

**Discourse, Policy, Gangs:
An Analysis of Gang Members' Talk and Policy**

EMMA R. E. AGNEW

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ABSTRACT

European academics have historically been reluctant to conduct explicit gang research on the premise that it risks stereotyping communities. Subsequently, notions about gangs in the UK have been transposed from American literature, which is primarily based within a criminological perspective and focuses on personal characteristics of gang members, such as their violent tendencies (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Alternatively, underpinned by a community psychology perspective, this research explores how young people involved in gangs construct their identities and experiences, and to what extent these constructions reproduce or resist political discourse.

Semi-structured interviews with six self-identified gang members, as well as the UK policy 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' (Home Office, 2011) were analysed using a hybrid approach of discursive psychology and critical discourse analysis. The four main discursive sites identified in the policy were: i) The demonization of gangs, ii) the inevitability of gangs, iii) gangs: the product of 'troubled families', iv) the racialization of gangs. The four main discursive sites within the interviews were: i) experiences of racism, ii) the inevitability of gang membership, iii) problematized identities, iv) individual and family responsibility.

The analysis indicated that, at times, the participants reproduced problematising ideological discourse, at other times they constructed reimagined personal narratives which resisted hegemonic discourses about gang members, and at other times they exposed the oppressive mechanisms of political discourse, by detailing how being labelled a 'gang member' and racial discrimination had shaped their subjectivities and lived experiences.

The findings indicate the need for an overhaul of elitist policy production, for authentic participation of young people with experiences of living in deprived areas, and for a shift from the 'criminological' framework of gang policy towards 'welfare'. Furthermore, the findings highlight the need to direct political attention to addressing racial discrimination. Clinically, community psychology approaches are recommended, as well as working at macro levels to change cultural narratives around this group.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Research

In Britain there are almost weekly media reports of gang shootings, stabbings or feuds, usually accompanied with images of the victim or perpetrator.

Subsequently, many people living in Britain may have preconceived ideas of gangs and gang members. This was exacerbated in August 2011 when gangs were thrust into centre stage following a police shooting of a Tottenham man allegedly involved in a gang. Young people, largely from local estates, took to the streets in peaceful protest. However, the protest turned to riots after they felt disregarded by the police, and the sentiment and disturbances spread across Britain. David Cameron called for an "all-out war on gangs" stating that gangs are "a major criminal disease that has infected streets and estates across our country," (as quoted by Helm, *The Guardian* newspaper, 2012). The seminal gang policy entitled 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence: A Cross Government Report' (Home Office, 2011) soon followed.

Thus, connotations around the term 'gang' have evolved in both public and political arenas. However, some academics report a UK-wide reluctance to use the term and conduct explicit gang research, on the premise that it risks stereotyping communities and focussing a negative spotlight on particular groups (Aldridge, Medina, & Ralphs, 2008). Consequently, UK gang research is in its relative infancy. Conversely, American gang research has a long history dating back to 1927 when Thrasher conducted the first explicit study into gangs in Chicago. As a result, knowledge from American literature has been applied to the British context (Klein & Maxson, 2006). This process became known as the 'Eurogang paradox' and refers to the inappropriate transposition of American notions of gangs to the UK, resulting in misplaced policies (Klein, 2001).

Although British literature into gangs has progressed hugely in the past decade, there remains a lack of sustained qualitative research into the topic (Alexander, 2008, Densley & Stevens, 2015). Furthermore, the UK body of research is largely from a criminological and sociological perspective, and psychological research is scant (Alleyne & Wood, 2014).

1.1.1 Community Psychology

As noted above, gang research lacks a psychological perspective (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). This study hopes to contribute to this body of research, however it also aims to offer an alternative to the mainstream psychological understanding of gangs by drawing on the principles of community psychology. The principles of community psychology endeavour to move away from individualised notions of distress and towards understanding mental health and well-being as intimately connected to social forces, power and oppression (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, Siddiquee, 2007). As such, community psychology advocates for interventions which privilege macro-social change and prevention, as opposed to the traditional focus upon internal cognitions of individuals (Kagan *et al.*, 2007). Below, I present a brief synopsis of community psychology's development in the UK, followed by a description of the particular strand of community psychology which influences this research.

Although community psychology remains a marginal pursuit in Britain, many clinicians, researchers and institutions are increasingly influenced by its ethos and theories. Indeed, the current state of UK community psychology is the culmination of several decades of evolution. Although there were numerous precursors, the approach first officially appeared on the UK psychology scene in the 1970's as interest in a social constructionist paradigm grew (Burton, Boyle & Kagan, 2007). In 1976, soon after establishing an alternative community-minded service in the London Borough of Newham (Burton *et al.*, 2007), Bender (Bender, 1976) published the first British introduction to community psychology. However, the approach remained elusive from the mainstream. Despite this, in the late 1970's Jim Orford re-established the clinical doctorate at Exeter University as a 'Community and Clinical' training course (Orford, 1979, Burton *et al.*, 2007). Subsequently, community psychology gained some traction in the UK. In the 1980's, Holland's social-action therapeutic work with women in an inner-city estate proved seminal for the UK community psychology scene, as it modelled the clinical application of the approach's values (Holland, 1991). Since then, the UK community psychology movement has continued to evolve, with the BPS formally recognising it's substantial following by recently establishing a community psychology section.

Furthermore, community psychology in Britain has developed alongside a trans-Atlantic influence from the USA and Latin America (Hollander, 1997). One such influence from Latin America is 'liberation psychology', a psychology developed in El Salvador by Martín-Baró (1996). Liberation psychology understands people's distress as resulting from powerful groups oppressing the masses, with the accompanying social issues such as marginalisation, lack of opportunities, and poverty (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Thus, effective interventions transform oppressive social conditions, rather than change an individual's thinking pattern (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Furthermore, transformation only occurs through a 'bottom up approach' which emphasises collaboration with the marginalised and facilitates the development of a critical awareness of their position (Martín-Baró, 1996). Once a 'critical conscious' of oppression has been raised, communities are mobilised to take collective action (Freire, 1970). The principles of liberation psychology heavily influence the current research.

Ultimately, this research is underpinned by community psychology principles and privileges attention to power, oppression and social context, as opposed to the individual psychology of gang members.

1.1.2 Overview of The Introduction

Considering that British understanding of gangs is heavily influenced by the US, this introduction explores historical and current research from both America and Britain and, where relevant, its location is noted. Firstly however, I explore the definition of a gang, which remains a highly contested area. Secondly, I present research which highlights individual characteristics of gangs and which emphasises their criminal and violent nature. Following this, I present studies which take a broader and more critical perspective, emphasising the social and political factors relating to gangs and their members' lived experiences. Through exploration of research that attends to gangs' macro-level context, I offer a critique of the previously presented individually focussed research. I then link broader social discourses with identity, through an exploration of labelling theory and how criminal identities can be socially constructed and, subsequently, resisted.

Finally, my focus moves from gang research to policy. Aligning with a social constructionist viewpoint, I introduce research which explores policy's role in constructing individual identities, and how notions of power and exclusion are crucial to understanding how policy is legitimised. Lastly, I present a brief historical overview of recent UK gang policy culminating in an explanation of the policy: *Ending Gang and Youth Violence* (Home Office, 2011).¹

1.2 Definitional Issues

Conducting research into 'gangs' is both controversial and complex. This is in part due to the nature of the subject, being embroiled in both political and social agendas, but also owing to the lack of consensus as to what constitutes a gang and who constitutes a gang member (Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001). The first recorded research into gangs was conducted in Chicago by Thrasher in 1927. He noted the definitional characteristics of gangs as being:

(a) spontaneous and unplanned origin, (b) intimate face-to-face relations, (c) a sense of organization, solidarity, and morale that is superior to that exhibited by the mob, (d) a tendency to move through space and meet a hostile element, which can precipitate cooperative planned conflict, a morale-boosting activity in itself, (e) the creation of a shared esprit de corps and a common tradition or "heritage of memories," and (f) a propensity for some geographic area or territory, which it will defend through force if necessary. (Thrasher, 1927, p.36-46).

Thrasher's understanding considered gangs as a source of social support in the transition between childhood and adulthood, rather than as opposition to the community (Alexander, 2008). Furthermore, it has been argued that these characteristics are typical of other groups and cannot be attributed to modern street gangs (Esbensen *et al.*, 2001).

