be due to their limited exposure to localised

criminal norms, or it could also be a consequence of Fringes' tendency to be more emotional

(or, at least, more emotionally expressive) than Cores. Further research would be needed in

order to determine whether this Core-Fringe difference is rooted in the experience or the

expression of emotion. If related to emotional expression, then the potential exists for Cores

and Fringes to have similar internal responses to the same environmental/social triggers, but

that Cores are better at hiding that response. If related to emotional experience, then this

emotional expressive difference may indicate that Fringes possess "healthy" emotional

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[144] The grey shaded area represents those family conditions most conducive to Core membership, the red shaded area represents those family conditions most conducive to Inner Fringe membership, and the blue shaded areas represent those family conditions most conducive to Outer Fringe membership. Areas of overlap suggest conditions where the young person's gang status could go either way, depending on other (i.e. non-family-related) factors.

reactions to outside stimuli which are expressed accordingly, while Cores' emotions may be dampened.

Fringes (and Cores to a lesser extent) also displayed traits of sociability and agreeableness. Such traits will promote a desire, and improve ability, to function as part of a group. Sociability may also enhance the ability to adapt – the more sociable and the more agreeable one is, the more information one might glean from, and about, others, which they might then use in the process of adaptation. This is particularly important for Fringes, whose transience introduced a need to take stock of new environments, situations, and people as they encounter them, and react accordingly in order to better integrate themselves into these new environments. With regards to subsequent gang membership, it seems likely that this ability to adapt may help Fringes to juggle their various peer group memberships and social identities, allowing them to maintain exposure to both pro- and anti-social peer influences, simultaneously and interactively. Cores, on the other hand, with no obviously enhanced adaptability, may struggle with this. This suggests a possible explanation for their tendency to prefer to keep their pro- and anti-social peers separate, and their ultimate commitment to one group only.

Finally, both Cores and Fringes indicated low thresholds for boredom. Consistent with individual characteristics interacting with social factors, this need to stay active may manifest in distinct ways for Cores and Fringes. Having expressed dissatisfaction with access to social resources, Cores' sense of boredom and dissatisfaction may be exacerbated, prompting them to go out and find their own (less socially accepted) outlets for their need for constant engagement. This may act as a push towards anti-social peer groups, who may offer more opportunities for excitement. Fringes, however, being relatively newer to their local area and thus likely less familiar with available social facilities, may be more willing to engage with these opportunities, thus managing their boredom-proneness in a more socially

acceptable manner. By utilising community resources in the expected manner, support for traditional social controls and pro-social values may be reinforced, acting as a push towards pro-social peer groups.

Social cognitive factors.

Attitudes towards authority figures featured among the social cognitive factors presented by both Cores and Fringes. However, whereas Cores demonstrated a fairly stable ambivalence towards authority figures such as the police (characterised by a general dislike for the police, but a willingness to cooperate under certain conditions), Fringes displayed (as yet unaccounted for) wide variations in their attitudes, from showing outright hatred and intransigent antagonism towards authority, to willingness to cooperate and a reasonably positive evaluation of the role of the authority in society at large. One interpretation maybe that Cores' ambivalence is driven by dislike for the police (e.g. on account of their treatment by them) but an unwillingness to portray them in too negative a light (i.e. consistent with the maxim that one can judge a man by the reputation of his enemies, it is in their own interests to give the police their due). Variation between Fringes may be driven by: 1) a dislike for the police (with little incentive to portray them positively, due to weaker attachment with the gang from belonging to a more fluid social network and, thus, less of a need to present the gang as positively distinctive); and 2) appreciation for the police rooted in a greater adherence to social controls. However, more research is required to fully interpret this finding.

Other social cognitive factors identified were specific to Cores or Fringes, rather than shared. For Cores, these factors revolved around; the nature of victimisation (most likely developing out of their awareness of localised criminal norms); concerns about their ability to achieve desired social goals and their access to (and ability to engage with) opportunities to

meet these goals (most likely developing out of their troubled school experiences and perceptions of the local social environment); and a developing vague approach to life in general. For Fringes, these factors revolved around: their (generally optimistic) outlook and belief in making the best of a bad situation (likely a function of their transience and agreeableness driving their ability to adapt to new situations and circumstances); a belief in the importance of being aware of the consequences of their actions (which Fringes regarded as being instilled in them by their parents and guardians); and a sensation that other people generally misunderstand them and their behaviours, attitudes, and motivations (which may be a result of the upheaval experienced at an early age, meaning that having long-term associates who understand their ways is rare).

Thus it would appear that the transient nature of young people's lives (coupled with [in]stability in family structure and bonds) maybe key to influencing social cognitive development which may, in turn, influence their subsequent level of gang membership. In being rooted to a single community throughout life, normalising criminal exposure and fermenting dissatisfaction with local opportunities, young people may become too "comfortable" with the way in which their lives have played out and thus start drifting through life. Conditions conducive to Core gang membership are thus promoted. In moving from place to place, young people may not become too "comfortable" anywhere – instead, their life experiences have taught them that actions have (negative) consequences which require a (positive) response, and they may feel somewhat distant from others. Conditions conducive to Fringe gang membership are thus promoted.

Peer selection processes.

The culmination of these varied Trigger processes for Cores and Fringes promoted different motivations for, and experiences of, peer selection. However, the end results were roughly the same, with associations with both pro- and anti-social peer groups becoming salient.

For Cores, school offered opportunities to interact with a distinct group of pro-social peers, while an attachment to distinct anti-social peer groups formed in the community. Commitment to each group was facilitated by prior experiences of socialisation into a (perceived) strong and committed family unit (such that young people may be recreating their existing family bonds with others outside the family group, thus creating an *extended* family), and the differences in peer associations aided in the pursuit of norm validation (i.e. in seeking to confirm beliefs and expectations developed through their experiences to date).

For Fringes, moving around meant regular exposure to new schools and new community environments, which offered opportunities to interact with multiple groups of pro-and anti-social peers. Their agreeableness and sociability (probably learnt from constant moves and the need to make new friends) meant that Fringes were more open to any group membership opportunities. However, their full integration into these groups seems to have been limited by prior experiences of relatively weak socialisation into a (perceived) unstable family unit. This limitation may be through choice (i.e. past experiences have taught them to be wary of being *too* close to others) or inability (e.g. because they were unable to make the most of their membership based on past experiences). Feeling able to trust peers, and gaining a source of emotional support, within these groups appears to be a key consideration of Fringes, perhaps because of previous disappointments experienced from having weak family

bonds.[145] "Family" may be too strong a word to describe the relationship between Fringes and their gangs, but the nature of the relationship Fringes' desire from peers would be akin to their wish to create a *surrogate* family.

Phase Two – Variable Commitment: core directives and fringe maintainers.

Environmental factors.

As Cores continued to associate with anti-social peers, their dissatisfaction with community social resources intensified as they perceived that provided facilities and activities were not aimed at their age group (anymore), a feeling facilitated by the similar feelings of others in the group. Subsequently, they started engaging in more unstructured activity in their free time, which contributed to a growing awareness of territorial disputes between groups of young people in the wider local area.

Developing awareness of territorial disputes also featured in Fringes' continued exposure to environmental factors via their anti-social peer associations. However, this development may be more a continued function of their response to transience (i.e. area-specific information learned via such associations can be folded into behaviour so as to better integrate into the area and with residents) than a consequence of spending more time in public. At this stage, personal criminal involvement may be minimal or non-existent for Fringes, and the territorial conflict aspect of gang-hood is typically met with disapproval (likely owing to Fringes' lack of life-long attachment to one area).

Social factors.

Cores' troubled school histories ultimately resulted in outright school failure, exclusion from mainstream education, and transferral to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Contact with (school-

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[145] Norm validation may be considered a bonus, but having been brought up in different social environments and communities to existing group members, some degree of norm adjustment may be expected.

based) pro-social peers became far less frequent, and (new) anti-social peer associations strengthened at the PRU. School experiences were more mixed for Fringes. Whilst some were excluded and/or placed in PRUs (typically at a later stage of their school careers than Cores), others completed mainstream education and attended college (i.e. consistent with socially acceptable expectations). Consequently, Fringes continued to maintain contact with pro-social peers (in addition to their anti-social peers), and their commitment to social controls, personal values, and socially accepted goals remained intact.

The stability of family bonds continued to exert an influence for Cores. The existence of continued, stable, supportive family bonds in Cores' lives promoted parental concern for their increasingly socially unacceptable behaviour and peer associations. Strong bonds, and a desire that their child make something good of their lives, could lead parents to take drastic action in an attempt to set them back on a socially acceptable path. Most commonly this was achieved by sending the Core away, usually abroad, to boarding school and/or to live with other family members. These measures were temporary, however, and soon the young person returned home, reasserting old (anti-social) peer bonds and re-engaging in old (anti-social) behaviours, often at an enhanced level compared to before. Fringes were less likely to experience such action: perhaps because family instability meant that they did not have the means to send them away; perhaps because weak family bonds meant that the family were unconcerned by the young person's behaviour; perhaps because they were reluctant to move yet again after doing so earlier in their lives; or perhaps because the influence of pro-social peers meant that Fringes had not engaged in behaviours severe enough to warrant such drastic action.

Individual factors.

Cores' social cognitive beliefs about victimisation, developed out of (a lack of) personal and vicarious experience of being the victim of crime[146], could promote development of an empathy deficit. Cores commented that because they did not really know what it was like to be a victim of crime, they did not feel able to fully appreciate the impact of their (individual and/or anti-social peer group) delinquent acts on others. This lack of empathy may have enabled them to engage in criminal and delinquent activities without concern for the widespread consequences of their actions. Owing to the strength of their emotional experiences and expression, Fringes, on the other hand, displayed an ability to empathise with others and consider the emotional impact that their actions may have on them and others. Owing to their inclination for consequential thinking, Fringes also displayed an ability to take the perspective of others, and were thus able to develop clear and reasoned ideas about their actions, their peers, and their environments.

However, whilst these factors may act as protection from some criminal engagement and committed gang membership, and enhance connections with pro-social peers, Fringes also showed clear, positive self-presentational/promotional needs (potentially driven by their agreeable and adaptable traits) and a heightened level of impulsivity (overriding empathy and deep cognitive thought). In other words, they were driven by a need to impress those around them and acted impulsively to do so. This played into associations with anti-social peers, then, when they saw deviant or delinquent action as being their means of presenting themselves in the best possible light. The equivalent process for Cores concerned the general tendency for them to drift through life, resulting in engagement in relatively shallow pursuits and desire for status. The processes evident in their lives were already pushing them more towards their anti-social peers at the expense of their pro-social peers, thus freeing them to

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[146] Although it is difficult to believe that, as gang members, they did not experience at least *some* victimisation.

engage in anti-social activity without needing to resort to disengaging from pro-social influences as Fringes do.

Social cognitive factors.

The social cognitive factors experienced by Cores and Fringes vary greatly at this point as a result of quite significantly different experiences.

While aware of bonds and concern within the family, Cores developed a sense of social neglect, as their negative perception of social, educational, and potential employment opportunities generated a belief that society as a whole cared nothing for them. Their growing commitment to their negative peer group, and awareness of, and engagement in, territorial disputes, introduced the possibility of gang issues into their lives. When combined with intra-group processes described below, their experiences in this context lead to a sensation of hyper-adolescence, as their experiences reflect those of a "typical" adolescent (i.e. in terms of peer group selection, behaviour, and evaluation, developing a sense of self, pushing boundaries, etc.) but at a heightened (potentially risky) level. A retaliatory and/or hostile mindset emerges, in which the young person adheres to a belief that provocation of any kind requires a proportional response.

Given the persistent associations with pro- and anti-social peers experienced by Fringes, social cognitive and group processes become very important for determining which group will hold most sway over the Fringe at any given time, and interact in a complex manner. During interviews, Fringes seemed to express an external locus of control – they blamed others for both the absence of good things in their lives and the presence of bad things, and often for their offending behaviour (in contrast to Cores who externalised blame for the absence of good things in their lives, but internalised blame for the presence of bad things, and their offending). Fringes also expressed a belief that life is uncontrollable, that

they are trapped by the circumstances they find themselves in and that they simply have to do the best they can within these constraints. The "best" they claimed that they could hope for may emerge from either, or both, socially acceptable or socially unacceptable means, continuing the theme of adaptation. However, Fringes also possessed a strong self-belief, not necessarily in their ability to control their lives, but that things would work out for them in the end (i.e. their values and goals would be met with potentially little personal planning or input). Thus, they may find themselves in a dissonant state. When circumstances dictate that their life goes the way they want, they experience positive emotions, commitment to their pro-social peers, and adherence to social controls. However, when circumstances dictate that their socially accepted aims and goals cannot be met, they may feel dejected, and initially work to end this dissonance by some means, before ultimately accepting how things are and committing to their anti-social peers in order to make the best of things. Thus, the experience of, and reaction to, disappointment ultimately determines to whom Fringes are drawn at any given time – their pro-social peer sets or their gang.

Group processes.

Group processes exert their influence as Cores' commitment to the anti-social peer group increases. For instance, territorial attachment becomes a heuristic tool intended to categorise individuals as members of outside gangs, and out-groups (such as rival gangs and the police) will be used as a yardstick against which their own social identity can be assessed and enhanced. As they are progressively drawn to their anti-social peer groups/emerging gang, and become progressively distant from pro-social peers, the prospective Cores experience a strong motivation for the gang to attain positive distinctiveness (thus enhancing their self-esteem and social status, but also reinforcing inter-group biases and territorial gang disputes).

With a continued commitment to pro- and anti-social peer groups, whether Fringes emphasise their links to one or the other peer group at any given time will depend on the interaction of their positive self-belief and the degree to which they believe negative circumstances in their lives are outside their control (i.e. their reaction to disappointment). That Fringes showed a wide variation in their attitudes to out-group authority (often placing themselves in opposition to authority groups) and, in particular, engaged in upward social comparisons (thus emphasising their own perceived inferiorities when compared to valued others) supports the notion that participating Fringes may have experienced dissonance regularly, thus shifting their group affiliations slightly more in the direction of their anti-social peer group.

Peer commitment processes.

With the culmination of the above processes (which Cores boil down to a desire for fun, material and social status, and extending families) pushing and pulling them in only one direction, Cores' commitment to the anti-social peer group crystallises. The culmination of processes (which can be characterised as being able to trust, finding support, and having role-models) experienced by Fringes means that the pushes and pulls fail to send them along any one trajectory, promoting continued commitment to both pro- and anti-social peer groups.

Phase Three – Gang Response: core maintainers and fringe reactions.