¹ In January 2016 a new policy entitled 'Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation' (Home Office, 2016) was published, and builds upon the existing 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' policy. Owing to its recent publication, its initiatives have not been implemented across the UK and hence does not form the focus of this research.

In the 89 years since this seminal study into gangs, many definitions have emerged from the research and constructions of 'gangs' have evolved over time. For example, in the UK the mid-1960's and 70's coverage of the conflict between 'mods' and 'rockers' highlighted a rivalry between two subcultures, which were considered as separate gangs (Cohen, 1972). A decade later, in the 1980's, an influx of Jamaican immigration led to the exportation of the drug trade from Jamaica to British Caribbean communities (Antrobus, 2009). The groups of men within Jamaican communities who were involved in gun crime and the drug trade were considered 'gangsters', and were colloquially known as 'yardies' (Antrobus, 2009). While only a decade apart, these examples highlight the way in which constructions of gangs have radically shifted over time, and emphasise that such a notion cannot be assumed to be a fixed phenomenon. Thus, a genealogical approach would help ascertain how current understandings have been made possible, as well as situate knowledge within a historically sensitive model (Hook, 2005). However, while conducting a genealogy would be a useful addition, I decided to focus on contemporary definitions in order to examine more closely how present constructions relate to and affect the current population of young people defined in this way.

Thus, more recently in the UK, Sharp, Aldridge and Medina (2006, p.2) offered a definition of a gang as "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 12 months, and has at least one structural feature i.e. a name, leader, a code/rules". Conversely, Bennet and Holloway (2004) discount criminality as a necessary criteria for defining a gang, while Howell (1998) argues that criminality is essential for defining gangs, as otherwise the definition becomes too broad. Furthermore, Ralphs, Medina, and Aldridge (2010) found those who have been defined by the authorities as gang members frequently do not consider themselves as such. Equally, Smithson, Ralphs, and Williams (2013), investigating views about local gang culture in an English town, reported that practitioners (including police officers, youth workers, and counsellors) and young people had contrasting views about the existence of gangs in the area, with young people believing that the area was not gang-affected while the practitioners cited a gang problem. The differential

viewpoints between the groups of people residing within a single area highlight the complex nature of gangs in the UK (Smithson, Ralphs, Williams, 2013).

Hallsworth and Young (2005) developed a three tiered definition in order to help policy makers consider different types of criminal activity, as well as to ensure that peer groups were not criminalised. The typology included: firstly, organised groups for whom crime is a career, secondly, the term 'gang' refers to a durable group with a collective identity. Gangs, as per their definition, are street based and consist of young people who see themselves as distinct from other groups and for whom crime and violence is integral to their group identity. The lowest tier consisted of the peer group, who are a transient group with a common history and may engage in deviant (but not criminally serious) behaviour. However, despite the typology's intentions, it has been argued that the three tiered approach inadvertently characterises the everyday activities of young people with little recreational opportunities, as deviant and gang related (Joseph & Gunter, 2011). Equally, Alexander (2008) postulates that continuing to use the term risks attributing a fixed identity to a transitional youth group and warns against criminalising men who gather in public spaces.

Definitional issues surrounding gangs have implications for both research and policy. Without an agreed understanding, gangs are at risk of being overestimated whereby individuals, groups and behaviours are captured under the definition. Equally, existence of gangs may be underestimated by too narrow a definition (Esbensen *et al.*, 2001). Combating the potentially detrimental consequences of wrongly defining gangs, many researches have advocated self-nomination, whereby gang members define themselves (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Esbensen *et al.* (2001) investigated the validity of self-definition by asking young people whether they have ever been in a gang. They concluded that, from a research perspective, self-nomination is effective in distinguishing between gang and non-gang youth. However, they caution that those who claim gang membership at one time may latterly exhibit pro-social behaviour, and yet the label remains attached. Similarly, Winfree, Fuller, Backstrom and Mays (1992, p.109) report that self-definition alone might encompass "wannabes" and former gang members, as well as currently active members. Therefore, from a legal perspective, self-definition may cast too wide

a net and wrongly encompass young people in the law enforcement system who self-nominate as gang members (Esbensen *et al.* 2001). It might be, however, that gangs are diverse and that no single definition will sufficiently describe what they are and how they function. For this reason, Ball and Curry (1995) call for abandoning the term altogether.

In response to the convoluted understanding of gangs and the predominantly American knowledge base, The Eurogang Programme was conceived to kick-start a coordinated research effort into gangs in Europe in an attempt to establish an overall consensus on a definition (Klein & Maxson, 2006).

Successfully, they reached a generally agreed definition of a gang as “durable and street oriented youth groups whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group-identity” (Klein & Maxson, 2006, p.4). Building on this, the Centre for Social Justice² (Antrobus, 2009) devised a working definition to be universally applied by those tackling gangs in the political arena. They settled upon this definition:

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. (Antrobus, 2009, p.21).

1.2.1 The Term ‘Gang’ in the Current Research

Although The Centre for Social Justice’s definition has been broadly adopted in the UK (including by the British Government in their policies), there still remains a level of discord around the definition and description of gangs. Ultimately, a lack of consensus is a testament to their complex nature, and indicates that research into gangs should be done critically, thoughtfully and without any taken-for-granted assumptions about their existence. In this way, I recognise that the term ‘gang’ is value-laden and infused with moral, institutional and

² The Centre for Social Justice is a think-tank established in 2004 by the Conservative party, being co-founded by Iain Duncan Smith. Thus, it is important to note its complex and potentially mutually influential relationship with the policies of the current and previous coalition government.

political judgments (Alexander, 2008), and consequently it is used with caution in this study. However, the term's use has spread in spite of British academic reluctance to use it (Alexander, 2008), and it seems important to reflect its wide public and political use. Thus, for readability the terms 'gang member' and 'young people who are involved in gangs' are used interchangeably throughout this study. However, I do not wish to reduce an individual's identity solely to that of 'gang member' nor suggest it is something that they essentially 'are'. Moreover, the critical stance of the research intends to deconstruct the term as opposed to perpetuate any damaging connotations.

1.3 Literature Review

In this section I present previous research into gangs. I review the themes that gang literature has predominantly focussed on, beginning with an exploration of risk factors and gang involvement, followed by gangs and violence, and gangs and social identity. For details on the literature search strategy refer to Appendix A.

1.3.1 Risk Factors and Gang Involvement

In attempts to understand how and why young people join gangs, much research has focussed on risk factors which lead to gang involvement.

Howell and Egley (2005) synthesised existing literature around risk factors of gang membership and suggest that "family and child deficits" (p.341) increase the likelihood of gang involvement in socially disadvantaged areas. Family 'deficits' might include harsh child punishment, parental criminality, and poor family management and child supervision (Howell & Egley, 2005). Individual deficits have been described in other research as low levels of IQ (Spergel, 1995), learning difficulties (Hill, Howell, Hawkins & Battin-Pearson, 1999) and low empathy (Dupéré, Lacourse, Wilms, Vitaro & Tremblay, 2007). Equally, following a review of literature, Maxson (2011) concluded that experiencing a major life event such as injury or a relationship breakdown, anti-social tendencies; having low level parental supervision; and associating with delinquent peers, all proved strong risk factors for gang involvement.

Aside from individual and familial factors, other research has focussed on the community and environmental factors related to the risk of joining a gang. Decker, Melde and Pyrooz (2013) report that gang emergence is facilitated by neighbourhoods with weakened systems of social control, a lowered sense of collective efficacy and limited opportunities. Equally, economic deprivation and social disadvantage exacerbate the prevalence of crime and contribute to the formation of gangs (Howell & Egle, 2005).