In demonstrating variable commitment to anti-social peer groups, there is support in the current findings for Thornberry et al.'s (1993) and Gatti et al.'s (2005) work. Specifically, having been on a trajectory towards commitment to deviant peer groups and rejection of pro-social peer groups for some time (i.e. through the Core Directional Phase), Cores will have been (regularly) engaging in anti-social and delinquent activities as a result. In finally committing to the anti-social peer group, Cores find that opportunities for criminal learning

are enhanced. Commitment to the gang will also then see a significant rise in the amount and severity of crimes they commit. In contrast, by continuing their commitment to both pro- and anti-social groups and experiencing the social cognitive and group processes described above, Fringes will find themselves bouncing between varying degrees of exposure to pro-social influences (and enhanced legitimate social controls) and anti-social influences (and enhanced opportunities for criminal learning). Criminal behaviour may be *facilitated*, however, by Fringes' continued exposure to the anti-social peer set as it evolves into a gang.

With regards to their offending behaviour, on average Cores were younger (by approximately 9.4 months) than Fringes at time of first conviction. As with the difference reported between Inner and Outer Fringes reported in Chapter Five, it is not possible to say whether this difference would be statistically significant due to the small and uneven sample sizes involved, but the difference is marked[147] and the direction of the effect continues the trend which might be expected with varying levels of gang membership – the more central to the gang one is, the earlier the (actionable) trouble with the Criminal Justice System (CJS) one experiences. Thus, the hypothesis presented in Chapter Five needs to be amended to speculate that (Outer) Fringes may be more reluctant to engage in criminal offending, and/or are likely to offend less frequently (and thus limit their chances of contact with the CJS), than would their Core peers (with Outer Fringes correspondingly being more reluctant to engage in criminal offending, and/or likely to offend less frequently, than Inner Fringes). Since Cores cut all ties with their earlier pro-social peer groups in favour of cementing their association with the deviant peer group/gang ties, they lose the protective effect that pro-social peer influences may provide. A much larger, quantitative examination of Fringe membership would be required to confirm this.

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[147] More-so when Cores are compared to Outer Fringes only, with Cores being on average 14 months younger than Outer Fringes at age of first conviction.

Finally, for Cores, classifications of their group's gang status were fluid. Whether the label of "gang" could legitimately be applied to their group could change as a function of the current cohesion and assessment of the group's entitative state. However, even if they did not see themselves as a gang, they would generally concede that it was likely that others (such as other gangs, police, community residents, or passers-by) would consider them to be a gang. Also, when they would admit to their group having all the self-defined characteristics of a gang, they would often find ways of arguing that their own group *was not* in fact a gang, while all other groups with the same characteristics *were* a gang. While Cores viewed the status of their group as fluid, Fringes viewed the status of their own personal membership as fluid. Fringes would engage in the gang significantly when life was seen as going badly for them and less so when things were going well. Fringes' rising commitment to legitimate social controls, such as family, education, and employment, may also be observed when in a period of relatively low gang involvement. Given the emphasis of external influences on Fringe membership, however, the attribution of gang-hood to the network or the individual by outside forces may also tip the balance in favour of either pro-social or gang peers. For Cores, the attribution of gang-hood to the group, by both themselves and by others, may have a significant influence over the status, membership, activities, and group relations that they experienced. It is worth noting that, based on objective measures (i.e. the Eurogang definition), in all cases (Core and Fringe) the deviant peer group met the criteria for being defined as a gang. At no point, however, did Cores or Fringes report that they actively sought gang membership. Instead, for Cores, gangs were always a natural development of an anti-social peer group to which they already belonged, while for Fringes, membership was a natural development from associating with a deviant peer group which alternated with pro-social associations.

Conclusion – A Theory of Differential Gang Membership

As stated in Chapter Three, Strauss and Corbin (1994) describe a good theory as being characterised as a loosely-linked set of hypotheses, the relationship between which should be able to explain and predict the phenomena of interest. As such, the following hypotheses, derived and simplified from the accounts of Core gang members (Chapter Four), Fringe gang members (Chapter Five), and a comparison of each (Chapter Six), represent a (proposed) Theory of Differential Gang Membership.

<u>Hypothesis 1</u>

Young people at greatest risk of gang membership are those who experience life: 1) in moderately socially organised communities (i.e. not a socially disorganised community, but with at least one characteristic of social disorganisation present/perceived); with 2) borderline stable family structures with relatively strong family bonds; and 3) an individual need to keep active and engaged.

Hypothesis 1a

Young people at greatest risk of Core gang membership are those who: 1) have predominantly only lived in a single community, which they perceive as relatively socially organised; 2) grow up in relatively stable family environments with predominantly strong family bonds; and 3) possess relatively inhibited (expression of) emotions.

These conditions promote ambivalent/positive attitudes towards institutions of authority, beliefs concerning (local) crime and victimisation, unease about their ability to achieve with available opportunities, and a tendency towards "drifting" through life.

Hypothesis 1b

Young people at greatest risk of Fringe gang membership are those who: 1) have lived a transient lifestyle, and perceive their current community environment as relatively socially disorganised; 2) grow up in relatively unstable family environments with relatively weak family bonds; and 3) display relatively "healthy" (expression of) emotions.

These conditions promote relatively extreme (positive or negative) attitudes towards institutions of authority, an optimistic outlook characterised by a desire to make the best of bad situations, an awareness of the importance of consequential thinking, an adherence to socially desired values and goals, and sense of feeling misunderstood.

Hypothesis 2

Young people affiliated with gangs will typically experience membership of both pro- and anti-social peer groups through childhood and early to mid-adolescence.

Hypothesis 2a

i

Core gang members will be motivated to form peer bonds which provide them with fun, social status, material status, and an extension to their family. Fringe gang members will be motivated to form peer bonds which provide them with emotional support from people they can trust, and role-models.

ii

Core gang members will more likely be excluded from school and attend Pupil Referral Units than will Fringe gang members.

iii

Core gang members will develop empathy deficits, while Fringe gang members maintain empathetic feelings.

iv

Core gang members will actively and explicitly seek to enhance their social status, while Fringe gang members will implicitly display a need to impress others.

v

Core gang members will display relatively shallow thinking, while Fringe gang members are relatively thoughtful.

vi

Core gang members will display a need for immediate gratification. Fringe gang members may not: however, they are prone to impulsive actions.

vii

Core gang members will generally accept responsibility for their negative actions (internal locus of control) while blaming others for the absence of positive opportunities in their lives (external locus of control). Fringe gang members will generally possess an external locus of control for both the absence of positive opportunities and the presence of negative events and behaviour.

viii

Core gang members will experience social neglect (as a function of perceived disinterest on society's part to provide appropriate opportunities), hyper-adolescence, and develop a retaliatory mindset.

<u>ix</u>

Both Core and Fringe gang members will become aware of territorial disputes between existing gangs. As a function of varying attachment and commitment to the area, Core gang members will begin to participate in these disputes, while Fringe gang members will be disinterested in (and derisive of) such disputes.

<u>x</u>

Both Core and Fringe gang members will experience social facilitation effects in their groups. Core gang members will seek for the gang to attain positive distinctiveness, while Fringe gang members will display a tendency to make upward social comparisons.

<u>Hypothesis 2b</u>

Core gang members will ultimately reject their pro-social peers, while Fringe gang members seek to maintain a connection to both sets of peers.

<u>i</u>

Fringe gang members commit to pro- and anti-social (i.e. gang) peers as a function of their reaction to disappointment. When experiencing disappointment (dissonance as a result of evidence tarnishing their self-belief), connection to anti-social peers may be enhanced.

<u>Hypothesis 3</u>

Core gang members will find their (anti-social) peer associations principally structured as a distinct, cohesive group. Fringe gang members will find their (pro- and anti-social) peer associations principally structured as a fluid social network.

Hypothesis 4

Core gang members will find their opportunities for criminal learning, and subsequent criminal behaviour, enhanced by their gang membership. Fringe gang members will find their opportunities for criminal learning enhanced, and their criminal behaviour facilitated, by their gang membership.

Hypothesis 5

Core gang members will find their opportunities for legitimate social control reduced by their gang membership. Fringe gang members' opportunities for legitimate social control will be preserved owing to their maintained contact with pro-social peers.

Hypothesis 5a

Fringe gang members' opportunities for legitimate social control, and for criminal learning, will fluctuate as a function of their commitment to pro- or anti-social (i.e. gang) peer sets at any given time (as depicted in Hypothesis 2b*i*).

As per constructivist Grounded Theory (GT: Charmaz, 2006), the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership is a substantive theory, capable of making sense of its own context (i.e. specifically the lives, experiences, and gang membership of those Core and Fringe gang members who participated in this research, and their own interpretations of these). However, these hypotheses raise a number of issues in relation to existing gang theory and research, and point the way towards the need for a further programme of research designed to empirically test them. Thus, in the final chapter, the possible wider consequences of the findings reported in this thesis will be considered.

Chapter Seven

Discussion – Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

Across the previous three chapters, an attempt has been made to explain why some young people at risk of gang membership become Core gang members while others remain Fringe gang members. Using Grounded Theory (GT) methods, this has culminated in the development of the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership, which accounts for observed differences in Core and Fringe members' environmental, social, individual, social cognitive, group, and peer-affiliation characteristics and processes.

In this final chapter, the proposed Differential Theory is discussed in relation to existing research and theory concerning the psychology and sociology of gang membership. Issues concerning definition, theory, and intervention will be of particular focus. Limitations of the current research will be evaluated before, finally, directions for future research, as suggested by the design of the proposed theory, will be presented.

Definition

As outlined in Chapter One, the means by which one defines who is, and who is not, a gang member is both complex and contentious. The research described in this thesis adhered to the Eurogang definition that a gang is "...*any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity*" (Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina, & van Gemert, 2009, p. 20). This definition was used owing to the large number of studies adopting it in recent years (thus allowing for improved comparison between current findings and existing research, a key aim of the Eurogang network's "consensus" definition) and because, among the myriad gang definitions used by researchers,

policy-makers, and other interested parties over the last near-century, the Eurogang definition perhaps captures the most basic and enduring aspects of these definitions.

However, GT research is rooted in the notion that it is the target of research focus (i.e. Cores and Fringes in this case) who should ultimately drive the development of new theory with their personal experience, understanding, and interpretation of the research topic (i.e. gang membership). Therefore, it was prudent to ask participating gang members for their own definitions of gang membership, and to rate their own gang status based on these definitions. In doing so, it is possible to compare the ways in which gang members define gang membership with the way that researchers and policy-makers predominantly define them. This is an important distinction that all researchers should be aware of, since:

a) Self-nomination (while regarded as a valid method of assessing gang membership for research purposes: Curry, Decker, & Egley, 2002; Decker, Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Moule, 2014; Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001) is only truly effective provided there are enough points of similarity between how a participating gang member defines a/their gang and how the researcher defines them;

b) Gangs are an evolving entity – the way in which they form, structure, behave, and present themselves will likely be as different in the next thirty years as today's gangs are from those that existed thirty years ago. To be truly effective, therefore, a consensus definition of gangs must also evolve, moving with the times to reflect the entity that it is intended to represent in the present. Not only do we need to ensure that apples are not mixing with oranges (Maxson & Esbensen, 2012), we must ensure that our fruit stays fresh. The best way of achieving this is to pay close (although not sole) attention to how gang members continue to define their membership.

Discussions with gang members in this research suggested there is enough overlap between their own definitions and the Eurogang definition (e.g. in the emphasis on youthful[148], group-related criminal activity) that, if presented with a gang-like group, gang members and Eurogang researchers will likely agree as to whether or not that group can truly be classed as a gang. However, analysis of interview data yielded four observations, two made explicitly by the majority of participants and two which may be inferred through their discussions of related topics. Each should perhaps be considered with regards to accepting or challenging the validity of the Eurogang definition.

Gang Names.

Gang members place great emphasis on whether the group has its own name. When asked to define what a gang is, all participants referred to it having a name, very often as either the first or second factor they would list. Gang names can be used to highlight the boundary of gangs (i.e. who is in and who is out), can be used to enhance the social identity of its members, and have even been used to perceive the promotion of a deviant peer group to the status of gang-hood. This was most clearly seen in the case of participant VA, who had been fully committed to his anti-social peer group for some time but decided to distance himself from it once the group adopted a (police-assigned, location-specific) name. It was this action which prompted VA to believe that the group had become a gang[149], something he had not "signed up for", and fear that it could lead him into more trouble than it was worth.[150]

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[148] However, Fringe participant JM questions to whom the term "youth" refers – *even the law and the media and all that, they're claiming that youths, are, from, the age of 12 to 24. A 24 year old is a big man he's not a youth he's a big man, you should be seeing these men as big men not youth... It's 'cos they don't understand"* – drawing a parallel with a critique of the Eurogang definition made in Chapter One of this thesis.

[149] A status it had likely achieved already, based on Eurogang criteria.

[150] Which was ultimately the case, despite him removing himself to the fringes of the group.

To the Eurogang network, whether the gang has a name is somewhat less important. Presence of a gang name is considered a Level One Characteristic, meaning that whether a group has a name should be identified whenever an individual's gang membership status is assessed. However, it is not characterised as a defining feature, but rather as descriptive (with some gangs having names and others not). Clearly, this is quite different from the views and experiences of the gang members in this research. It is also different to participants' perceived understanding of police-gang interactions. That police are seen to assign specific names to specific groups makes logistical sense (in doing so the police will be better able to categorise and quantify gangs and gang members in their area, thus maximising the efficiency of their intelligence and behaviour), implying that the police believe gang names to be an important feature (see Hakkert et al., 2001). However, the police are potentially creating the conditions under which a self-fulfilling prophecy may play out. While all participants were aware of, and could define and identify gangs, many were unwilling to apply the term to their own groups (despite recognising that their group possessed all the characteristics that they themselves had just identified as defining a gang, much like the sample reported by Hales et al., 2006). The impetus for this belief was that if they did not have a collective name for themselves they could not be a gang. As illustrated by the proposed explanatory model(s), self- and other- attributions of gang defining qualities are an important aspect of gang development, and of individual attachment and behaviour. To gang members then, a gang name is almost like a key, used by themselves, the police, and/or other outside parties, which unlocks the group and frees them to embrace gang-hood.

Therefore, the issue of gang names would seem to need to be given more emphasis by the Eurogang definition, particularly when used in conjunction with the self-nomination method of identifying gang members. While undoubtedly considered important by the Eurogang network already (being a Level One Characteristic), there may be a strong case in

support of making reference to this characteristic in the formal definition. While many nameless groups might meet the Eurogang criteria when taken on their definers alone, without reference to a gang name in the supplied definition, many research participants who are members of such groups may deny gang membership (thus, not meeting the principle requirement of self-nomination used by many researchers), thus, excluding themselves as a potentially valuable source of information. Gang names are very important to (at least, participating) gang members, and the way in which researchers and policy-makers view gang names may need to shift appropriately.

Territorial Conflict.

The second point repeatedly and explicitly made by participating gang members regarded the link between gangs, territorial attachment, and inter-gang conflict. Fringes in particular listed territoriality as a significant, defining element of gangs. Cores were slightly more circumspect – for those who belonged to gangs engaged in territorial conflict, territory was identified as being virtually central to their existence and behaviour, while for those whose gang had fewer or less intense rivalries, attachment to territory was seen as less important and/or bordering on being a stereotype of gangs rather than a realistic depiction. Beyond questions of the mere existence of territoriality and conflict, there was also a wide variation in gang members' evaluations of territory and conflict. These evaluations ranged from perceiving territorial disputes as: a bit of harmless fun; to being a serious, potentially harmful, but unavoidable (almost necessary) aspect of gang membership; to, finally, a pointless endeavour, with a scathing rebuke of the mindset of those gang members who defend and fight over territory.

As with whether a group has a name, territory is also considered a Level One Characteristic for gang assessment by the Eurogang network, but is not identified as a

defining feature of gangs. And, just as with the name issue, the enduring emphasis placed on territoriality by participating gang members (regardless of its evaluation or perceived form) when asked to define a gang suggests that some further consideration is needed as to whether this should be promoted to a defining characteristic of the Eurogang definition. Again, the inclusion of this factor could make a great deal of difference to researchers' ability to identify gang members when using self-nomination methods.

Crime versus Violence.

Related to the above, the current findings also reflect the ongoing debate as to whether crime generally or violence specifically should be considered a primary definer of anti-sociality in distinguishing gangs from similar groups. As discussed in Chapter One, that a group engages in crime is a Eurogang-endorsed defining characteristic of a gang, but this criminal action can take any form. Others, going all the way back to Thrasher (1927), suggest that it is conflict that truly defines the gang, as most recently put forward by Aldridge, Medina-Ariz, and Ralphs (2012), who were concerned that the criminality definer risks some groups being inappropriately categorised as gangs. An example would be a group of friends who regularly engage in recreational drug use on a night out but do not commit any other form of crime – such groups would not fit the common understanding of gangs or be of interest to the Eurogang network.

Participants in the current research all agree that gangs engage in crime. An interest in crime is the common feature that binds (especially Core) gang members together – it is the action they take to fill their time, inject some excitement and a sense of adventure into an environment that they are not stimulated by (and for which they feel some degree of marginalisation from the wider community), and to attain money and desired goods more quickly and easily than by finding and committing to legitimate employment or asking their

parents. However, the vast majority of their criminal actions tend to have violent features. Obviously, those convicted of assault and grievous bodily harm have, by their very nature, engaged in acts of violence but, in many instances, those convicted of property crimes committed these acts with the aid (and use) of knives, while those who engaged in drug offences were also caught in possession of firearms. This does not even take into consideration the violence associated with involvement in gang rivalries or postcode wars – violence that is committed against gang members, their associates, and those caught in the crossfire of their actions. Thus, gang members suggest that gangs *are* inherently criminal, but there is also an inherent violence in these crimes. Therefore, adoption of a compromise position may be suggested in which the criminality definer of the Eurogang definition includes the qualification that the criminal acts engaged in are violent in nature and/or involve the use or possession of an offensive weapon.

Groups, Teams, or Networks.

The final observation made by gang members with regards to definitional issues concerns what was described in Chapter One as being perhaps the most basic element of gang-hood – that the gang is a group. Chapter One outlined how and why greater care may be needed when it comes to using the term "group" in relation to the Eurogang definition, specifically by questioning exactly how the network defines "group" (e.g. in terms of the minimum number of individuals required, whether participants recognise themselves and are recognised by others as being a distinct collective, etc.)

There are two ways by which gang members contribute to the discussion of the group problem. Firstly, an alternative term is introduced – "team" – which may in fact be a more suitable than "group". All teams are groups, but not all groups are teams, and the definition of a team (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003) very much suggests that gangs would fit within these

particular types of group. Teams, compared to regular groups, tend to: be motivated by specific goals and have a greater sense of shared purpose; have set procedures which guide goal-directed behaviour; and possess members with complementary skills and who are mutually accountable to one another. Participating gang members described their membership as a developing process, in that existing anti-social peer groups evolved to fit the profile of a gang – in part, this evolution may be driven by a collective shift from being a regular group to a team, as: members' goals are shared by, and thus become linked to, the goals of the wider group; territorial awareness and conflict (in some cases) introduces a collective purpose; behaviours become more criminal/violent in pursuit of these goals, developing into group-specific criminal/violent norms and values; individual offending occurs more frequently with/in the presence of other members of the group; and as (Cores') retaliatory mindsets and (Fringes') perceived loss of control lead members to become involved in the affairs of fellow members that they themselves are not directly party to.

The second way in which gang members contribute to the discussion of the group problem is by shedding light on gang structure. As described in Chapter Six, it may be more accurate to describe the Cores of a gang as being a distinct, entitative group or team, with the Fringes as a looser social network (of individuals and/or smaller sub-teams) affiliated with (certain members of), and surrounding, the core group/team (see Figure 7.1). Aldridge and Medina (2008) and Mares (2001) have previously proposed that a social network definition of gangs may be more appropriate than a group-based definition, particularly when examining gangs in the UK. As with regards to the crime versus violence debate discussed above, based on differences in the observations and experiences of participating Core and Fringe gang members concerning their relationships with other members of their gang, it seems that a compromise can be made in which Cores are identified as a group (or team), and the periphery of the gang referred to as a social network
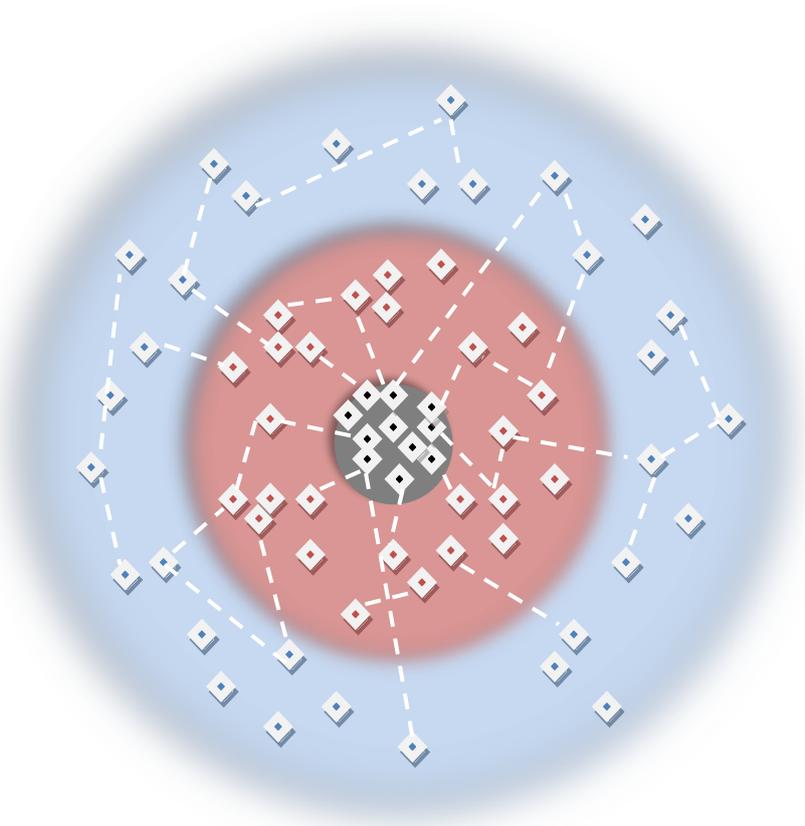
Figure 7.1.   Illustration of a potential Core-group/Fringe-network gang structure.

Revising the Definition

Given the issues described above, the following revisions (presented in bold) are suggested to the existing Eurogang definition in order provide a better fit with how gang members perceive and understand gangs. Thus, gangs may be defined as:

> "*...any durable, **<u>bounded,</u>** street-oriented youth **<u>team/network</u>** whose involvement in **<u>violent/criminal</u>** activity is part of their **<u>collective</u>** identity*"

The term "bounded" refers to the ability to accurately demarcate the boundary of a gang via their adoption of a collective name (recognised by all those within the gang, and by individuals outside the gang) and/or association with a definable geographic location. Using

the term "collective" also encapsulates both the core group/team and the fringe network within the gang concept without misattributing their nature – that gang membership is characterised by association and interaction with multiple other individuals who share the same social identity to a greater of lesser degree. Finally, by replacing the phrase "illegal activity" with "violent/criminal activity" the focus of emphasis is sharpened within the definition, thereby deflecting attention away from groups whose inclusion may be inappropriate for Eurogang-consistent research (e.g. recreational drug users: Aldridge et al., 2012).

Theoretical Implications...

The intention behind any GT approach is to generate new theory regarding the social phenomenon of study. This theory should be grounded in the lived experiences of those who have had direct contact with the phenomenon. This thesis has elicited several new insights concerning differences between Core and Fringe gang members (described in Chapter Six) which have the potential to explain why such different forms of membership exist. Additionally, given the breadth and range of existing gang theories (with regards to gang membership *per se*, if not for differential membership) it is unsurprising that themes emerged from the data which correspond with, and help to validate, existing gang theory.

... of New Insights.

Research examining Core versus Fringe gang membership is limited, and is generally quantitative in nature. Given the qualitative nature of the present research, direct comparisons with this existing research are not possible (given differences in sample sizes, data collection methods, etc.), however, some broad observations can be made. For instance, Cores were, on average, very slightly older than Fringes, as found (although not to the same

extent) by Alleyne and Wood (2010).[151] While the presence of differences in the severity of crimes participating gang members were convicted of is debateable, generally speaking Fringes' crimes appeared to have been more violent in nature, as per Alleyne and Wood (2010). Consistent with Wood, Kallis, and Coid (under review), (Outer) Fringes were more likely to have been born outside of the UK than were Cores, however, they also found: Fringes were less likely to be Black or Asian (whereas as the current research shows no discernible pattern of racial differences between Cores or Fringes); Fringes were less likely to show signs of anxiety (whereas the current research shows Cores display a relative fearlessness); and that Fringes were less likely to abuse substances (whereas Asset data revealed that more participating Fringes had drug histories than did participating Cores). While differences in impulsivity and attitudes towards fighting were seemingly negligible, the responses made by participating gang members in this research correspond with Esbensen, Winfree, He, and Taylor's (2001) findings that Cores: are more risk-seeking; have (or, at least, develop) a greater commitment to anti-social peers, and less commitment to pro-social peers; and fewer feelings of guilt (as shown by Cores' relative lack of empathy). Finally, on average, participating Cores were found to have been convicted of a criminal offence much younger than Fringes, which corresponds with Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, and McDuff's (2005) finding that Facilitation effects were experienced by "transient" (i.e. Fringe) gang members, while "stable" (i.e. Core) gang members experienced an Enhancement process.

A number of other differences were observed between participating Core and Fringe gang members, however, which may have more explanatory power...

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[151] On average, participating Cores were less than two months older than Fringes, although this may be an artefact of collecting data from incarcerated gang members – young Fringe members with limited criminal experience will be less likely to find themselves in prison than older Cores with more extensive criminal histories.

Pro- vs. anti-social peer associations.

As previously mentioned, the key observation, around which all other identified themes that emerged were organised, was that:

1. Gang members, in general, were aware of, and identified with, what they saw as pro-social peer groups for some period during childhood and (early) adolescence. Gang members would also associate with, and identify themselves as, members of anti-social peer groups. Membership of these (relatively) distinct peer groups occurred simultaneously. That is, with regards to participating gang members at least, a purely anti-social peer selection and association process did not occur;

2. Cores would ultimately come to reject their pro-social peer associations (as a response to the experience of static and dynamic environmental, social, and individual factors, and their evolving social cognitive responses to these factors) in favour of committing to their anti-social peer group, and thus setting them on a trajectory towards full criminality and gang membership. Fringes, on the other hand, would fail to reject either peer group, and instead would continue to maintain associations with both. As such, Fringes continue to be exposed to both pro- and anti-social peer influences, and find themselves torn, or bouncing, between a trajectory of adherence to legitimate social controls and socially acceptable behaviour and a trajectory towards criminality and gang membership.

Theoretically, it could be suggested that one possible explanation for Fringes' position on the periphery of the gang is that their continued exposure to sources of pro-social influence might help them to maintain an adherence to social controls and socially acceptable values and goals. Thus, Control Theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi, 1969) may be particularly relevant to the Fringe gang member experience (as will be described in more

detail below). Also, in dividing time between two sets of peers, Fringes may be physically prevented from spending more time with anti-social peer groups, thus, limiting exposure to their influence and opportunities for criminal learning. Cores, on the other hand, (particularly when excluded from school and attending Pupil Referral Units [PRUs]) lose and/or reject their source of pro-social influence, and exposure to exemplars of adhesion to social control (i.e. a source of pro-social reinforcement) will be lost. This will induce a slide away from legitimate social controls in favour of (more easily achievable and peer normative) opportunities for criminal learning. Effectively, Fringes will constantly feel the pull in both pro- and anti-social directions, and will have to work against one to achieve the other kind of peer involvement, while Cores will only feel the pull of the gang and, thus, may be easily engaged in gang norms exclusively. A number of processes will determine which kind of pull a young person at risk of gang membership may feel...

Education and aspirations.

Related to the above observation, Cores and Fringes displayed some differences in terms of their educational histories and future aspirations. Almost without exception, Cores were permanently excluded from school, often after exclusion from multiple different schools, and were subsequently sent to attend PRUs. While memories of school were generally positive, the PRU experience was generally more negative, as participants cited issues with inadequate supervision, a lack of structure, and increased anti-social peer associations. Cores were also unlikely to offer much in the way of future aspirations even prior to their exclusion from mainstream education, having not thought beyond school to consider future education opportunities or career paths. Fringes, however, were more likely to complete mainstream education and sit GCSES – when exclusion did occur it was generally late on in their school lives, with Fringes unlikely to be sent to a PRU. Fringes also showed greater consideration

for their future engagement in legitimate opportunities, with a number expressing a desire to go on to college or university, or ambitions within a specific sphere of employment.

As might be expected given the similarity in the emphasis of Core/Fringe differentiation and embeddedness research, the differing educational histories of Core and Fringe participants speak to one of the key elements of the embeddedness concept – that the more deeply embedded one is in the gang (i.e. the more likely one will be classified as a Core than a Fringe), not only will bonds with anti-social peers strengthen, but opportunities to interact with pro-social peers will decrease and bonds with pro-social peers will weaken (Pyrooz et al., 2013). Given that participating gang members (regardless of their degree of gang membership) generally regarded pro-social peer associations as being rooted in the school environment, by removing Cores (or those on the way to Core membership) from that environment, their only pro-social attachments are also removed. Thus, school exclusion promotes the conditions which characterise deeper embeddedness (i.e. increased likelihood of being a Core).

Family stability and bonds.