While risk factor research may have good intentions of determining who should be targeted by early intervention, this research is not unproblematic. Framing youth activity as predictive of gang involvement criminalises individuals who might otherwise 'grow out' of said behaviour (Armstrong, 2006). For example, Maxson's (2011) risk factor of 'anti-social tendencies' do not necessarily equate to delinquent or criminal behaviour, and as such relies upon normative assumptions about what is considered anti-social and who defines it as such (Armstrong, 2006). Equally, associating certain familial and environmental factors uncomplicatedly with gang and criminal activity is to suggest that young people are passively determined by their circumstances and discounts their personal agency (Armstrong, 2006). Thus, this results in young people being targeted by authorities without necessarily demonstrating any criminal behaviour (Armstrong, 2006). Furthermore, based on group statistics, risk factor research oversimplifies the link between the influence of family, peers and individual psychology and cannot reliably predict young people's behaviour (Armstrong, 2006). In this way, Hallsworth and Young (2008) regard predicting group life based on variables as reductionist.

Moreover, risk research largely focusses on individual and familial factors, discounting the role and responsibility of the state (Densley & Stevens, 2015). Hence, interventions are aimed at the individual level and conceal any need for real social transformation (Armstrong, 2006). As Rose (1999) describes, calculating the probability of becoming a problem child makes people "amenable to having things done to them" (p.8) such as "educate, cure, reform, punish" (p.7). In this way, risk factors can be conceived as a form of social control whereby the excluded are further marginalised, and punishment takes

precedence over welfare as the “neglected child” becomes synonymous with the “young criminal” (Rose, 1999, p.157).

1.3.2 Gangs: Violence and Social Identities

In these sub-sections below I initially present the literature without critique because the current study considers this type of research unsatisfactory, as it does not account for political and cultural aspects of gangs’ existence. Thus, specific critique of the research will be introduced in a subsequent section when I revisit it after an alternative and more critical body of gang research is presented.

1.3.2.1 *Violent Gangs*

A large proportion of gang research, particularly from America, has consistently focussed on individual characteristics of gang members and their violent and criminal nature. Much research has stipulated that violence is a key defining feature of gangs (Decker, 1996, Felson, 2006), as Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, and Chard-Wierschem (1993) note that violence is reported in almost all American studies of gangs despite varying locations, times and methodologies of data collection. Explaining the relationship between gangs and violence, Gottfredson and Hirshci (1990) report that those who join gangs have a pre-existing propensity for criminal and violent activity, whereas Decker (1996) cites group processes as responsible for elevating violent tendencies in individuals. Decker (1996) explains that violence is used by gangs as a device for both social control and protection in their communities, while McGloin (2008) suggests violence enhances reputation and social status for gang members.

Furthermore, Thornton, Frick, Shulman, Ray, Steinberg and Cauffman (2015) explore ‘callous-unemotional’ (CU) personality traits in adolescents and their mediating effect on group crime. They describe adolescents with “developmentally inappropriate levels of callous and unemotional traits” (Thornton *et al.*, p.368) as tantamount to those described as ‘under-socialised’ in the DSM-III (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). Thornton *et al.* (2015) found that CU traits were associated with gang membership and that higher levels of the traits resulted in narcissistic tendencies and taking on leadership

roles in gang hierarchies. Recommendations from this research include providing treatment for adolescents with CU traits, as well as future research into whether these traits affect offending differently for “black adolescents compared with adolescents of other ethnicities” (Thornton *et al.*, 2015, p.373). However, they did not specify to which ‘ethnicities’ they referred. Similarly, Dupéré, Lacourse, Willms, Viatro and Tempalay (2007, p.1035) denote that childhood “psychopathic tendencies” pose a significant risk for gang involvement among young people living in unstable neighbourhoods.

In the UK, Alleyne and Wood (2010) researched the psychological processes involved in being a gang member. They criticize the primarily criminological and sociological basis of the majority of gang research and frame their study as introducing a psychological aspect to the body of literature. Alleyne and Wood (2010) describe cognitive techniques which gang members employ to reconcile the ethical dilemma surrounding the benefits of joining a gang and the “immoral behaviour” (p.425) required of them. These cognitive techniques include using euphemistic language to sanitize violent acts, displacing and diffusing responsibility by blaming the authorities or involving others in the crime, and dehumanising or blaming the victim so that the perpetrators are convinced they deserve the harm. These processes, termed “moral disengagement” by Alleyne and Wood (2010, p.425), are said to resolve the personal moral dissonance of gang member’s actions.

1.3.2.2 *Gangs and Identities*

Goldman, Giles, and Hogg (2014) suggest that gang membership is inherently linked to social identity processes. Studies have explored the relationship between joining a gang and identity formation, as Vigil (1988) speculates that self-perception is central to gang affiliation. Furthermore, through interviewing gang members Stretesky and Pogrebain (2007) highlight the ‘social facilitation’ perspective regarding the relationship between identity formation and gang membership. This perspective suggests gang members and non-gang members are no different from each other until gang involvement. It is only after joining a gang that socialisation to its norms and values causes crime and violence to burgeon in the lives of its members. Furthermore, the interviews emphasised gang membership as a platform for otherwise underprivileged

young people to acquire status, project a positive image and express masculinity. Thus, in accordance with social identity theory, the gang is viewed as a group that will enhance status and offer a secure base from which to develop a positive self-concept (Goldman *et al.*, 2014). However, Bulbolz and Simi (2015) found that young people may have idealised expectations regarding their gang membership and that when these expectations are unmet they become resentful towards the gang and exit. Thus, incongruence between individual identity and that of the gangs can result in disillusionment as opposed to assimilation.

Other research has explicitly linked identity development and delinquent behaviour for ethnic minority young people. Knight, Losoya, Cho, Chassin, Williams, Cota-Robles (2012) state that criminal activity and ethnic identity formation follow similar developmental trajectories and as such may associate with one another. Using Mexican American juvenile offenders as participants, they suggest that “lower levels of psychosocial maturity” (Knight *et al.*, 2012, p.792) among ethnic minority people reduce their capabilities at dealing with the tasks of adolescence, such as civic competence (Havighurst, 1951), and as such explains their anti-social behaviour (Knight *et al.*, 2012).

1.3.2.3 *Gangs and Group Processes*

Alongside focussing on individual identity, social psychological research has also focussed on group processes and the social identities of gang members. Vigil (1988) suggests that through joining a gang, otherwise excluded young people gain a sense of belonging. Subsequently, young people who join gangs place group norms of criminal activity ahead of personal concerns regarding punishment (Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012). Furthermore, some research demonstrates that gang members adopt shared norms together and subsequently view their membership in relation to out-groups, such as rival gangs or the police (Viki & Abrams, 2013). Moore and Vigil (1987) suggest that through recognising the ‘in-group’ and corresponding ‘out-groups’, gangs increase cohesion and become ‘oppositional’ towards authorities.

However, Thornberry and Krohn (2001) propose an interactional theory of gang involvement. Their theory posits that gang membership results from a

relationship between the individual and peer groups, as well as social structures and environment. In this way, although group processes are important for understanding the dynamics within gangs, members also exhibit individual differences in how they relate to the group depending on their own contexts as well. Furthermore, the relationship between social and psychological processes in collective action was discussed by Reicher and Stott (2011) in reference to the 2011 London riots. Reicher and Stott (2011) noted the difference between research findings and the political rhetoric in explanations of the riots.

Theoretical accounts consider rioting within a social and political context, yet the media and politician's accounts constructed the 2011 riots as acts of pure criminality performed by "morally challenged criminals" (Reicher & Stott, 2011, p.7). Explanations that endorse notions of deficient and criminal characters, obscure an understanding of riots as a form of protest, or as collective action that highlights social problems. Reicher and Stott (2011) note that throughout history crowds have been constructed as inherently dangerous and criminal, which serves to further marginalise those who grasp minimal social power and for whom collective action can be constructive.

1.4 An Alternative Perspective on Gangs

The research described above is not exhaustive, however it highlights general and common themes found within much of the gang research to date. Below, I present a review of literature that offers an alternative perspective on gangs. Alongside this, I reflect upon the literature previously presented from the viewpoint of a more critical approach.

1.4.1 Societal Oppression

Within the body of research detailed above, societal conditions such as poverty, deprivation and oppression are barely mentioned. As Klein and Maxson (2006) report in a review of gang literature since 1990, individual, family and peer characteristics are more frequently the subject of gang research than neighbourhood characteristics. Klein and Maxson (2006) call for more attention from both researchers and practitioners to be paid to community level features, and a shift from analysing 'gang culture' towards systemic societal exclusion (Alexander, 2008). By focussing at the individual level, the social, political and

cultural contexts impacting on young people are obscured (Patel, 2003). Below, I discuss research which makes salient contextual factors, thus offering an alternative view on gangs.