Lack of parental guidance does not necessarily reflect neglect. A common stereotype of gang members is that they have come from disorganised family backgrounds in which parents neglect their children. Cores in this research show that many young gang members actually come from what would be described as relatively stable families, with little evidence of neglect and, at most, some evidence of circumstances in which Cores may have experienced a temporary lack of guidance. Fringes were more likely to have experienced some form of parental neglect at some point. While both experiences may indicate that young people come to rely more on their peer groups as a form of coping strategy, meaning that the results of lack of guidance and presence of neglect may look the same, there are (at least) two distinct

reasons for this strategy, and we should not automatically leap to the more stigmatising explanation of neglect.

Finally, it would be remiss not to point out the (oft-repeated) observation that, relatively-speaking, Cores came from more stable family backgrounds with stronger family bonds than did Fringes. Consistent with Katz and Schnebly's (2011) determination that gangs will not emerge in entirely disorganised neighbourhoods, it maybe that gang members will not emerge from entirely disorganised families. Instead, some experience of socialisation into a relatively stable (family) group will be required to aid integration into outside peer groups and gangs. The less stable one's family experience, the more difficult it will be to integrate into outside groups/gangs, and the more likely one will remain on the periphery of the group/gang

Emotional reactions and empathy.

Cores displayed relatively muted emotional reactions compared to Fringes. In particular, Cores displayed a characteristic fearlessness with regards to their engaging in risky behaviour, which may have been a result of becoming normalised into a "risky" social environment (i.e. they are vicariously exposed to engagement in risky behaviours, such as those associated with gang membership, over a prolonged period of time). Fringes, meanwhile, were reasonably upfront about their fears and concerns about (the consequences of) their gang membership. This apparent difference in fear response may help to account for differential gang membership, since relatively fearless Cores may be willing to become more centrally involved in the gang despite the risks, whilst the relatively fearful Fringes may opt to keep their involvement somewhat limited. Fringes also displayed a broader range of emotional expression than Cores, including the experience of hopelessness and dejection,

which appeared to be key to determining to which of their multiple peer groups (pro-social versus anti-social/gang) they felt a deeper connection to at any given time.[152]

As a possible consequence of these emotional differences, Fringes also showed potentially higher levels of empathy and perspective-taking than did Cores. Cores indicated little concern for the consequences of their actions, and little concern for those who bore the brunt of their actions (i.e. the victims of their offending behaviour). In contrast, Fringes were relatively more empathetic and understanding, potentially indicating that (under normal circumstances) they would think twice about engaging in actions which may prove harmful to others. This would indicate the presence of a protective factor likely to inhibit offending behaviour and/or gang membership: however, Fringes also showed a trait of impulsivity and a belief that life was uncontrollable (and thus they were merely reacting to life events). Both these factors may override empathy effects, thus allowing Fringes to participate in crime and gang membership, however, the empathic concern they hold may be strong enough that, when reacting, they attempt to limit the damage they may cause. Keeping themselves to the fringes of the gang may be one means of achieving this.

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[152] The emotions displayed by Fringes may suggest a role for Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987; Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986). This says that actual-self/ought-self discrepancies promote agitation, and that actual-self/ideal-self discrepancies promote dejection. While Cores were generally unemotional, one or two described anger and agitation at being stereotyped as gang members, and were thus aware of what they ought to be doing (sticking to pro-social friends, doing pro-social activities but unable to due to pro-social neglect) and that they were not doing it. Thus, they had an actual/ought discrepancy, and felt anger. Given that they were vague about future plans they likely had no ideal to compare actual-self to anyway. Fringes, meanwhile, had more concrete goals (ideals) but failed to live up to them, promoting an actual/ideal discrepancy – they were aware of what they would like to do but could not do (tying in with their theme of feeling trapped) – thus, they felt dejected when they compare themselves to their ideal (as shown in the Cycle of Disappointment: Figure 5.7). It seems that Cores may be prone to making actual/ought discrepancies which promote anger and related behaviours, and Fringes are prone to make actual/ideal discrepancies which promote dejection and related behaviours. This is a promising finding, worthy of follow-up, and which may have implications for intervention. However, without more relevant data from Cores, this thesis cannot currently speak to this with great confidence.

Transience.

Fringes were found to have experienced a relatively transient existence, having made multiple moves between countries and cities during their childhoods. Cores, meanwhile, were generally found to have lived in a single location for their entire lives. This difference appeared to underpin a number of subsequent process differences displayed by Cores and Fringes. In practical terms, transience meant that Fringes had less personal history with their home areas and fellow residents than did Cores, resulting in them having fewer "*beefs*", to use JM's term, and thus restricting them to the periphery of the gang. Lack of attachment to a single location also appeared to promote an inability in Fringes to comprehend why gangs engage in territorial disputes. Whereas inter-gang conflict and defence of territory were described as commonplace by Cores with an attachment to their home areas, Fringes reserved their hostility for Core gang members who engaged in such pointless exercises. Transience could also be related to Fringes' sociability and desire to make the best of situations. Being open to affiliating with new peers is an important tool for integrating into new environments, an experience which Fringes were familiar with. These factors may also, therefore, induce Fringes' motivation to maintain contact with both pro- and anti-social peers at all times (in that, in keeping all their peer options open, they will have access to a broader range of resources capable of allowing them to deal with a broader range of situations) – *the* key observed difference between Cores and Fringes. Finally, Fringe transience may link to their belief that they have little control over their lives...

Locus of control and blame attribution.

Cores and Fringes also differed in terms of their loci of control. Cores indicated a belief that they were in control of their negative/anti-social behaviour and its consequences, but externalised blame for the absence of positive/protective factors in their lives. Fringes, on the

other hand, displayed a greater tendency to externalise blame for both positive and negative aspects of their lives.

... in Relation to Existing Theory.

As depicted in Chapters Four and Five, Unified Theory (Wood & Alleyne, 2010) provided a reliable template upon which to elaborate the Core and Fringe Gang Member models. As data collection and theory development continued, it became evident that the interplay of environmental, social, and individual factors proposed by Unified Theory, and the way in which these factors influence social cognitive processing and peer selection, reflected the simplest means of organising the major themes emerging from the data.

Structural differences between Unified Theory and the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership principally revolve around what emerged as the core category from GT analysis – the introduction of Core-Directional and Fringe-Maintenance Phases, to reflect different approaches to the presence of pro-social peer associations that were evident in the lives of virtually all participating gang members. However, by introducing awareness of pro-social peers, the proposed models also lend some support to Haddock's (2011) suggested amendment to Unified Theory (mentioned briefly in Chapter Two: see Figure 7.2). Haddock included a *peer rejection* factor as influencing peer selection processes. Current findings suggest that peer rejection *is* an important aspect of developing gang associations. This is especially true with regards to Cores, when they reject their pro-social peers in favour of solidifying associations with deviant peer groups. As such, the placement of peer rejection in Haddock's amendment (i.e. mediating social factors, social cognition, and peer selection) can be questioned. Gang members in this research, regardless of level of membership, describe initially selecting and associating with peers from a range of social groups
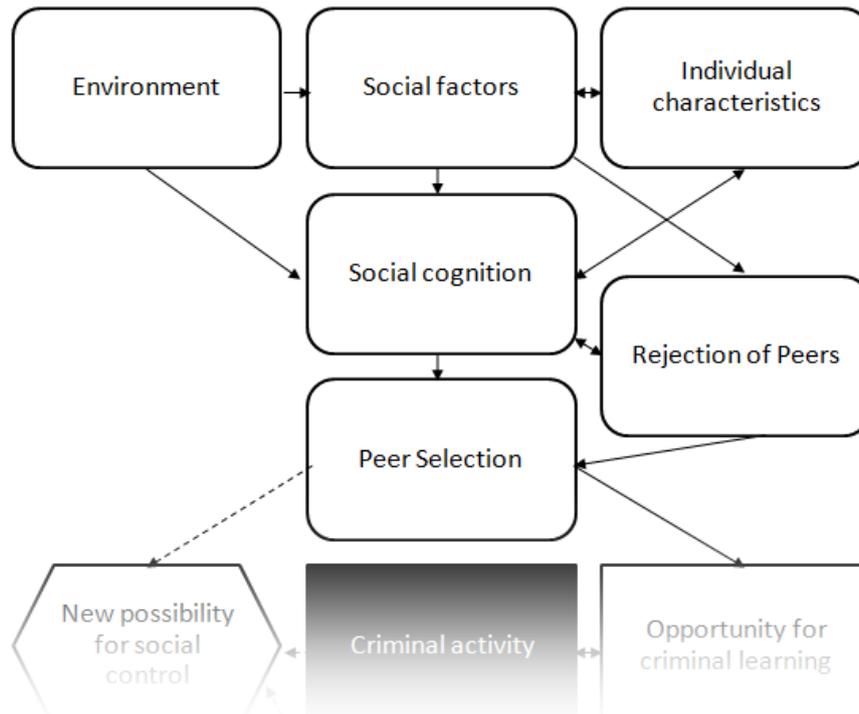
Figure 7.2. Haddock's (2011) proposed adaptation to Wood and Alleyne's (2010) Unified Theory.

simultaneously.[153] Thus, peer rejection (totally and/or permanently for Cores, or reluctantly and/or temporarily for Fringes) becomes relevant *after* gang members have selected their peers and as they come to make the decision whether or not to *commit* to these selected peers. By separating out initial peer selection (in the Core- and Fringe-Trigger Phases) from subsequent peer commitment (in the Core-Directional and Fringe-Maintenance Phases), and applying peer rejection specifically to the commitment stage, peer rejection becomes more integral to the model than Haddock's (2011) amendment may initially imply.

Given that Unified Theory was devised through a process of theory-knitting (i.e. taking elements of different theories and weaving them together to form a more coherent

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[153] i.e. they do not reject certain (pro-social?) peer associations before moving on and "trying out" new associates who they then may or may not select as their chosen peer group, as Haddock's amendment implies.

whole: Ward & Hudson, 1998), it is no surprise to identify characteristics of other existing theories which appear in Differential Theory.

Psychological theories.

Chapter Two demonstrated that, to date, no purely psychological theories of gang membership have been put forward, but that there was potential for existing (particularly group process) theories to apply. Responses given by participating gang members suggest strong support for the application of Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) to any potential explanation of gang membership. In initially forming/joining multiple (pro- and anti-social) peer groups (see Trigger Phase – peer selection), young people are initially able to compare their own values, attitudes, and behaviours to those of others, thereby validating the norms to which they adhere to (and thus setting up the conditions which will determine future peer commitment and/or rejection). In belonging to these groups, young people may then (positively) self-evaluate and self-enhance by comparing their groups to others (Suls et al., 2002). For example, as described, the antagonistic relationship many participating Core gang members had with the police, coupled with a tendency to afford them some level of respect (as if presenting them as worthy or equal adversary) or by using terminology that imbues the police with a higher perceived degree of status (e.g. "*the Feds*"), provides them with information necessary to (positively) self-evaluate and self-enhance. Social Comparison Theory and its associated processes should therefore be an integral component of any explanatory examination of gangs and the differences evident between members.

The applicability of Social Identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and Self-Categorisation Theories (Turner, 1987) to the examination of gang membership is apparently complex based on gang members' responses. It could be suggested that these theories are more relevant to Cores than to Fringes, given that Cores tend to adopt a specific social identity when they

commit to anti-social peers and reject pro-social peers, while Fringes juggle multiple identities in their commitment to a range of peers. As per Social Identity Theory, status issues are more prevalent for Cores than Fringes. So too are views on the permeability of social groups, both in terms of the degree of interaction between pro- and anti-social peers during the Trigger Phase (i.e. with Cores preferring these groups to remain separate, and Fringes describing regular though limited contact between them), and commitment/rejection of peer groups during the Variable Commitment Phase. Subsequently, in-group biases, and out-group derogation and conflict, may also be more evident for Cores than Fringes, as supported by Cores' commitment to territory as a heuristic categorisation tool and Fringes' general reluctance of getting involved in, and disapproval of, territorial gang conflicts. The belief that emerging group memberships may strengthen individual members' development of a sense of self and guide their subsequent behaviour can be seen as inherent in: (Core) parents' use of the "Bee-Gee" effect to distance their children from their social groups and bring about a "course correction" in their continued behavioural and identity development; and in some Fringe's (e.g. VA and RS) self-imposed distancing of themselves from the group. However, this is not to suggest that Cores are altogether satisfied with their social identity as a gang member. Rather than altering that identity by changing the nature of their relationship with the gang, however, they instead attempt to change the nature of the perception of the gang – this is shown by several Cores in their tendencies to admit that their group met all their self-defined criteria for gang-hood, and that people outside of the group would likely characterise it as a gang, but that they themselves did not believe that they actually were part of a gang. Thus, it seems Cores may employ quite sophisticated, psychological techniques to manipulate their social identity (in such a way as to make it more palatable to themselves) while also maintaining commitment to the gang (i.e. to try and give themselves the perceived positives of gang membership while denying themselves the label-

driven negatives), whilst Fringes (and non-gang affiliates, such as parents of gang members) may take the more direct approach of manipulating their social identity by manipulating (or imposing a manipulation on) their group memberships.

Finally, there is limited evidence in support of Social Exchange Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Social Exchange Theory is based on the notion that group memberships are maintained provided that the costs and benefits of membership are rationally balanced against one another. However, there does not always appear to be a rational approach to the measurement of this balance in gang membership, especially by Cores. The severe, negative repercussions of (Core) gang membership (such as heightened risk of criminal and violent victimisation, increased likelihood of punitive contact with the criminal justice system, and the wider, negative impact of their actions on their family) are often downplayed or ignored, while the positive motivations associated with gang membership could (if they were willing) be attained through less risky means. Impulsive tendencies/the need for instant gratification may play their part in over-riding rational cognitive processing of this kind, or rational cognitive processing may be engaged but with little application to gang membership itself. For instance, whilst only evident in one case, when describing the benefits of gang membership SL stated that "*...it wasn't what the group give to me it was... other people around like. It was like we even had fans sort of, you know.*" This suggests that he does not view group membership *per se* as having positive (benefits) or negative (costs) consequences, but rather that gang membership promotes or inhibits the conditions in which these positive (benefits) or negative (costs) consequences may emerge. It is a subtle distinction, but one which may account for why an individual's membership of a gang may not be approached as rationally as Social Exchange Theory might suggest. Further research is required to examine this phenomenon further.

Criminological theories.

The Chicago School.

Regarding initial gang theories proposed by the Chicago School, participating gang members present mixed views. Social Disorganisation Theory (Sutherland, 1924) suggests that factors such as poverty, population turnover, ethnic heterogeneity, and poor community associations promote the formation of gangs by inhibiting the levels of cohesion and trust among community residents necessary for keeping everyone in line. While there is some support (particularly among Cores) for Thrasher's (1927) observation that gangs form out of childhood playgroups (see also Delaney, 2014, and Densley, 2012b), and that anti-social peer groups may offer some young people valued opportunities they may not be/feel able to access through traditional means, participating gang members did not suggest experiencing widespread social disorganisation. While it was common for participants to suggest the presence, and awareness, of at least one social disorganisation factor in their communities, none perceived full disorganisation and, rather, indicated positive feelings towards, and attachment to, their communities. Crucially, in most cases, they indicated experiencing strong community associations. As stated in Chapter Six, this is a key aspect of the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership, which supports Katz and Schnebly's (2011) conclusion that in order for a gang to develop within a community, there must be some degree of organisation within that community. A localised, cultural inability to draw young people together will inhibit gang formation.