Dating back to the first research into gangs, Thrasher (1927) argued that social disorganisation leads to a disintegration of conventional social institutions, thus forcing those experiencing economic instability into street gangs. Although nearly 90 years ago, notions of social disorganisation and social breakdown are still important for understanding the formation of gangs currently. Using case studies of young people in a UK city, Clement (2010) highlights the inextricable link between poverty, marginalisation and gangs. He reports that young people who are consistently incarcerated are those who have grown up in isolated social spaces, abject poverty and with a glaring dearth of opportunity. Densley and Stevens (2015) interviewed young people involved in gangs in London in order to develop explanations for their actions. The young people described facing a lack of employment opportunities, and understood this unequal distribution as having a racial basis. Corroborating these young peoples' subjective experiences, statistics show that young black men in Britain experience higher rates of unemployment than the national average (Ball, Milmo, Ferguson, 2012). Equally, Briggs (2010, p.862) found that young black people in gangs conflated their ethnicity with the impossibility of "leading a better life".

British society is underpinned by capitalist ideals which promote self-realisation, consumerism and material success as an indicator of worthy citizenship (De Benedictus, 2012). Unsurprisingly, disadvantaged young people want to pursue the same successful life, as determined by neoliberal values, that their privileged counterparts are afforded (Densley, 2014). Highlighting this, in an interview conducted by Densley (2014), a young man describes his drug dealing as being a "business in competition with other businesses" as he endeavours to "generate capital" (p.532). In this way, young people may be channelling their skills, talents and entrepreneurial ambitions into illegal activity, owing to the "multiple marginality" that prevents them from pursuing normative pathways to material success and financial stability (Vigil, 2003, p.237). Alleyne and Wood (2010) use strain theory to explain this process, whereby society

creates universally desired goals and yet provides the opportunity to achieve them only to a limited number of people. Thus, as a response to the strain, people become frustrated, leading to the emergence of a subculture which promotes instant gratification and rebellion (Cohen, 1955).

Thus, Bulbolz and Simi (2015), described in section '1.3.2.2 Gangs and Identities', found that young people *exit* gangs when their idealised expectations of the gang are not met. However, it could be argued that unmet expectations of growing up in a society that celebrates material capital while being faced with limited opportunities, results in disillusionment, resentment towards mainstream society and accounts for gang *entry*. By joining a gang, people are actively and creatively responding to the socially unjust circumstances they face (Hagedorn, 2005). To focus on their personal or familial deficiencies, as detailed in '1.3.1 Risk Factors and Gang Involvement', is to make opaque their oppressive socio-economic circumstances. Such concealment serves the interest of those designing interventions for gangs, as individualised research calls for individualised interventions rendering obsolete arguments for social change (Patel, 2003).

1.4.2 Racial oppression or Ethnic Identity Struggles?

Reflecting back to research described in section '1.3.2.2 Gangs and Identities' I refer to Knight *et al.* (2012) who conflated ethnic identity formation with the development of anti-social behaviour. In contrast, Putnam (1993) states that ethnic minority groups are almost always associated with a lack of social capital and thus young black men are primarily victims of segregation and oppression, as opposed to perpetrators (Clement, 2010). Considering this, and in contrast to Knight *et al.*'s (2012) argument, gangs reflect the make-up of impoverished communities as opposed to the internal ethnic identity struggles of its members. Furthermore, Knight *et al.* (2012) explains offending by ethnic minority adolescents as owing to their low level of "psychosocial maturity" (p.792), which renders them incapable of dealing with the tasks of adolescence. However, as Martín-Baró (1996) warns, attributing people's problems to their personal characteristics redirects the focus away from those in power, so that injustices remain unchallenged. To suggest that young people who face the triple force of unemployment, relegation to neglected neighbourhoods and discrimination are

'psychologically immature' is to discount their awareness and autonomy evident in the interviews conducted by Densley and Stevens (2015), in which gang members spoke about their marginalised position in society. Furthermore, adolescence is viewed in some contexts as a luxury. Thus, deprived young people from minority backgrounds may not be in a position to prioritise the tasks of adolescence, such as civic competence and preparing for a career (Knight *et al.*, 2012, Havighurst, 1951), while attempting to survive in conditions of extreme exclusion from mainstream society.

Moreover, as described in '1.3.2.1 Violent Gangs', Thornton *et al.* (2015) recommended conducting research into whether CU personality traits affect 'black adolescents' differently to other ethnicities. This recommendation perpetuates the notion that ethnicity and offending are related. Once again, focusing on individual characteristics shifts the focus from societal oppression and colludes with unethical ideals that sustain people's subjugated positions (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). In this vein, Smithson, Ralphs and Williams (2013) assert that the behaviour of black and minority ethnic (BME) individuals is being conflated with gangs, without any evidence of association. Racialisation of gangs has been used to authorise punitive interventions in black communities (Alexander, 2008) and Smithson *et al.* (2013) cite the overrepresentation of BME young men in incarceration as evidence of their unjust criminalisation. Furthermore, Alexander (2008) warns against ascribing the gang label to all groups of BME men as a result of stereotyped media images, underpinned by racist connotations and ethnocentric attitudes. In reality, crime is conducted by people from varied backgrounds and to determine race as a signifier for gangs is to naturalise and fix a perspective that requires a stronger social and political understanding, which pays attention to historical oppression (Alexander, 2008). I argue that poverty and offending are related, and that ethnicity and poverty are linked owing to the structural and social barriers that minority ethnic young people face (Densley & Stevens, 2015).

1.4.3 A Structurally Violent Government

'Structural violence' is a term first coined by Galtung (1969) and refers to insidious systemic structures, such as poverty, gender inequality, and racism, that impairs certain groups from achieving social mobility, meeting their needs

or fulfilling their potential. Given that gangs are formed in the context of deepening social inequality (Goldson, 2011) gangs' existence can be explained by pathological social conditions, as opposed to pathological (i.e. callous-unemotional) individuals (Clement, 2010).

The UK has amongst the highest rates of social inequality in the world, despite being one of the wealthiest and most developed countries (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) plot the devastating consequences of inequality, which include reduced life expectancies; high incidences of mental health problems; and high crime rates. In Britain, recent statistics show that young people's (under 30) incomes are 7% lower than in 2007/2008 (Belfield, Cribb, Hood, & Joyce, 2016). Furthermore, the ratio of inequality has remained consistently high since the 1990s with the richest households continuing to earn four times as much as the poorest (Belfield, *et al.*, 2016). In fact, the richest 10% of households hold 45% of the country's entire wealth, while the poorest 50% own just 8.7%, starkly highlighting the disparity between the wealthy few and the poorer masses (Office for National Statistics, 2015). As Clement (2010) notes, those living in deprivation are more likely to be imprisoned, and, moreover, BME young men are significantly overrepresented in the criminal justice system (Smithson *et al.*, 2013). In this way, recent statistics suggest that the structural violence utilised by powerful groups to perpetuate inequality cannot be ignored (Clement, 2010, Farmer, 2004). Furthermore, structural violence is linked to the "social machinery of oppression" (Farmer, 2004, p.307) and serves to maintain social injustice. Its ubiquitous nature results in its normalisation through powerful institutions, so much so that it is largely invisible and undetected (Gilligan, 1997).

Reviewing the research described previously in '1.3.2.1 Violent Gangs', from the perspective of gang members as victims of structural violence, a different story is told. Although violence is described as an integral feature in defining gangs (Decker, 1996, Felson, 2006), according to the young people interviewed by Densley and Stevens (2015), violence is not solely confined to gang members. Instead, they viewed their violence as akin to the violence used by the government as a means to achieving political goals, thus rendering their vilification by the government hypocritical. Furthermore, the institutional racism

and exclusion experienced by the young people served as justification to break the laws, which they viewed as being made by the very group responsible for their plight (Densley & Stevens, 2015).