Some findings also support, while others contradict, Differential Association Theory (Sutherland, 1937; Sutherland & Cressey, 1960; 1974). In support, there is evidence that young people may learn appropriate norms and behaviours via exposure to peer groups. In contrast, Differential Association implies that gang membership arises because access is

limited to anti-social peer groups only, and thus deviant norms and behaviours are accepted and reinforced. However, without exception, participating gang members cited exposure to both pro- and anti-social peer groups at the early stages of peer development (i.e. during the Trigger Phase, and throughout the Variable Commitment Phase) which, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced their normative and behavioural development. The focus on deviance may, therefore, suggest Differential Association is less of an explanation of gang membership *per se* and more suggestive of the mechanism by which young people who have rejected associations with pro-social peers (at the Variable Commitment Phase – peer commitment stage) may then solidify their involvement with anti-social peers and move onto Core gang membership. This is consistent with Battin-Pearson, Thornberry, Hawkins, and Krohn's (1998; cited by Esbensen & Weerman, 1998) finding that the strongest predictor of sustained gang affiliation was not only a high level of interaction with anti-social peers but also a low level of interaction with pro-social peers.

   Strain theories.

Strain Theory (Merton, 1938, 1949; Cohen, 1955) suggests that gangs emerge due to pressure, experienced by members of socially disorganised communities, caused by a discrepancy between culturally-defined goals and access to the institutionalised means available to achieve them. While the social disorganisation element of strain may be questioned (as described above), participating gang members made a number of references suggesting experiences of strain, as evidenced by the emphasis placed by Differential Theory (and especially the Core Gang Member Model component) on the perceived *achievability* of available opportunities. The root of the experienced strain: may be traced back to gang members' own actions (e.g. Cores, whose behaviour leads to exclusion from mainstream education and transfer to, comparatively unsatisfactory, PRUs) or to factors outside of their control (e.g. for Cores this is evidenced by dissatisfaction with a lack of adequate, age-

appropriate facilities in the local area, thus promoting a sense of social neglect, while for Fringes, it may be driven by dissatisfaction at the unstable nature of, and relationships within, their families compared to "traditional" families they are aware of); and may be objective (e.g. when there are no adequate opportunities locally available) or perceived (e.g. when adequate opportunities are locally available, but are dismissed as boring or inappropriate for their needs).

The actions, values, and goals expressed by participating gang members suggest that they fit the profile of Merton's (1938, 1949) Innovator (i.e. they accept social goals but not the means of achieving them, preferring illegitimate or deviant means) rather than Cohen's (1955) Rebel (i.e. they were not in opposition to the status quo, as shown by their expressed willingness, under the right conditions, to cooperate with institutions such as school and the police, and their offending was principally motivated by material profit). The proceeds from their illegal, Innovative activities (e.g. theft, drug dealing etc.) *were* then used to attain culturally-defined goals, such as independence and a feeling of achievement.

Control theory.

Control Theory (Gottfredson & Hirchi, 1990; Hirschi, 1969) receives as mixed support within Differential Theory as it receives in the wider literature. Given that all participating gang members experienced negative social relationships and engaged in crime, Control Theory's key observation, that it is the lack of negative social relationships that stops conformers from engaging in crime and delinquency, may be inferred but cannot be confirmed without data from non-gang members. That non-conformers exhibit weak social bonds receives little support, given that all participating gang members were able to provide examples of strong such bonds in their lives (i.e. displaying: attachment and emotional connections with family

members; [some] commitment to legitimate social norms; involvement in conventional activities; and a belief or faith in common values and institutions).

Given that Control Theory suggests that it is the threat of experiencing negative emotional reactions (that result from breaking a bond) which deters people from offending and gang membership, the fact that participating Cores (relative to Fringes) lacked emotional expression (if not experience), and demonstrated apparent empathy deficits, suggests that negative emotional consequences may either not be felt or will be of little concern to Cores. Thus, they may possess strong social bonds but are capable of acting against them because they are relatively insensitive to the negative emotions that such actions should produce.

Fringes, on the other hand, maintained closer and more permanent connections to pro-social peers (and, thus, had experienced an additional source of support for adherence to social bonds that Cores denied themselves), were more emotionally expressive, and displayed empathetic traits. The fact that they still engaged in crime and gangs despite these factors, however, may be attributable to self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Participating Fringes were impulsive, making them prone to immediately gratifying actions at the expense of their long-term values and goals. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990): the strength of the social bond and subsequent offending behaviour rests on self-control and the ability to overcome the urge for immediate gratification; and, children who are poorly socialised, with unstable family backgrounds (i.e. just like participating Fringes), are less likely to develop self-control. Thus, all participating gang members were able to engage in gang membership despite having relatively strong social bonds: for Cores, this was because they had less contact with pro-social peers and were less responsive to the emotional implications of breaching their bonds; while Fringes were influenced more by their social bonds than Cores on account of their greater exposure to pro-social peers and their emotional/empathetic tendencies, but were still able to act against them on account of their

family background-instilled impulsivity and poor self-control. Thus, another wrinkle in the

mixed support found for gang members' self-control (i.e. Brownfield, 2010; Childs,

Cochram, & Gibson, 2009; Hope & Damphouse, 2002; Kissner & Pyrooz, 2009; Pyrooz et

al., 2013) becomes apparent, as this thesis concludes that self-control (and Social Control

Theory more generally) may be more applicable to the Fringe gang member experience than

the Core.

Interactional theory.

Interactional theory (Thornberry, 1987; Thornberry & Krohn, 2001) finds strong support in

the proposed Differential Theory, in that both contend that reciprocal relationships between

young people and their peer groups, social structures, social bonds, and learning

environments, contribute to gang membership. Further, the findings reported in this thesis

echo previous research concerning the processes Interactional Theory suggest young people

come to be accepted by gangs (as proposed by Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, & Chard-

Wierschem, 1993). For instance, only weak, anecdotal evidence of a Selection effect (i.e.

whereby existing gangs select and recruit new members from the community based on

evidence of their prior delinquency) was found[154] (consistent with Hill, Howell, Hawkins, &

Battin Pearson, 1999, and Lahey, Gordon, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Farrington, 1999) –

participating gang members belonged to groups which formed and evolved around them,

meaning that none were wannabes selected into the group. Rather, strong support was found

for Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, and McDuff's (2005) research, in that a Facilitation effect (i.e.

whereby gangs provide delinquent opportunities for young people who were not delinquent

beforehand) was found for Fringes, while Cores showed evidence of an Enhancement process

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[154] With WM mentioning the recruitment practices of a rival gang, and SM (speaking hypothetically) stating
that if the gang became aware of someone with a reputation for doing "*bad stuff*" they would want him in their
circle. In contrast, as mentioned in Chapter Four, JW actively sought to keep his friends from being selected
into the gang.

(i.e. whereby gang members are recruited from a population of high-risk youth who become more delinquent as a result of their membership).

... Regarding prevention, intervention, and desistence.

The proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership reveals that there are key social, psychological, and peer group differences between Cores and Fringes. As such, we can infer that if there are differences which lead individuals to follow different trajectories into ever deeper levels of gang membership, then there will be key differences which will direct variously embedded members along different trajectories back out of the gang.   For instance, a gang desistance strategy may look to the (positive) factors which limit Fringes' involvement and then seek to enhance these factors (and hopefully push/pull them further towards the Outer Fringe boundaries) or, in the case of Cores, seek to tackle factors related to Core membership and/or seek to introduce those factors which limit Fringes' involvement into Cores' lives (limiting the presence of Core enhancers, while introducing factors likely to push/pull them towards and beyond Fringe membership).

The most obvious way to achieve this suggested by the present findings: in the case of Fringes, is to help them nurture their existing pro-social peer group affiliations (i.e. enhancing a protective factor from Core membership); and for Cores, is to work to dissolve their cohesion to the gang (i.e. reduce a risk factor for Core membership) whilst simultaneously helping them to develop new (or reassert old), and foster, pro-social peer associations (i.e. enhancing a protective factor from Core membership). Effectively, addressing gang members' relationships with pro-social peers would be a first step towards strengthening (for Fringes) or re-engaging (for Cores) commitment to social control. However, other strategies may be devised based on other observable differences between Cores and Fringes, and used in conjunction with a Good Lives Model-based approach (GLM: Ward & Brown, 2006; Ward

& Stewart, 2003)[155], such as working on locus of control issues, empathy enhancement, responsibility acceptance and consequential awareness, etc.

For Fringes, given the process described by the proposed Differential Theory to account for why they fluctuate between commitment to pro- and anti-social peer groups, helping them to overcome the dissonance experienced as and when their socially accepted aims and goals are not met (thus puncturing their innate self-belief) may be the best way to achieve this. This may be achieved either by providing support to help them reach their socially accepted aims and goals or, by assisting them to restructure their aims and goals in such a way that they are able to achieve something of value and maintain their self-belief, dissonance may be limited and, thus, the conditions which typically promote their commitment to pro-social peers (and adherence to social controls) will be facilitated.

Given that Cores ultimately have no connection to pro-social peers, in terms of intervention (i.e. aiding desistance from Core gang membership), using pro-social connections to promote adherence to social controls would be difficult. Thus, prevention will likely be more effective for Cores than intervention. Making sure that they do not reject or lose associations with pro-social peers (in effect, ensuring that the Directional Phase of the Core Gang Member Model does not come to pass) will be easier than helping them re-establish lost connections with pro-social peers. This may be best achieved by re-thinking how troublesome young people at risk of Core gang membership are dealt with in school. More often than not, it is school exclusion and transferral to a PRU which results in the complete breakdown of pro-social affiliations. Providing young people with more support (to curtail those anti-social, school-based behaviours which are likely to result in their school

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[155] The GLM is a strength-based approach in which offenders are aided in developing capabilities required to acquire primary human goods ("*actions, states of affairs, characteristics, experiences, and states of mind that are intrinsically beneficial to human beings and therefore sought for their own sake rather than as means to more fundamental ends*": Ward & Brown, 2006, p. 246) in socially acceptable and personally meaningful ways.

exclusion, and promote commitment to a positive future through education), providing training for teachers in how to deal with, and relate to, pupils with an evident risk of gang membership (in order to improve their ability to diffuse situations involving gang-risk pupils so that school exclusion may be less warranted), and (if school exclusion is unavoidable) overhauling the PRU system so that the risk factors it promotes are diminished. Ultimately, it may not be possible to ensure that the Core Directional Phase does not come to pass but, based on the above suggestions, it may be possible to shift things enough that it comes to more resemble the Fringe Maintenance Phase. Full desistance from gang membership is desirable for Cores, but a compromise which sees them reduced to Fringe status (with full desistance at a later date) would be acceptable.

One final means of improving commitment to social controls and pro-social peers, for both Cores and Fringes, would be to find means of improving their *engagement* in social controls. Regardless of status, participating gang members' need to be active but generally found that resources available to them did not meet their needs. For Cores in particular, this would result a perception of social neglect, which would harden the path to Core membership. Similarly, in school, participating gang members would emphasise the social opportunities, with some ambivalence towards educational opportunities. For Cores in particular, this fuelled, and reciprocally was fuelled by, vagueness in their planning and a sense of lacking direction. While more could be done to make opportunities for social control more palatable to gang members (e.g. by creating more age-appropriate facilities and resources), their mindset must also be addressed. Dawes and Larson (2011), conducting their own GT study of (non-gang) youth social behaviour, determined that for young people to benefit from positive developmental opportunities afforded by social resources and programmes, they need to be psychologically engaging. That is, the young person must form a personal connection with the resource and activities it provides (i.e. integrating personal

goals with the goals of these activities). Dawes and Larson (2011) identified three personal goals upon which such a connection was based: 1) learning for the future; 2) developing confidence; and 3) developing a purpose. Consistent with participating gang members' regularly stated view that opportunities need to be made appealing to young people, Dawes and Larson (2011) conclude that youth motivation can be cultivated by programmes which creatively assist young people to explore ways of forming authentic connections to programme activities.

Limitations

As with all psychological research, this programme of research was not without its limitations, the greatest of which was the necessity to collect data regarding street gang membership from a prison population. This led to both conceptual and practical problems when it came to conducting interviews and analysing the interview data.

Conceptually speaking, and as mentioned in Chapters Four and Five with regards to participants' evaluations of their school experience, there is the risk that hindsight bias may influence responses. There is a "chicken and egg" situation as, while the interview was framed around discussing attitudes, thought processes, feelings, and behaviours pre- and during gang membership and criminal offending, there was always the risk that interviewees would respond with reference to current events and situations. Therefore, there is the risk that some of the themes developed in this study may be influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by participants' experiences since going to prison, and that their recollections are filtered through that lens. Further to this, while the confidentiality of the interview and anonymity of the participant was stressed at the start of interviews, and all took place in private with only the interviewer and participant present, being within the prison may have placed restrictions on how open participants felt they could be and/or induce impression

management strategies (something the proposed theory shows that gang members are prone to). If participants did not feel able to open up about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings, then it is possible that they only relayed half the story to the interviewer[156], creating an unknowable hole in the data collected which would have a knock-on effect on analysis and theory development. If participants engaged in impression management, for example by saying what they thought the interviewer would like to hear and portraying themselves in a more positive, rather than accurate, light in the belief that doing otherwise might influence their prison record, then the data and final theoretical model(s) may also be skewed away from the reality of their gang experience.

Further to these conceptual issues above, participants' ages and development were also a risk. As mentioned many times throughout this thesis, both with regards to the current research and existing literature and theory, gang membership is a long-term developmental process. Even if an individual affiliates with a gang for only a short period of time, that period is the result of a long procession of influential processes. However, a prison term pauses this development. By being cut off from their street gang, gang members are only able to reminisce about the stages that they went through until incarceration. Dynamic factors which influence gang experiences cannot be examined as they occur and, rather, must be inferred through reliance on anecdotes told at a point where all these factors are held static. If any of the same participants had been interviewed out in their neighbourhoods, very different responses may have been given compared to those provided in prison. Finally, in relying on the accounts of street gang members in prison, we face a restriction in who may be sampled such that the target population may be under-represented. For instance, the average ages of Cores and Fringes are approximately 16 and 14.75 years respectively (Alleyne &

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[156] Exacerbating this potential limitation was the necessity of interviewing adolescent boys, who traditionally are not renowned for their communication skills at the best of times. Further, interviews would usually take place at around 8.30am – they (and the interviewer!) were often still a little groggy from sleep, meaning it would take a while to warm up to open, detailed discussion.