Considering this, I revisit Thornton *et al.*'s (2015) study as described in section '1.3.2.1 Violent Gangs'. Thornton *et al.* (2015, p.368) describe gang members as having high levels of "callous and unemotional traits". However, it could be argued that 'callous' political structures are organised in such a way that certain groups of people are consistently harmed as a result. To blame violence solely on the personalities of apparently callous individuals is to negate our responsibility to challenge social injustice (Clement, 2010) as, in short, joining a gang is more indicative of a person's social status than their personality (Kizer, 2012). Equally, Dupéré *et al.*'s (2007) assertion that childhood psychopathic tendencies increase risk of gang involvement in unstable neighbourhoods, provokes questions about how innocent children have been subjected to inadequate living conditions and why they are branded psychopaths in the face of it. According to Jovchelovitch and Priego-Hernandez (2013), violent exchanges occur in the context of chronic isolation and rejection from mainstream communities. Thus, unable to unite against powerful oppressors, communities become disintegrated and internal fighting can occur (Freire, 1970, Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010, Kizer, 2012).

Finally, the socio-cognitive processes described by Alleyne and Wood (2010) as being used by gang members to 'morally disengage' and justify their violent actions (sanitizing violence, displacing responsibility and dehumanising victims), do not appear dissimilar to strategies utilised by powerful groups such as the government and research institutions. Martín-Baró (1996) posits that responsibility for inequalities is displaced when problems are blamed on personal characteristics, as demonstrated in the individualising research described above. Furthermore, akin to euphemistic language used by gang members to obscure violence, Clement (2010) describes the juxtaposition of governmental discourses around "empowering communities" (p.449) while simultaneously generating policies which further marginalise said communities. Similarly, Wacquant (2004) describes social inequity as so degrading that those who are affected are 'decivilised'. As Martín-Baró (1996) describes,

dehumanisation is a consequence of oppression whereby the oppressed are viewed by the powerful as less human and therefore deserving of their circumstances. In summary, to inverse the lens of research from pathological gang members to pathological social conditions exposes a political level of 'moral disengagement' employed by institutions to reconcile the immoral aspects of structural violence.

1.5 The Construction of a Criminal Identity

From a social constructionist perspective, identity is discursively constituted through interactions rather than owing to pre-determined personal characteristics (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The act of being in a gang is not criminal in itself, however an exploration of how young people involved in gangs are socially constructed as criminals is explored below. This is not to say that crime is never committed by those who identify as being in a gang, and that notions of criminality are not relevant. However, social processes have determined that some young people are positioned as criminal even without committing any crime. Furthermore, positioning these young people entirely as criminals conceals other aspects of their identities.

1.5.1 Labelling Theory

Labelling theory (Lemert, 1951) posits that youth who are labelled as delinquent by authorities are more likely to adopt deviant identities, be excluded from mainstream activities and spend more time with delinquent peers. In this way, an official response to deviant behaviour, such as being arrested, has the unintended consequences of increasing 'secondary' delinquency and the prospect of future arrest (Lemert, 1951; Wiley, Slocum, & Esbensen, 2013).

Research has suggested there are several mechanisms by which this process occurs. Matsueda (1992) reports that a young person's identity is altered as they internalise a deviant sense of self in accordance with the delinquent label. Other research suggests external societal processes such as stigma, increased surveillance and exclusion from mainstream institutions results in decreased opportunities and affects future prospects (Sampson & Laub, 2003). Furthermore, Liberman, Kirk, and Kim (2014), found that labelling can result in increased sanctioning from authorities even without any actual continued

delinquent behaviour. Thus, labelling theory indicates that the 'gang data bases', used to record details of suspected gang members, will further marginalise young people and enhance their propensity to join a gang independent of criminal behaviour. In this way, many young people are unjustly criminalised through the labelling process. Given that those who join gangs have typically experienced social oppression, labelling and targeting gang members is synonymous with the criminalisation of poverty (Kizer, 2012).

1.5.2 Labelling Theory and Moral Panics

Coined by Cohen (1972), the term 'moral panic' refers to a societal fear of a certain threat which is disproportionate to its objective danger (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). Labelling disadvantaged young people as gang members and dangerous criminals inadvertently contributes to a moral panic. The subject of the moral panic comes to represent a stereotyped version of itself, known as a "folk devil" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994, p.149). The apparent existence of "folk-devils" subsequently fuels public concern and calls for punitive policies that reproduce power imbalances. In this way, moral panics are borne of the ideology of the powerful and legitimises oppressive policies that facilitate social control of this deviant 'other'.

The relationship between moral panics and the marginalisation of the working class has interested social researchers for many decades. In 1978, Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, and Roberts traced the development of moral panics around a spate of street muggings in London. They noted that notions of "race, crime and youth" were "condensed into the image of mugging" (Hall *et al.*, 1978 p. viii) and propelled wide-spread anxiety and disciplinarian policing action. Hall et al. (1978) situated the muggings within structural and social conditions which produce crime, alongside the extensive media reporting which, they assert, perpetuated a moral panic. By making this connection explicit, Hall et al. (1978) reconfigure 'mugging' as an ideological and power issue, particularly in relation to the oppression of young black people, as opposed to being a 'behavioural' one.

Dating moral panics back in history, Davies (2007) noted how local police and newspapers alleged that Glasgow gangs in the 1920's were imposing a "reign

of terror” (Davies, 2007, p.1) on the city. In the following decades, media interest in Glasgow gangs waned until the 1960’s when gangs were said to have ‘reappeared’ in the city (Bartie, 2010). The “new wave of Glasgow hooliganism” (Bartie, 2010, p.392) was reported in the media as being more violent and dangerous than ever before. However, embedded within an increasing focus on youth violence in Britain in the 1960’s, Bartie (2010) explores how constructions of gangs did not match the empirical evidence. Despite the lack of evidence, strong police measures were bought in as a deterrent against this apparent folk-devil and in 1968 the Scottish Police Federation called for capital punishment to be reintroduced. Such a radical remedy was proposed in the context of a city living in fear. Moreover, owing to the increasing media coverage, public support for capital punishment strengthened (Bartie, 2010). Thus, moral panics have real and damaging consequences for those who inadvertently become feared by the public.

Considering moral panics, Hallsworth and Young (2008) go as far as to say that gangs are ‘talked into being’ by academics, politicians and policy makers and that continued claims confirming their existence (through labelling) constructs a fictional menace against which society can band together. However, Pitts (2012) critiques labelling theory for failing to account for primary deviance, i.e. the original crime which results in a label, and argues that discounting the existence of gangs is naïve. Pitts (2012) states that the “denial of gangs” (p.36) undermines the realities of people who have fallen victim to their crimes.

However, Ralphs, Medina, and Aldridge (2010) interviewed young people who had been labelled as gang members to ascertain the lived reality of such an ascription. Many of the young people did not identify themselves as gang members, and yet reported feeling the full weight of law enforcement and social barriers as if they were criminals. Thus, the lived reality of many young people labelled as gang members is one of exclusion and fear (Ralphs, Medina & Aldridge, 2010), which stands in stark contrast to the criminalised image of callous ‘folk devils’ prowling the street.

1.5.3 Resistance

Young people who are deemed deviant as a result of their association with gangs or contact with the justice system are not always passive receivers of this label (Densley & Stevens, 2015). Some research has shown that those marginalised by society adopt “resistant identities” (Hagedorn, 2005, p.158) in order to stand against a dominant and oppressive culture. Through resistance, deviant-labelled young people contest their deficit ascribed identity and promote a “reimagined” personal narrative that affirms a positive self-concept in the face of denigration (Case & Hunter, 2014, p.909). Case and Hunter (2014) described various techniques that offender labelled African-American youth use to reframe their stigmatized identities. The techniques include distancing themselves from negative identities, whereby young people assert how they are different to the labels society ascribes, as well as problematizing the views held of them. Conversely, some young people actively embraced the stigmatised identity and reframed it as a positive alternative (Case & Hunter, 2014). Furthermore, Hagedorn (2005) stipulates that socially excluded groups such as gangs can be seen as social actors who cast cynicism on modern capitalism, and seek out alternative ways for a better life. In this way, reframing gang members as responsive to oppressive structures is to acknowledge their agency in grappling with the material and cultural constraints imposed upon them (Densley & Stevens, 2015).

However, this is not to condone criminality. Instead, this study argues for a recognition of an alternative narrative away from essentialist and demonising discourses. In this way, Ruble and Turner (2000) describe aspects of gangs that are not often discussed, such as “cohesion, [connection], loyalty” (p.11) and “being strong...willing to take risks and being a survivor” (p.14). They argue that interventions which harness these unrecognised aspects of gangs might support members in replacing a criminal system with a pro-social one, while maintaining their positive elements (Ruble & Turner, 2000).

1.6 Summary: Gangs – Social Construction or Reality?

Reviewing the literature presented in sections '1.4. Previous Research into Gangs' and '1.5. An Alternative Perspective on Gangs', there are three stances emanating from gang research regarding their existence.

Firstly, the main body of gang research, as described in section 1.4, focuses on individual characteristics of gang members and explains the existence of gangs as a product of the character and moral deficiency of certain oppositional people (Pitts, 2008). In this way, interventions are centred on containing and controlling these individuals, beginning with earmarking those most at risk of joining gangs (Pitts, 2008). For these researchers, gangs exist and their impact on communities are evident and detrimental.

Secondly, the alternative research strand, as described in section 1.5, posits that societal oppression and government action, underpinned by capitalist ideals of autonomy and self-success, pushes disenfranchised young people to seek unconventional pathways to success and positive identities. Thus, it is a pathological society, rather than pathological individuals, that creates gangs. The existence of gangs is recognised, however their source is considered societal.

Thirdly, contrasting both bodies of research pertaining to gangs' existence, moral panic and labelling theory (Cohen, 1955) indicate that social processes such as labelling contribute to the demonization of the deprived and the social construction of a dangerous criminal (Loseke, 2003). It has been suggested that research into gangs contribute to moral panics by reifying stereotypes (Aldridge *et al.*, 2008) and subsequently Klein (2001) cautioned that co-ordinated research into European gangs may contribute to their emergence.

Ultimately, this research acknowledges that there are young people who identify as being part of a gang, and that their actions can comprise of criminal and illegal activity. However, gangs cannot be examined without attending to the poverty, marginalisation and oppression which characterise many young people's lives. Furthermore, the non-material aspects of poverty such as powerlessness, shame, stigma, humiliation and assault on self-esteem

(McLaughlin, 2007) cannot be assumed as separate issues to gangs. Thus, while gangs may exist, research, media, political interventions and convoluted definitions have socially constructed a misrepresentation of the phenomena and the realities of young people so labelled.

1.7 Policy

This section firstly explores the role of policy in constructing certain realities for its subjects (McDonald, 2009, Hunter, 2003), followed by a consideration of policy in the context of power and exclusion, and finally a brief overview of historical and recent UK gang policy.

1.7.1 Policy, Discourse and Identities

According to the UK government website, policy is defined as “a statement of the government’s position, intent or action” (Williams, 2012, para. 13). In taking a position, the government inadvertently constructs a subject position for those to whom the policy refers (Watson, 2000). Furthermore, Georgaca and Avid (2012, p.147) describe discourse as “systems of meanings...related to the interactional and wider sociocultural context and operate regardless of the speakers’ intention”. Discursive practices are inherently embedded within policy and play a role in defining certain identities for its subjects (Taylor, 1998). Akin to labelling theory, political discourses categorise groups of people in ways that make particular characteristics salient (i.e. single mother, job seekers, gang member). While political categories have also been considered useful in highlighting necessary allocations of resources (Taylor, 1998), Rose (1999) postulates that identity construction occurs in the context of power relations, as powerful institutions construct the identities of less powerful people. In turn, the ascribed categories disseminate certain ‘truths’ about groups of people, as well as particular interventions aimed towards them, which subsequently affects the social status and experiences they are able to inhabit (Rose, 1999). Thus, as well as shaping the identities of its subjects, policy discourse affects the material realities of those whom it defines (McDonald, 2009).

1.7.2 Policy: Power and Exclusion

Social policy is typically produced at governmental level and discursively constructs an 'ideal citizen' against which society is measured (Watson, 2000, Lister, 2007). Thus, the boundaries between morality and legality are blurred (Watson, 2000), as what is deemed socially acceptable and what is considered legal is defined by the elite (Muncie, 2000). Hence, policy makers not only possess the power to define what is acceptable but also what constitutes a social problem, who the problem-makers are, whose voice is included and what action will be taken should non-conformity occur (Hughes, 2011). Subsequently, the voices of the people to which policy refers are excluded and ownership of policy remains with the powerful (Lister, 2007). Furthermore, any recognition of expertise amongst oppressed citizens is ignored as scientific research is privileged over personal experiences. Lister (2007) asserts that for policy to be truly effective, citizens should be afforded ownership of the documents impacting their lives and their expertise by experience should be authentically considered. However, he warns against tokenistic inclusion and advocates a process whereby citizens are not only listened to but actively participate in the creation of policy. Undoubtedly, this requires a shift in power from the elite. However, Patel (2003) suggests that the powerful may subtly avoid action which truly transforms social circumstances so as to maintain their position and perpetuate the subjugation of the oppressed.

1.7.3 UK Gang Policy

Below, I present a brief history of UK gang policy, before describing the recent seminal gang policy.

1.7.3.1 *Recent Historical Context of UK Gang Policy*

Gangs or youth violence have been on the agenda of the UK government for several decades. Eighteen years ago, within months of winning the general election, New Labour produced a white paper entitled "No More Excuses: A New Approach to Tackling Youth Crime in England and Wales" (Home Office, 1997). The government proposed a hard-lined approach asserting that there would be 'no more excuses' for young offenders and explicitly stated that social circumstances could not be considered an explanation for crime. Personal

responsibility and fast track punishment became tag lines for the act (Goldson, 2000). Two years later, in 1999, the Youth Justice Board proclaimed that it endorsed a deterrent strategy of 'shaming' those who appeared in a youth court (Goldson, 2000).

Fast forward to 2006 and the political landscape has changed. Although David Cameron did not utter the words himself, his speech at a social justice conference came to be known as the "hug a hoodie" campaign (Alexander, 2008, p.5) owing to its emphasis on understanding young people's social circumstances. In this speech, Cameron seemingly introduced compassion to the youth crime narrative. Answering his call, the Centre for Social Justice produced a report in 2009 entitled 'Dying to Belong: an in-depth review of street gangs in Britain' (Antrobus, 2009) highlighting the relationship between social breakdown, disenfranchisement of young people and gang involvement. The report calls for an approach that addresses discrimination and stereotypes, poverty, support for families, positive role models for young people and employment. However, in the same year, the Policing and Crime Act (Home Office, 2009) introduced a civil injunction specifically aimed at gangs which imposed a range of restrictions on gang members including inhibiting their entering certain areas, associating with certain people, restricting the colour of their clothes and the use of the internet (Densley, 2011). The order was condemned by civil liberties groups as a breach of human rights (Densley, 2011) and thus, the 'hug a hoodie' sentiment was criticised as mere rhetoric that lost its power within the political battleground of winning elections (Kruger, 2013).

Moving forward to 2011, in an ethnographic study Densley (2011) casts a critical eye upon political gang interventions to date. He postulates that the "gang intervention industry, needs an intervention" (Densley, 2011, p.1) owing to its centring on retribution and punishment. In the same year, 2011, the 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' policy was published.

1.7.3.2 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' UK Gang Policy

During the August 2011 riots, David Cameron called for a "war" on gangs, describing them as a "criminal disease" infecting the streets (as quoted by

Helm, *The Guardian* newspaper, 2012). Although gang members did not play a central role in initiating the disorder (Home Office, 2011), the social upheaval proved the catalyst in thrusting the issue of gangs and youth violence to the forefront of both the media and political agenda. David Cameron purported that there was a need for a “tough, but intelligent” approach to crime which combines “tougher sentencing”, as well as “more rehabilitation” (Press Association, 2012). Three months later, in November 2011, the government report ‘Ending Gang and Youth Violence’ (EGYV) (Home Office, 2011) was published. The report formed the foundation for national policy initiatives and set out five key themes: prevention; pathways out; punishment; partnership working; and providing support. Thus, it appeared that, for the first time, the message within UK gang policy was that enforcement alone was not effective. The report was lauded for recognising the combination of individual, family and contextual factors that contribute to gang membership, as well as its move away from law-enforcement (McMahon, 2012). However, it was also met with criticism. Shute and Medina (2013) in an online blog post described the EGYV report as “utterly appalling” for aiming an action plan at an ill-defined phenomena. Similarly, in an article published in 2012, Shute, Medina and Aldridge accused the report of being contradictory in its approach to youth violence by its “support-then-punish” (p.41) rhetoric. However, regardless of its critics, the government presents EGYV as evidence for its commitment to working with young people who may become caught up in gang and youth violence.