Wood, 2010). However, the participating YOI only accepts young people aged 15 years and over, and only allows those aged 16 and over to participate in research. While both Cores and Fringes were identified in the present sample, this may have been more by luck than design – all are older than the average age of a Core, meaning that the chance of identifying Fringes within a prison population are likely much slimmer than in the community. Further, in having to skew older in our sample of participants, they are not only divorced from the factors which influenced their membership through their current situation, but they are also divorced from them by time – processes which may have characterised the transition from non-gang member to Fringe membership and Core membership maybe more distant memories for some than others, given the age differential between Fringes and Cores in the community.

Future Research

In developing new, substantive theory using GT techniques, new, testable hypotheses can be drawn up (as seen throughout Chapters Four, Five, and Six). This, then, allows for the development of new research designs, the findings of which can be used to validate, refine, or reject the new theory. Ultimately, the research presented in this thesis could be seen as a pilot study for a much larger programme of research. A number of potential avenues for future research have been highlighted thanks to the processes that have emerged within the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership, be they specific to Cores, Inner or Outer Fringes, or related to gang membership more generally.

Quantitative tests of new theory.

As presented at the conclusion of Chapter Six, the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership sets out five central hypotheses, and sixteen sub-hypotheses, all of which may be examined through quantitative research designs. Given the sheer number of testable

hypotheses which have emerged from the present research, it is not possible to describe in detail any such potential designs. However, a full programme of research must, and will, be implemented, specifically designed to test these hypotheses and thus validate the Differential Theory. Indeed, work has already commenced on studies which should contribute to this process, particularly with regards to group processes described by Cores and Fringes (Mozova, in preparation).

Qualitative expansions to current research.

While conducted as thoroughly as possible, there are a number of ways in which this research could be expanded upon, continuing in the GT tradition.

Firstly, semi-replications of the current GT study could be conducted with a new sample of gang members in order to address the limitations described in the section above. Two areas that we would seek to address are the failed emphasis on gang desistance and intervention strategies, and elaborating on the Inner Fringe/Outer Fringe distinction. It would also be beneficial to replicate the existing study with young people with no history of gang membership. That is, while the current research was focussed on within-group processes (i.e. Cores vs. Fringes), an analogous study with non-gang members would allow for between-group comparisons (between them and gang members more generally) to be drawn. In theory, such a study would help to elaborate the pro-social route through the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership (and the Unified Theory upon which it is based), which may shed further light on social control processes experienced by Fringes.

Secondly, it has always been anticipated that working with incarcerated street gang members would merely be a convenient starting point for the development of a psychologically-based theory of gangs. To get a fuller picture of the developmental process of gang membership an investigation of those who are active in the community at the time of

interview is necessary. Conducting interviews, using the same basic interview schedule used for this research (with some small tweaks), but with active, community-based street gang members would be the logical next step any future research programme. By examining the current engagement of Cores and Fringes and their evolving relationship with the gang (and pro-social peer groups), a fresher perspective on the processes involved in their different developmental trajectories can be achieved, and the potential for hindsight bias (and other limitations which became evident in the pilot with incarcerated gang members) occurring during data collection limited, if not removed outright.

While it would be logistically difficult to engage with gang members in the community to conduct such lengthy or multiple interviews, the ideal next step is longitudinal research. Such a (GT) study would concern tracking a number of young people at risk of gang membership, and following them over a period of time to: see how the various contributory factors suggested by the proposed Theory of Differential Gang Membership (i.e. environmental, social, individual, social cognitive, group, and peer factors and processes, across both Trigger and Variable Commitment Phases of the proposed Theory) function in real-time; trace individual progression to non-gang membership, Outer Fringe membership, Inner Fringe membership, and/or Core membership; and examine any correlations between the two. A very large sample would be required for such a study in order to capture sufficient numbers who follow each of the proposed trajectories and to account for attrition rates. Great care would also be needed to ensure such a study were run ethically. In order to capture the full process, participants would need to be tracked from at least the age of 11 years and, as such, special measures would need to be in place, as with any research focussing on such a young sample. Safeguards would also need to be in place to ensure that young people were not put at any greater risk of gang membership by participating in the research than they would be if they did not (i.e. the risk of introducing a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which

participants go on to join a gang due to a perception that they have been labelled as a likely future gang member due to their specific recruitment into the study, would need to be minimised). Similarly, data collection procedures must be done in such a way as not to influence the developmental trajectories of participating young people, so that any results are reliable and valid. It would be an incredibly challenging piece of research to conduct, but may be the ideal method for developing as accurate an understanding of differential gang membership as possible.

Improving assessment and intervention.

Finally, consistent with the emphasis placed on improving desistance by embeddedness research (Carson et al., 2013; Pyrooz et al., 2013), ultimately a programme of research should move away from theory development and testing towards more practical contributions.

An improved means of assessment of Core versus Fringe membership would be beneficial for both continued research and use by intervention providers. Current methods of assessment have weaknesses: self-nomination/funnelling techniques are time-consuming; cluster analysis of Eurogang Youth Survey items (as used by Alleyne, & Wood, 2010) is geared towards *post hoc* analysis in quantitative examinations of large samples; the gang embeddedness scale is statistically complex to assess; and the concentric ring rating scale, while easy to administer, is not as scientifically rigorous as desired. Therefore, formal, consensus definitions of Core membership and Fringe membership, with a pre-screening survey similar to the Eurogang Youth Survey but capable of making a defined distinction between Cores and Fringes, would benefit those with a need to quickly and easily identify a young person's level of gang involvement. The inclusion of the concentric ring rating scale is a good visual aid to get a sense of the individual gang member's own self-nomination of gang involvement, but when used in conjunction with survey items, a quickly and easily

administered, scientifically rigorous, and simply scored assessment of an individual's level of gang involvement would be available. This would be particularly useful when determining the appropriateness of particular intervention strategies for individual gang members.

As described in discussion of the theoretical implications of the research findings with regards to gang prevention, intervention, and desistance, gang desistance (and prevention) programmes should have different emphases depending on whether the programme is dealing with Cores or Fringes. In order to know what to emphasise, those running intervention programmes will need to identify a youth's specific status (using an assessment tool such as described above), and then tailor their strategy to tackle the factors which contribute most to that status. Further research is needed, therefore, to determine the precise mechanisms by which these Core- and Fringe-promoting factors work and the ways in which they may be manipulated to promote gang desistance.

Finally, more research needs to be conducted in order improve evaluation of intervention strategies (see Densley, 2011, for a full critique of the intervention industry). One of the difficulties facing social workers and psychologists working in the prison estate is not knowing what effect their work ultimately has on the post-release lives of the gang members they are responsible for. Without the (or with limited) ability to follow (hopefully) ex-gang members back out into the community to assess their behaviour, any assessment of intervention effectiveness (that is, which promotes a move towards desistance and a reduction in gang-related activity) will be severely limited and based on vague predictions. With limited options available, our ability to predict the likelihood of re-uptake of gang membership post-intervention must be improved. Psychology, and in particular Health Psychology, has a long history of applying theories of behavioural prediction (e.g. the Theory of Planned Behaviour: Ajzen, 1991) to the construction and evaluation of interventions designed to address aspects of that behaviour. The application of these methods to the

prediction of recidivism and reconnection with gangs would, if successful, be a welcome boost to intervention practices, and it is research such as the current study which (with further expansion) improves our understanding of the factors associated with (differential) gang membership upon which accurate predictions will be based. Effectiveness of intervention can then be assessed in terms of the comparison of predictions of recidivism/re-connection with gangs made pre- vs. post intervention.

To conclude then, psychology brings an as-yet untapped perspective to the practicalities of dealing with gang membership as well as to our theoretical understanding of gangs. With the potential for improvements to assessment tools capable of identifying variations in gang membership based on underlying psychological processes, improvements to intervention strategies rooted in an understanding of the key underlying psychological and social cognitive processes that determine trajectories of variable gang membership, and improvements in our ability to predict future gang-related behaviours, and thus evaluate the effectiveness of gang intervention strategies, there is a vast array of psychological research opportunities in this field.

Concluding Remarks

So, how do you tell a "weasel" (BL's derogatory term for Cores) from a "fraggle" (MB's derogatory term for those on the fringes of gang membership)? Based on participants' experiences, observations, and interpretation of gang-life it would seem that the most effective means is to look at the breadth of a gang member's peer associations. A Core will predominantly be committed solely to their deviant peer group, the gang, and will display reluctance for anti- and pro-social peers to interact during the process of gang development. The Core belongs to a defined group. A Fringe, on the other hand, will predominantly associate with both anti- and pro-social peers over the lifetime of their gang membership, and these different associates will be known to interact with one another during the process of gang development. The Fringe, therefore, emerges with a relatively ill-defined social network. There are a range of underlying processes, however, which may determine the extent of this differential peer association and commitment.

Profile of a Core Gang Member

Cores will typically come from relatively stable families and possess strong bonds with family members. They will be positively attached to their home area, having been long-term, usually life-long residents, and describe a generally stable, socially cohesive community experience. However, they will express some dissatisfaction with access to social resources in the area, citing a rising sense of boredom which is exacerbated by their general tendencies towards hyperactivity. They will also describe early awareness of criminal activity in the area, which will influence their normative beliefs about crime and their emotional responses to it (specifically a sense of fearlessness). They will have troubled school histories, favouring the social opportunities afforded by school over the educational opportunities. These experiences shape their adolescent social cognitive development, including their attitudes

towards authority figures, thoughts about the nature of victimisation, concerns about their ability to achieve desired social goals and the access to (and ability to engage with) opportunities to meet these goals, and a developing vague approach to life in general. Peer selection will be influenced by the interaction of these factors – school will offer opportunities to interact with a distinct group of pro-social peers, while an attachment to distinct anti-social peer groups will form within the community. Commitment to each group will be facilitated by prior experiences of socialisation into a (perceived) strong family unit (such that young people may be recreating their existing family bonds with others outside the family group), and the differences in peer associations will aid in the pursuit of norm validation (i.e. in seeking to confirm their beliefs and expectations developed through their experiences to date).

Having identified with pro- and anti-social peer groups, the Core's continued experiences will ultimately push and pull them towards rejecting their pro-social peers and committing fully to their anti-social peer group. As they grow up around their anti-social peers, dissatisfaction with social resources in the community intensifies as they perceive that provided facilities and activities are not aimed at their age group. Subsequently, unstructured activity in their free time will contribute to a growing awareness of territorial disputes between groups of young people in the wider local area. Troubled school histories will result in school failure, as they are excluded from mainstream education and sent to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) – as such contact with their (school-limited) pro-social peers will become far less frequent, and (new) anti-social peer associations may strengthen at the PRU. The stability of their family bonds will continue to exert an influence, as the family's concern for the young person's increasingly socially unacceptable behaviour and peer associations lead them to take action to set them back on a socially acceptable path (such as by sending them away) – these measures are temporary, however, and soon the young person is reasserting

their old ways more than ever. Their prior beliefs about victimisation promote an empathy deficit which allows them to engage in criminal and delinquent activities without concern for the widespread consequences of their actions. Their vague approach to life reforms into a general sense of drifting, and a motivation for relatively shallow pursuits and status. They may exhibit a heightened trait of (public) self-consciousness, and a developing state of (public) self-awareness. While aware of bonds and concern within the family, they develop a sense of social neglect, as their negative perception of social, educational, and potential employment opportunities generates a belief that society as a whole cares nothing for them. Their growing commitment to their negative peer group, and awareness of, and engagement in, territorial disputes, introduces the possibility of gang issues into their lives. Group processes exert their influence as commitment to the anti-social peer group increases. For instance, territorial attachment becomes a heuristic tool intended to categorise individuals as members of outside gangs, and out-groups (such as rival gangs and the police) will be used as a yardstick against which their own social identity can be assessed and enhanced. Their experiences in this context lead to a sensation of hyper-adolescence, as their experiences reflect those of a "typical" adolescent (i.e. in terms of peer group selection, behaviour, and evaluation, developing a sense of self, pushing boundaries, etc.) but at a heightened (potentially risky) level. A retaliatory mindset emerges, in which the young person adheres to a belief that provocation of any kind requires a proportional response. As such, commitment to the anti-social peer group becomes crystallised, since the above processes experienced (which Cores boil down to a desire of fun, material and social status, and extending the family) push and pull them towards this group specifically (i.e. with beliefs and expectations the young person has about himself being supported by this membership, or adapted to fit).

Having already belonged to the anti-social peer group, and engaged in anti-social and delinquent activities as a result, in committing to the anti-social peer group Cores find that opportunities for criminal learning are enhanced. Commitment will also then see a significant rise the amount, and severity, of crimes they commit. Based on objective measures (i.e. the Eurogang definition), the deviant peer group will meet the criteria for being defined as a gang. Few Cores will describe actively wanting to join a gang or seeking it out – instead, gang-hood will be a natural development of an anti-social peer group to which they already belonged. As such, subjectively speaking, classifications of the group's gang status will be fluid in the eyes of their members: sometimes they are a gang, sometimes they are not, depending on the current cohesion and assessment of the group's entitative state; when they do not see themselves as a gang, they will concede that it is likely that others (such as other gangs, police, community residents, or passersby) will; and when they will admit to their group having all the self-defined characteristics of a gang, they may find ways of arguing that their own group is not in fact a gang, while all other groups with the same characteristics are a gang. The attribution of gang-hood to the group, by both themselves and by others, can, therefore, have a significant influence over the status, membership, activities, and group relations experienced by Cores. Despite a self-confessed, strong commitment to a group of anti-social peers, and engagement in gang-like activities, there will be reluctance among Cores to admit their objectively-identified status.

Profile of a Fringe Gang Member

Fringes will typically come from relatively unstable stable families and possess fairly weak bonds with family members. They will generally have experienced some degree of upheaval, rarely having stayed in their current home area for their whole lives. This promotes the development of a trait of adaptability, as they learn techniques of understanding, and integrating themselves into, new environments. This is further enhanced by the sociable and

agreeable natures Fringes typically possess. Evaluations of the stability and cohesiveness of the home community will be mixed, and they will show a generally ambivalent attachment to the area. However, they will describe some positive awareness of, and willingness to use, social facilities nearby. As with Cores, Fringes will display hyperactive traits and low thresholds for boredom, so access to such facilities (and the relative newness of them, given their relative newness to the area) may help to manage these. Exposure to criminal norms will be fragmented on account of the short duration in which they have been resident in the area, though awareness of crime generally will be evident. School experiences will also be mixed, with some Fringes facing exclusion and PRUs and others completing mainstream education and attending college (i.e. consistent with socially acceptable expectations). As such, many will display a strong adherence to social controls and pro-social values, and relatively set life goals (including specific career plans and hopes to attend university). Specific to Outer Fringes, cultural values and expectations may also influence the expression of values and goals, as well as placing an impediment to full integration with wider UK society and groups. These experiences will shape their adolescent social cognitive development, including their attitudes towards authority figures, their (generally optimistic) outlook and belief in making the best of a bad situation, a belief in the importance of being aware of the consequences of their actions, and a sensation that other people generally misunderstand them and their behaviours, attitudes, and motivations. Peer selection will be influenced by the interaction of these factors – new schools and new community environments will offer opportunities to interact with multiple groups of pro-and anti-social peers. Their agreeable and adaptable traits will mean that Fringes will be open to, and able to engage with, any group membership opportunities, however, their full integration into these groups may be limited by prior experiences of relatively weak socialisation into a (perceived) unstable family unit – this may be through choice (e.g. because the young person decides to

limit their membership based on past experiences) or inability (e.g. because the young person is unable to make the most of their membership based on past experiences). Feeling able to trust peers within these groups appears to be a key consideration to Fringes. Norm validation may be considered a bonus, but having been brought up in a different social environment and community to existing group members, some degree of norm adjustment may be expected.