1.8 Research Rationale

The existing body of research into gangs, some of which is presented in the literature review, spans a variety of areas: definitional debates, risk factors, personality traits, the link between the social environment and gang involvement, labelling theory and impact of policy. In this way, most gang theories are rooted in either macro-level sociological explanations or micro-level individual explanations (Decker *et al.*, 2013). The current study offers a novel perspective by explicitly linking the two – powerful political discourse at the macro level, and their influence on individual constructions at the micro level. This research will specifically explore the discourses reproduced within the EGYV UK gang policy, and how certain identities ascribed to people termed

'gang members' are reinforced and how this impacts upon their lived realities and experiences. Thus, through critically analysing policy from a community psychology perspective, the research intends to challenge the assumption that policies associated with gangs need be punitive (Aldridge *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, Ralphs *et al.* (2010) note that there is a tendency in the research to ignore the lives of less advantaged young people. By also consulting young people themselves, this study hopes to provide a platform for which self-described gang members' politically constructed identities can be made transparent and explored.

As a vehicle for government policy and service provision, it is imperative that clinical psychology explores how young people make sense of their realities and identities, and how discourses in policy relate to their constructions. In this way, this research will contribute to preventative interventions by attending to social and political policies and practices which directly impact on a population's well-being. Furthermore, the literature is largely embedded within a criminological basis and psychological research into gangs is relatively recent (Alleyne & Wood, 2014). Thus, given that gangs are made up of young people who are marginalised and fearful (Aldridge, *et al.*, 2008), this research intends to place the issue in the realm of psychology, as opposed to criminology.

1.8.1 Aim of Research

Formulating specific research questions prior to conducting data analysis is debated amongst qualitative researchers and, in particular, discourse analysts (Wooffitt, 2005). Harper (2006) suggests that constructing pre-determined research questions may eclipse novel avenues of investigation. Thus, I provide a description of the aim of the study, as opposed to specific research questions.

The current study aims to explore the EGYV government policy and how it might connect to the lived experiences of those at street level involved in gangs themselves. More specifically, this research aims to understand how young people involved in gangs discursively construct their identities and experiences, and to what extent these constructions reflect those identified in the policy.

2 EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Epistemology

The current study is underpinned by a social constructionist critical-realist epistemology. An overview of social constructionism, and the implication of the epistemology for the current research are explored below.

2.1.1 Cognitivism vs Social Constructionism

Cognitivism posits that language, whether spoken or written, accurately reflects both external reality and internal mental representations of speakers or writers (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Thus, individuals are conceived as autonomous agents who cognitively process the social world, accumulating objective knowledge and perceptions about its reality (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Furthermore, within a cognitivist approach, individuals are deemed to have unique and fixed personal characteristics, resulting in particular underlying mental states which influence their attitudes and behaviours. The literature reviewed in the introduction which pertained to the personality traits of gang members, is positioned within a cognitivist paradigm.

In contrast, social constructionist theory rejects the assumption that knowledge about the world derives from our cognitive processes and perception of reality (Burr, 2003). Instead, social constructionism conceives our understanding of the world as constructed and perpetuated by social processes (Burr, 2003). Thus, language is not viewed as a conduit through which mental states and facts are communicated, rather it is viewed as actively *constructing* the world (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). In this way, language, for both producers and recipients, constructs specific versions of phenomena which subsequently affords particular consequences or actions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Moreover, these constructions are historically and culturally contingent, in that they vary over time and place (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Therefore, there is no 'fixed truth' about the world to be discovered, and instead social constructionism recognises that multiple versions of 'reality' and 'knowledge' are possible (Burr, 2003).

Language construction is organised in patterns known as 'discourse', which refers to a "particular way of talking about and understanding the world"

(Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.1). Within a social constructionist framework, identities are considered a discursive performance through which broader social discourses are reproduced (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). However, recognising the existence of a multiplicity of discourses ensures that hegemonic shifts are possible and that people can organise their talk in ways that challenge the dominant ideology. A social constructionist understanding of the gang phenomena yields a consideration of social processes, such as labelling, as opposed to internal cognitions.

2.1.2 Macro Social Constructionism vs Micro Social Constructionism

Social constructionists distinguish between ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ social constructionism (Burr, 2003). Micro social constructionism refers to constructions of reality which are situated within local interactions between people. It focuses on discourse in everyday interaction and how language is used between people to create certain realities, identities, and action (Burr, 2003).

In contrast, macro social constructionism attends to the constructive nature of language and its inextricable connection to powerful institutions and broader social structures (Burr, 2003). Within a macro social constructionist approach, ideological effects of discourse are considered with reference to its role in serving a powerful group’s interests while eclipsing alternative understandings of the world (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). While a distinction is made between macro and micro social constructionism, they are not mutually exclusive (Burr, 2003).

2.1.3 Relativism versus Realism

Social constructionism is viewed as an “umbrella term” (Cromby, 2004, p.177) encompassing various positions existing on a continuum between relativist social constructionism and critical realist social constructionism (Burr, 2003). By acknowledging the existence of multiple versions of reality, truth, and knowledge, a relativist position posits that there is no one viewpoint that can be privileged over others (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). However, critics of this approach challenge the idea that all versions of the world can be equally good,

thus rendering critical research redundant (Willig, 1999). Furthermore, relativism indicates that there is no existence beyond our discursive representations (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). In other words, there is no reality beyond the text (Burr, 2003). In this way, relativism is accused of failing to theorise embodied experience and the interaction between the discursive and non-discursive worlds. In contrast, a critical realist position postulates that material structures exist outside the discursive realm (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). While critical realist social constructionism maintains that language constructs our understanding of the world, it recognises that constructions are both limited by and affects the material world. In this way, language makes possible certain social actions, which are subsequently felt and experienced in the physical world (Georgaca & Avid, 2012).

The epistemological underpinning of the current study is critical realist social constructionism, and therefore recognises the existence of a material reality alongside, and as a product of socially constructed phenomena (Elder-Vass, 2012). In this way, this study explores how gangs are constructed through language while attending to the material impact of these constructions on lived experiences.

2.2 Methodology

In order to frame the methodology, a reminder of the research aim is provided. This current research aims to explore the discourses embedded within the UK EGYV policy and their impact on the lives of young people in gangs.

Specifically, the research will analyse how young people involved in gangs discursively construct their identities and experiences, and to what extent these constructions reproduce or challenge those identified in the policy.

2.2.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is the examination of language with regards to its construction of reality (Willig, 2013). Aligning with the distinction between macro and micro social constructionism, discourse analysts focus their research at different levels of social construction. Discursive psychology (DP) primarily focuses at the level of micro social constructionism, whereas critical discourse

analysis (CDA) attends to macro social constructionism (Willig, 2013). A brief description of these two approaches is below, followed by an outline of how they will be integrated into the current study.

2.2.2 Discursive Psychology

DP focuses on how people use language and discourse to create certain social identities and realities (Edwards & Potter, 1992). DP examines how participants organise their talk, for example utilising rhetorical strategies to locally reproduce or restructure existing discourses (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Furthermore, it explores how individuals use linguistic tools to create certain accounts of reality which appear 'factual' (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Its analytic focus is largely on local interaction.

2.2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

DP, described above, has been criticised for its narrow focus on text in interaction and the absence of wider social and cultural practice in its analyses (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). In contrast, CDA explicitly links the macro and micro levels of social constructionism by closely engaging with the language of texts while paying attention to its social, political and cultural contexts (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Thus, CDA embodies an explicitly political position by acting to make transparent the otherwise opaque relationship between powerful institutions and people's local constructions of their world. Furthermore, CDA explores the capacity of the oppressed to resist discursive abuse (van Dijk, 2009, Fairclough, 1992).