Having identified with pro- and anti-social peer groups, and supporting interaction between them, the structure of a Fringe's peer associations may be seen as being more of a diffuse social network containing (low cohesive) memberships of (somewhat connected) peer groups (as opposed to cohesive membership of distinct peer groups). As such, the Fringe will experience pushes and pulls which will find their position in the network constantly shifting as their commitment to either their pro- or anti-social peer groups varies. At any given time, they will likely identify with one group over the other, but some connection with both will be maintained at all times. As their experiences with anti-social peers continue, Fringes become aware of any territorial disputes and gangs in the area – at this stage, personal criminal involvement may be minimal to non-existent, and the territorial conflict aspect of gang-hood is typically frowned upon (likely owing to Fringes' lack of life-long attachment to one area). As their experiences with pro-social peers continue, Fringe's commitment to social controls, personal values, and socially accepted goals will also remain salient. This is achievable through their continuing engagement in mainstream education – Fringes are able to maintain contact with the full range of their peer associates, thus exposing themselves to continued pro- and anti-social influences. Owing to the strength of their emotional experiences and expression, Fringes display an ability to empathise with those around them and consider the emotional impact that their actions may have on themselves and others. Owing to their adherence to consequential thinking, Fringes also display an ability to take the perspective of others, and are thus able to develop clear and reasoned ideas about their actions, their peers,

and their environment. Whilst these factors may act as a protection from criminal

engagement and gang membership, and, thus, enhance connections with pro-social peers,

Fringes also show clear, positive self-presentational/promotional needs (likely driven by their

agreeable and adaptable traits) and a heightened level of impulsivity (overriding empathy and

deep cognitive thought). In other words, they are driven by a need to impress those around

them and may act impulsively to do so. This, then, plays into associations with anti-social

peers when they see deviant or delinquent action as being their means of presenting

themselves in the best possible light.

Owing to the intricate balance between engagement with pro- and anti-social groups

and the factors which make each appealing (which can be characterised as finding

acceptance, support, and role-models), social cognitive and group processes become very

important for determining which group will hold most sway over the Fringe at any given

time. Fringes express an external locus of control – they blame others for both the absence of

good things in their lives and the presence of bad things in their lives, and for their offending

behaviour. They also express a belief that life is uncontrollable, that they are trapped by the

circumstances they find themselves in, and that they simply have to do the best they can

within these constraints. The "best" they can hope for may come via socially acceptable

means or not, continuing the important theme of the need to adapt. However, Fringes also

possess a strong self-belief, not necessarily in their ability to control their lives, but that

things will work out for them in the end (i.e. their values and goals will be met with little

input from themselves). Thus, they may find themselves in a dissonant state. When

circumstances dictate that their life goes the way they want, they experience positive

emotions, commitment to their pro-social peers, and adherence to social controls. However,

when circumstances dictate that their socially accepted aims and goals cannot be met, they

may feel dejected and initially work to end this dissonance by some means, before ultimately

accepting how things are, and committing to their anti-social peers in order to make the best of things. Thus, whether a Fringe emphasises their links to pro- vs. anti-social peer groups at any given time will depend on the interaction of their positive self-belief and the degree to which they believe negative circumstances in their lives are outside of their control. That Fringes show a wide variation in their attitudes to out-group authority (often placing themselves in opposition to authority groups) and, in particular, engage in upward social comparisons (thus emphasising their own perceived inferiorities when compared to valued others) supports the notion that participating Fringes (at least) may have experienced the described dissonance effect regularly, thus shifting their group affiliations slightly more in the direction of their anti-social peer group.

In committing to both pro- and anti-social groups and experiencing the social cognitive and group processes described above, Fringes will find themselves bouncing between varying degrees of exposure to pro-social influences (and social controls) and anti-social influences (and opportunities for criminal learning). Thus, their criminal behaviour may be facilitated by exposure to anti-social peer group engagement. Based on objective measures (i.e. the Eurogang definition), the deviant peer group will meet the criteria for being defined as a gang. At no point though will Fringes describe actively wanting to join a gang or seeking it out – instead, Fringe membership will be a natural development that comes with associating with the deviant peer group they associated with. They themselves, then, will consider their gang member status to be fluid, engaging significantly when things are seen as going badly and less so when things are going well. Rising commitment to social controls, such as family, education, and employment, may also be observed when in a period of relatively low gang involvement. Given the emphasis of external influences on Fringe membership, however, the attribution of gang-hood to the network or to the individual themselves by outside forces may also tip the balance in favour of pro-social or gang peers.

A Greater Role for Psychology

To conclude, beyond the emerging Theory of Differential Gang Membership, perhaps the greatest contribution of this research is further support to the cause of gang *psychology*. Evidence of a range of individual psychological and social cognitive processes have been presented in this thesis, which were found to influence the development of gang membership along with traditional sociological and criminological factors, and which specifically appear key to determining the extent to which one may become gang-involved. Further, quantitative examination of these findings is vital in order to validate, and further expand upon, the themes and their inter-relationships which participating gang members have flagged as important. The need for an enhanced psychological perspective is not only driven by purely academic interest, but by the calls of those gang members themselves. They displayed an awareness, and a growing weariness, of the stereotypes that abound for those tagged with the label of gang member – stereotypes which can ultimately inform a great deal of people's attitudes and behaviours towards them, and which (to an extent) can be perpetuated by the dominance of traditional lines of gang research. However, participating gang members, in a number of ways, demonstrate that it can be possible to belong to a gang and not necessarily fit that stereotype. Further, stereotyping promotes homogenisation, and this research shows, and participating gang members would keenly like people to know, that this is not the case. Participant SL describes only seeing "*difference*" within the gang (i.e. between individual members), but this is a sentiment that he and other gang members feel they do not share with the public at large. Similarly, BL describes how he feels things will improve if people were to look beyond the gang and see the individuals it contains – as he says, they are all "*Individuals... individuals with their own mind.*" It will take psychology to unravel the stories behind the individuals involved with gangs, and it will take psychology to present these stories to the wider world in such a way that reliance on stereotypes when dealing with

gang members is reduced. However, it has taken a long time for psychology, as a discipline, to gain traction in its application to the understanding of gangs, and it remains debatable as to how stable this traction is, especially when compared to sociological and criminological works. Psychology is gaining ground in this regard, and the ability to generate new, psychological accounts capable of explaining gang membership at the individual and intra-group process level will be instrumental in continuing this trend. However, the field of gang psychology is still in its infant stage, and BL may have to wait some while yet before he can even begin to get his wish…

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Appendices

Appendix 1a

Information sheet

Aims of the study;

We would like to look at how you view street gangs in your home area and your experiences with them (whether as a member of a gang or not). We would also like to hear your opinion of programmes designed to reduce gang-related offending (both in the community and within the prison), as well as what you think would work best to reduce gang-related offending.

Procedure:

If you decide to take part in this research you will be interviewed in private by one of the researchers. This informal discussion will last roughly one and a half to two hours. Some of the questions we will think about during the discussion will be:

1. Why do some young people become heavily involved in gang activities while others do not?
2. Why and how do some young gang members ultimately choose to leave the gang?
3. What effect might being a gang member have on young people's attitudes towards efforts to address their offending behaviour (for example, intervention by friends and family, community programmes, imprisonment, etc)?
4. What effect might depth of involvement with a gang (for example, being heavily involved in gang activity or only lightly involved) have on gang members' expectations of leading a crime free life in the future?

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions - we are only interested in hearing about your experiences of crime and what you think and feel about gang-related issues.

Risks;

The discussion may touch on sensitive topics. For instance, you may be asked about your involvement in antisocial activities. However, your responses will be treated confidentially and anonymously. If there is anything that you feel uncomfortable talking about, or if you feel uncomfortable in any way, we will take a break and move on to talk about something else. You can end the discussion at any time if you so wish.

Benefits of this study;

This study will shed light on the issues that affect how far young people may become involved in gang-related activities, and highlight the issues that young people believe crucial for tackling gang-related activities. This will help us to develop intervention programmes to help and support young people, parents, schools and the justice system.

Confidentiality;

The discussion will be recorded, but your responses will be treated confidentially. We do not ask for your name during the discussion - instead you will be given a number, which you will be told, so that if you wish to withdraw your data your responses can be identified. The consent form you complete will *not* contain this number so your responses and consent form cannot be linked, in order to maintain anonymity. Only the researchers will have access to your responses and they will be securely stored.

The researchers are however legally obliged to waive confidentiality if, during the discussion, participants break prison rules and/or disclose information about:

- A breach in prison security;

- Further identifiable offences for which they have not been convicted;

- A threat to harm themselves or others

If you do disclose such information, the researcher <u>will</u> have to report it to the prison authorities.

Voluntary participation and withdrawal

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to take part or to continue at any point without penalty. You can also skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

Questions and/or complaints;

If you have any questions about this study, would like to withdraw your data after the study has been conducted, or if you want to know the main findings of the research, you can contact the researcher (Mark James - below). Further details of how to contact the researchers will be held by the prison and will be given to you if you request them.

Lastly, if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study, please contact the Chair of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (via the Psychology School office) in writing, providing a detailed account of your concern.

Consent Statement;

By signing below you are acknowledging the following:

- You have read this consent form and all your questions have been answered;
- You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty;
- You understand that all your answers will be kept confidential, unless they violate any of the conditions described above;
- A copy of this form will be given to you.

Signature of participant _____

Print name _____

Date _____

Researcher details:	Supervisor details:
Mark James	Dr Jane Wood
School of Psychology	School of Psychology
University of Kent	University of Kent
CT2 7NP	CT2 7NP

Appendix 1b

<u>Debrief Sheet</u>

Thank you very much for taking part in this study. Below is more information about the purpose of this research and what we are looking at.

Past research into gangs has compared young people who belong to a gang with those who do not. However, in doing so, much research, the media, and the public tend to lump individual gang members together, focussing on their similarities but not their differences. Gangs and their members are far more complex than usually portrayed, but if our understanding of gangs does not reflect this then young people in gangs risk being burdened with a stereotype which they may struggle to break away from.

From discussions with young people who have experienced the effects of gang activity, either as fully-fledged gang members, side-line gang members, and/or witnesses of gang activity, this study will examine important differences in terms of personal motivations for joining a gang, individual attitudes towards gang-related crime, and personal circumstances which may prompt gang members to leave their membership behind. These differences may then be taken into consideration when developing or enhancing programmes aimed at reducing reoffending.

If you have any queries about this research, or want to withdraw your data at any point after the researcher has left the prison, please contact the member of the psychology staff who contacted you about taking part, giving your participant number and lead researcher's name (see below for details). They will forward your queries/concerns to the lead researcher who will respond ASAP. Please bear in mind that you would need to do this within two months from the date of the interview or your data will already have been included in the study. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study, please contact the Chair of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (via the Psychology School office) in writing, providing a detailed account of your concern.

Once again we would like to thank you for your valuable contribution to this research. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely

Mark James
School of Psychology
University of Kent, CT2 7NP

Supervisor details:
Dr Jane Wood
School of Psychology
University of Kent, CT2 7NP

If you have any serious concerns about the ethical conduct of this study, please contact the Chair of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (via the Psychology School office) in writing, providing a detailed account of your concern

Participant code: ....

Appendix 2a

Interview Schedule One

Introduce myself and explain what I am doing:

1. Describe the aims of the interview:
    a. I would like to understand more of what they think regarding: their perception of crime in their home area; its nature (is it gang-related or not); and (potentially) their view of their own role within it.
    b. I would also like to discuss their opinion of "what works" with regards to anti-youth gang/anti-youth crime interventions (to be described to participants as any effort that seeks to reduce youth gang and individual crime); the effectiveness of family-, community- and/or prison-based interventions experienced.
    c. Emphasise this is a relatively informal confidential discussion that is intended to gain an understanding of their own experiences – there are no right or wrong answers.
2. Confirm they're happy to talk, ask if they have any questions and explain that the session is to be recorded (to be discussed in conjunction with providing an information sheet and informed consent form):
    a. Explain their rights as participants regarding anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that their right to confidentiality can be withdrawn if they are to break a prison rule during the interview, or admit to; a breach in prison security; further identifiable offences for which they have not been convicted; and/or a threat to harm themselves or others. Stress that the discussion is only concerned with their behaviour outside the prison, and only those criminal behaviours which have been recorded (i.e. through conviction, charge or caution). If the prison insists on any additional caveats to these I will explain this to participants before the interview takes place. I will also explain that if there is something that they feel uncomfortable talking about, or if they are feeling uncomfortable in any way, we will stop the interview to give them a break or we can move on to talk about something that they feel more comfortable talking about. If they are not happy to continue we will terminate the interview and I will explain to them that this will not incur any penalty to them.

- Own (offending) experiences:
  - Background –
    - Where did you grow up?
      - What was the area like?
    - What was your family-life like?

- Parents?
- Brothers and sisters?
  - Did you have a good relationship with them?
- How about school/college – how did you get on there?
  - Opportunities and perception of legitimacy?
  - Did you have many friends in school?
- What about friends outside school - what were they like what sort of things did they enjoy doing?
  - Did you have many friends or a group of friends you spent a lot of time with?
    - Tight group or more loosely connected – how close to the group/members were you? Where do you know them from – same kind of area, age etc.? Have you known them a long time? What kind of stuff did you used to get up to?
- What about crime in your home area?
  - How did this make you feel (threatened)?
- Attitudes towards crime -
  - Own experiences,
    - What was your first experience of crime (as witness, victim, or offender)?
    - What about you group of friends – did any of them get involved in crime? What did the rest of the group think about this? Did any of your group do illegal things together? If yes - what sort of things?
    - What about your own conviction – why are you in YOI right now?
      - What motivated the incident that lead to your conviction?
      - Was it spontaneous or premeditated – were there any particular goals or risks associated with the incident?
      - What personal characteristics (e.g. anger etc.) do they believe are relevant to their offending?
      - Is this your first time in YOI? – if so, how are you finding it?
        - Do you have any previous convictions?
- Victimisation –
  - Have you been the victim of crime?
  - If yes, what effects did this have on your attitudes, behaviour? Did you feel threatened?
- Gang activity –
  - Were any of your past experiences of crime (as witness, victim or perpetrator) group-related?

- If as perpetrator – would you consider yourself a member of a gang or criminal group? If no, did you used to belong to such a group?
    - How often did you meet up with the group? How much time did you spend with the group? Did you have a good relationship with the other members of the group? core or peripheral group members?

- Gang membership:
    - Definition –
        - How would you define what a gang/criminal group is? How would you describe a typical group member?
        - What do you think gangs have to offer people who join/want to join?
    - Local gangs –
        - Are there many gangs/criminal groups in your home area?
        - What was your first experience of gangs (if separate from first experience of crime)?
    - Attitudes towards gang *membership* –
        - What are your thoughts and feelings about being in a gang (informed or uninformed opinion, depending on the how they view their status)?
        - ONLY IF GANG DISCLOSURE HAS BEEN MADE,
            - What were your motives for joining the group?
                - How were things in your life at the time?
                - Did you have any friends or family in the group?
            - What are the goals of joining such a group (what do you get out of it)?
            - What are the risks of joining such a group?
            - What does belonging to a group mean to you?
        - Generally,
            - How do you think (non-)gang members (members of the wider community) view gangs?
            - What about the media's portrayal of young people and gangs/groups?
            - What do you think of the Governments/local Councils views on young people and/or groups?
    - Attitudes towards gang *members* –
        - What are your thoughts and feelings about people who join gangs?
        - What are your views on the core vs. peripheral distinction? What about "wannabe" gang members?
        - What might motivate others to join a gang?
        - (Psychological) Needs of gang members
    - Attitudes towards gang *behaviours*:
        - Non-criminal,
            - What behaviours might they engage in?
                - How do you think such actions would make them feel?

- Criminal;
  - What behaviours might they engage in?
    - How do such actions make them feel?
  - ONLY IF GANG DISCLOSURE HAS BEEN MADE - Refer back current conviction – was this gang-related? If not, ask about most recent gang-related caution/conviction.
    - In the build up to the incident,
      - What were your thoughts and feelings?
      - Were there any changes your in circumstance or situation that might have lead (directly or indirectly) to the incident?
      - Were you alone or were others present in the immediate time before the incident?
    - The incident itself,
      - What were your thoughts and feelings at the time?
      - Was anyone else with you at the time of the incident? – What was their role, if any?
    - Consequences of the incident,
      - What was the end result? - What are your thoughts and feelings on this?
      - Was there a victim? - What are your thoughts and feelings on them?
      - What were the implications of the incident for the group?
- Leading crime free lives:
  - Hopes for future –
    - What are your thoughts on leading a crime- (or gang-) free life?
    - How likely do you think this is? Why?
  - Background (referring back to 1c above throughout);
    - What role do you think family and friends (offending and non-offending friends) might play in helping you avoid engaging in criminal acts?
    - Would you like to go back to college? What job would you like to do for a living?
  - Community programmes 1 – pre-YOI experience of anti-gang/anti-crime interventions,
    - General (i.e. geared towards youth in community at large),
    - Specific (i.e. targeted towards certain groups of young people in the community),
    - What effect did these initiatives have on your attitudes and behaviour?
      - How do you explain any effects?
  - The YOI experience,

- What, if any, has been the effect of being in YOI on gang membership and attitudes towards membership?
- Have you been enrolled on any YOI-based anti-gang programmes?
  - What effect has this intervention had? – How can you explain these effects?
- Community programmes 2 –
  - On your release, do you plan to take part in any additional programmes to support your aims?
- Practical solutions?
  - What do you think would make gang members leave gang membership/criminal behaviour behind?

Appendix 2b

Interview Schedule Two

Introduce myself and explain what I am doing:

3. Describe the aims of the interview:
    a. I would like to understand more of what they think regarding: their perception of crime in their home area; its nature (is it group-related or not); and (potentially) their view of their own role within it.
    b. I would also like to discuss their opinion of "what works" with regards to anti-youth group/anti-youth crime interventions (to be described to participants as any effort that seeks to reduce youth gang and individual crime); the effectiveness of family-, community- and/or prison-based interventions experienced.
    c. Emphasise this is a relatively informal confidential discussion that is intended to gain an understanding of their own experiences – there are no right or wrong answers.
4. Confirm they're happy to talk, ask if they have any questions and explain that the session is to be recorded (to be discussed in conjunction with providing an information sheet and informed consent form):
    a. Explain their rights as participants regarding anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that their right to confidentiality can be withdrawn if they are to break a prison rule during the interview, or admit to; a breach in prison security; further identifiable offences for which they have not been convicted; and/or a threat to harm themselves or others. Stress that the discussion is only concerned with their behaviour outside the prison, and only those criminal behaviours which have been recorded (i.e. through conviction, charge or caution). If the prison insists on any additional caveats to these I will explain this to participants before the interview takes place. I will also explain that if there is something that they feel uncomfortable talking about, or if they are feeling uncomfortable in any way, we will stop the interview to give them a break or we can move on to talk about something that they feel more comfortable talking about. If they are not happy to continue we will terminate the interview and I will explain to them that this will not incur any penalty to them.

- Own (offending) experiences:
    o Background –
        ▪ Where did you grow up?
            ▪ Been there whole life or moved around?
            ▪ What was the area like?

- ▪ Busy, quiet, community oriented etc.
- ▪ Much to do in the area?
- ▪ How about school/college – how did you get on there?
  - ▪ What about it did you (not) enjoy? Subjects?
  - ▪ College/work plans - Opportunities and perception of legitimacy?
  - ▪ Did you have many friends in school?
    - ▪ School only friends or know each other outside school too?
- ▪ What about friends outside school - what were they like what sort of things did they enjoy doing?
  - ▪ Did you have a lot of friends in the community?
  - ▪ Did you a particular group of friends you spent a lot of time with?
    - ▪ How many?
    - ▪ Where do you know them from – same kind of area, age etc.?
    - ▪ Have you known them a long time? How did you get to know them?
    - ▪ What kind of stuff did you used to get up to?
      - ▪ Did you used to go places/do thing/hang about on the street/park?
    - ▪ Tight group or more loosely connected – how close to the group/members were you?
      - ▪ Connections to you – big part of your life (day in day out) or something you could dip in and out of?
      - ▪ Did you have a role or place among your group of friends? How would you describe your position in the group?
- ▪ Who did you live with growing up?
  - ▪ What was your family like?
    - ▪ Dad?
      - ▪ Did you have a good relationship with him?
      - ▪ Lot in common – things you used to do?
    - ▪ Mum?
      - ▪ Did you have a good relationship with her?
    - ▪ Brothers and sisters?
      - ▪ Did you have a good relationship with them?
  - ▪ What was your family-life like?
- ▪ What about crime in your home area?
  - ▪ Was there a lot of crime in your area – estimate more than average? Type?
  - ▪ Police presence?

- How did this make you feel (threatened)?
  - o Attitudes towards crime -
    - Own experiences,
      - What was your first experience of crime (as witness, victim, or perpetrator)?
        - How did that make you feel?
        - Change of attitude?
      - Victimisation –
        - Have you been the victim of crime?
        - If yes, what effects did this have on your attitudes, behaviour? Did you feel threatened?
      - What about your group of friends – did any of them get caught up in crime (victim, witness, perpetrator)?
        - What did the rest of the group think about this?
        - Did any of your group of friends do illegal things together? If yes - what sort of things?
      - What about your family – did any of them get caught up in crime (victim, witness, perpetrator)?
        - How did that make you feel?
      - What about your own conviction – why are you in YOI right now?
        - What motivated the incident that lead to your conviction?
        - Was it spontaneous or premeditated – were there any particular goals or risks associated with the incident?
        - What personal characteristics (e.g. anger etc.) do they believe are relevant to their offending?
        - Is this your first time in YOI? – if so, how are you finding it?
          - Do you have any previous convictions?
        - Effect of conviction on friends and family?
  - o Group activity –
    - Were any of your past experiences of crime (as witness, victim or perpetrator) group-related?
      - If as perpetrator – would you consider yourself a member of a criminal group? If no, did you used to belong to such a group? Reiterate points from above
        - How often did you meet up with the group?
        - How much time did you spend with the group?
        - Did you have a good relationship with the other members of the group?
        - Core or peripheral group members?
- Group membership:
  - o Definition –

- How would you describe a typical group member?
- What do you think (criminal) groups have to offer people who join/want to join?

o Local groups –
  - Are there many criminal groups in your home area?
  - What was your first experience of a criminal group (if separate from first experience of crime)?

o Attitudes towards group *membership* –
  - What are your thoughts and feelings about being part of a criminal group (informed or uninformed opinion, depending on the how they view their status)?
  - ONLY IF GROUP DISCLOSURE HAS BEEN MADE,
    - What were your motives for joining the group?
      - How were things in your life at the time?
      - Did you have any friends or family in the group?
    - What are the goals of joining such a group (what do you get out of it)?
    - What are the risks of joining such a group?
    - What does belonging to a group mean to you?
  - Generally,
    - How do you think (non-)group members (members of the wider community) view such groups?
    - What about the media's portrayal of young people, particularly in groups/on the street?
    - What do you think of the Governments/local Councils views on young people and/or groups?

o Attitudes towards group *members* –
  - What are your thoughts and feelings about people who join criminal groups?
  - What are your views on the core vs. peripheral distinction? What about "wannabe" members?
  - What might motivate others to join such a group?
  - (Psychological) Needs of members

o Attitudes towards group *behaviours*:
  - Non-criminal,
    - What behaviours might they engage in?
      - How do you think such actions would make them feel?
  - Criminal;
    - What behaviours might they engage in?
      - How do such actions make them feel?
    - ONLY IF GROUP DISCLOSURE HAS BEEN MADE - Refer back current conviction – was this related to your group? If not, ask about most recent group-related caution/conviction.
      - In the build up to the incident,

- What were your thoughts and feelings?
- Were there any changes your in circumstance or situation that might have lead (directly or indirectly) to the incident?
- Were you alone or were others present in the immediate time before the incident?
  - The incident itself,
    - What were your thoughts and feelings at the time?
    - Was anyone else with you at the time of the incident? – What was their role, if any?
  - Consequences of the incident,
    - What was the end result? - What are your thoughts and feelings on this?
    - Was there a victim? - What are your thoughts and feelings on them?
    - What were the implications of the incident for the group?

- Leading crime free lives:
  - Hopes for future –
    - What are your thoughts on leading a crime- (or gang-) free life?
    - How likely do you think this is? Why?
  - Background (referring back to 1c above throughout);
    - What role do you think family and friends (offending and non-offending friends) might play in helping you avoid engaging in criminal acts?
    - Would you like to go back to college? What job would you like to do for a living?
  - Community programmes 1 – pre-YOI experience of anti-gang/anti-crime interventions,
    - General (i.e. geared towards youth in community at large),
    - Specific (i.e. targeted towards certain groups of young people in the community),
    - What effect did these initiatives have on your attitudes and behaviour?
      - How do you explain any effects?
  - The YOI experience,
    - What, if any, has been the effect of being in YOI on gang membership and attitudes towards membership?
    - Have you been enrolled on any YOI-based anti-gang programmes?
      - What effect has this intervention had? – How can you explain these effects?
  - Community programmes 2 –
    - On your release, do you plan to take part in any additional programmes to support your aims?

- o Practical solutions?
    - What do you think would make gang members leave gang membership/criminal behaviour behind?

Appendix Three

Extract of Grounded Theory Analysis Sheet for Interview with Participant VA

	Interview Data			
Trans. Page	**General Unit**	**What General Unit means**	**Further Concepts**	**4th Level**
	Obviously, I used to be in a gang when I was young init,	When he was younger he was in a gang	In the days before the robbery/possession incident – thus meaning it was unfair when that was used against him in court (he'd distanced himself before then)	**Gang member status** • **Self-nomination as ex-gang member**
	when I didn't know that ... to be honest I don't even know that ...	He didn't even really know that he was part of a gang when he was in it	Think of the timeline – we're probably talking about when he was around 11 or 12, he may not have fully appreciated the situation he found himself in	**Gang member status** • **Self-nomination as ex-gang member** • **Membership linked to immaturity** • **Unaware of what he was getting involved in**
	like, what they call a gang, I mean what do they call a gang, you know what I'm saying?		Raising the definition issue - He's questioning what a gang really is. Tapping into the idea that our common understanding is too broad and that stereotypes may be more prevalent than fact?	**Gang member status** • **Questioning who constitutes a gang member** • **Stereotypes vs. evidence**

I'm just saying, I had a group of friends, which we all do crime together init	He had a group of friends and they used to commit crime together	Two of the five defining criteria of a gang there	**Gang member status** • **Being part of a criminal group**
Like, so I don't call myself any names or nothing.	He doesn't call the group by a specific name	Crucial to his definition of what a gang is – his group may look and act like a gang, but so long as they're nameless they remain merely a group of friends	**Gang member status** • **Being part of a criminal group** • **Did not self-ID as a named group** • **Group names treated as a gang definer**
They try to say, they got us down as [name of] Gang. Just chatting all this shit, making up names for us.	Other people refer to them as the [name of] Gang, but they're talking rubbish and making things up	Who's they? Police? Not a name they use for themselves	**Gang member status** • **Being part of a criminal group** • **Did not self-ID as a named group** • **Out-group labelling, the in-group didn't accept**
Told the Judge that we were in a gang, and obviously the Judge is gonna listen to them.	(The police) told the judge he was part of this gang at his trial, and obviously the judge believed it	Highlighting both the differences different groups define what a gang is, and views on authority (i.e. groups who are more likely to be listened to)	• **Losing control over social identity** • **No power**
That's what they do man, just lie	The police lie	A view rooted in his (perception of his) personal experience	**Anti-authority (police) attitude** • **Police as liars** • **Rooted in personal negative experience**

7	Obviously, fucking ... they look at the roads that we chill on most init. They look at the streets. And they're like "ah, they must be called that".	The police look at the specific roads where (gang-like) groups congregate and label them accordingly	Aldridge's self-fulfilling prophecy argument – if gangs view group names as defining what a gang is, is this argument strengthened by the knowledge that the police actually assign groups names?	**✻**
				
				Gang member status
				• **Being part of a criminal group**
				• **Did not self-ID as a named group**
				  • **Out-group labelling, the in-group didn't accept**
				  • **+ Group names treated as a gang definer**
				  • **= self-acceptance as gang member may be facilitated**

	Then obviously, just one dumb person can say "yeah ..."	Once labelled, all it takes is one dumb person in the group to adopt the name for themselves, and that's then the group confirmed as a gang	Continuing the above – if a member of the group accepts the name, and thus applies it to everyone associated, this is the point where a groups of friends is elevated to gang-status He doesn't think highly of the person who does this	↓ • **Solidifying the label once a group member accepts it** • **Losing control over social identity** • **Greater impact when source is an in-group member**