CDA is not considered to be a particular method, but rather a critical perspective on doing research (van Dijk, 2009). CDA draws on a range of different methodologies (van Dijk, 2009) including specific discursive analytical tools, alongside the analysis of hegemonic social practice, as well as elements of Foucauldian discourse analysis (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, Fairclough, 1992).

2.2.4 A Hybrid Approach: Discursive Psychology and Critical Discourse Analysis

As previously discussed, I will be exploring how political discourses position young people in gangs, alongside the interactional constructions of their identities and experiences with reference to the reproduction of or resistance to hegemonic discourse. In order to encapsulate both the micro and macro levels of the social construction of gang member's experiences, a hybrid approach will be adopted, combining elements of both DP and CDA approaches. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, p.3) postulate that a "multiperspectival" approach is highly valued within discourse analysis, as both approaches provide differential knowledge about a phenomena and as such a combination enables a broader understanding.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

2.3.1 Ethical Approval

The University of East London (UEL) School of Psychology Ethics Committee gave ethical approval for the study in May 2015 (Appendix B). The original ethics form stipulated that data would be collected through focus groups and with participants over the age of sixteen. However, the ethics form was amended and approved three times throughout the process for the following requests: to provide participants with a £20 voucher, to conduct interviews instead of focus groups, and to be able to interview under sixteen year olds (Appendices C, D, E).

2.3.2 Informed Consent

An information sheet was given to all participants and a consent form was completed prior to interview (Appendix G, H). For the participant under the age of sixteen, an accessible information sheet was provided (Appendix J). Many young people did not wish to read the information sheet and as a result they were informed verbally of the details of the study. The right to withdraw was emphasised. For the participant under sixteen, consent was also sought from a mentor within the charity with which he associated (Appendix F).

2.3.3 Confidentiality

Information collected about the participants was minimal in order to avoid identification. Names and identifying features were anonymised in transcripts to ensure confidentiality. However, the limits of confidentiality were explained with regards to the requirement of sharing information should a participant indicate someone was at risk of harm. Furthermore, it was made clear that disclosure of illegal behaviour was not encouraged by the researcher and would be discussed with the supervisor in this event.

2.3.4 Risk

I discussed with the organisations the need to recruit participants who were deemed suitable and low risk. Thus, the most likely cause of distress would be the invocation of painful feelings during the interview (Barker, Pistrang & Elliott, 2002). A de-brief was provided after each interview and, if necessary, sources of support were discussed. During all interviews, a support worker was on site should any concerns arise.

2.4 Data Collection

Within the current research, there are two strands of data to be analysed: text and talk. The text data refers to EGYV government policy about gangs, and the talk data refers to interviews conducted with gang members.

It is acknowledged that analysis of government policy and interviews will not capture the entirety of current discourses around gangs. Thus, consideration of other discursive data such as media text, public discourse, other policies and initiatives would allow for a fuller depiction of gang discourse. However, such an analysis is beyond the scope of the study. Despite this, it is considered that analysis of both the policy and interviews with gang members will enable sufficient exploration of discourses around gangs, as the two-fold analysis captures available discourses at polar ends of the social power spectrum. In this way, government policy disseminates powerful discourses which are reciprocally linked with media and public narratives (Reiner, 2007), and thus may reflect discourses also present in alternative data. Equally, within a social constructionist framework, identities are considered a discursive performance

through which broader social discourses are reproduced (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Thus, macro constructions link to the micro discursive constructions of identity. Furthermore, Foucault's (1972) 'discursive production of the subject' posits that identities are the product of dominant discourse, and that 'selves' are entirely ideologically constituted, serving to perpetuate existing power relations. Considering this, interviewing gang members' will also enable exploration of discourses about gangs as they are the subjects of the political discourse and their micro constructions may be affected by it.

Below, I present a description of the EGYV policy as well as the interviews with gang members, which formed the two data sets of this research.

2.4.1 Text Data: Policy

The seminal UK gang policy was identified as 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence: A Cross Governmental Report' (Home Office, 2011). This policy set the precedent for subsequent related initiatives and as such reflects the government's position on gangs. The policy is organised in a way that reflects the life trajectory of a young person. The titles of each section, as presented in the contents page of the policy, are detailed overleaf:

- Ministerial Foreword
- Executive Summary
- Section 1. The life stories that lead to violence – what causes gang and serious youth violence? What are the costs?
- Section 2. Breaking the life-cycles of violence – interventions that can make a difference:
 - The foundation years
 - The primary years
 - Teenage years
 - Early adulthood
- Section 3. Making it happen locally. Support for high violence places.
- Section 4. Next steps – milestones and governance.

Owing to restricted time and the two-fold nature of the research, the entire report could not be analysed. Therefore, the ministerial foreword, the executive summary, Section 1 and Section 2 were chosen for analysis.

2.4.2 Talk Data: Interviews

2.4.2.1 *Participant Criteria*

Participants had to be male and have current or historical experience of gang involvement, and self-identify as such. For participants with historical involvement, I ensured that involvement was recent and therefore aligned with the current political context. Men were specifically recruited because gang membership is traditionally associated with males, and females may have a different experience that is worthy of its own research. The self-identifying criterion is widely used in gang research and is found to be a reliable recruitment strategy (Esbensen *et al.*, 2001).

2.4.2.2 *Recruitment Procedure*

In April 2014, details of my research were emailed to several charities, third sector organisations and youth projects who worked with disadvantaged young people. Ultimately, participants were recruited from two organisations.

One of the organisations requested that I present at a team meeting and this was facilitated. Through the presentation I made contact with support workers who work directly with young people involved in gangs. We exchanged contact details and interviews were arranged through them. Recruitment was largely opportunistic as support workers informed me on the day or a few days prior as to whether young people were available for interview.

The second organisation invited me to attend their site on a specific day where I interviewed participants separately.

On the advice of the organisations, a £20 voucher was provided to participants as an incentive, and as a payment for their time.

2.4.2.3 Participants

Six participants were interviewed for the analysis. Each participant has been given a pseudonym to protect anonymity. A table with the details of each participant and interview is below.

Table 1. Participant and interview details

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Length of Interview: Hr.Min.Sec
Fawwaz	22	Black African British	1.14.42
Jahman	18	Black Caribbean British	1.05.05
Ishaar	26	Black African British	1.12.07
Tyrone	18	Black British	2.28.59
Darrell	15	Black, unknown	29.56
Karl	20	Black, unknown	1.12.53

The mean age of the participants was 19.8, with the eldest being 26 and the youngest 15.

It is important to note that Karl stated that he did not identify as a gang member, however he had grown up in the 'worst gang affected' area in London and as a result was assumed to be part of a gang by peers, his school and the police. Through being labelled a gang member, he had experiences akin to those who identified as being gang involved, for example, being chased and nearly stabbed by other young people, being stopped by the police and being unable to enter certain areas. After discussion with him about whether to proceed with the interview, he felt strongly that his experiences were considered relevant having been 'gang labelled'.

2.4.2.4 Interviews

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews permit both a directive approach to ensure that instances of talk are relevant to the research question, while also allowing space for natural talk-in-interaction and generation of new material (Willig, 2008). As fitting with a semi-

structured format, the interviews were guided by a schedule (Appendix K). At times the conversations naturally generated relevant material and thus explicitly following the schedule was unnecessary.

Towards the end of each interview I shared extracts from the EGYV policy with the participants (Appendix L). We read through them together and discussed which extracts participants were most drawn to. This was done in order to alleviate power differentials by making explicit the link between the government and their realities, as well as affording them the opportunity to comment on the documents impacting their lives. In this way, I followed Lister (2007) in his advocating involvement of citizens in dialogue around policy.

Interviews took place in the charities' offices across various London sites.

2.4.2.5 *Sample Size*

Six interviews were conducted and analysed. The small sample size does not reflect the scale of recruitment endeavours, as many participants did not attend interviews. Being a specifically excluded group (Densley & Stevens, 2015), it was unsurprising that recruitment was difficult. However, in keeping with a community psychology approach, the inclusion of marginalised voices in research is crucial for privileging expertise by experience over a dominant scientific viewpoint.

Furthermore, a small sample size is considered advantageous in qualitative research as it proffers an in-depth analysis (Banister *et al.*, 2011). While it is argued that a small sample renders the generalizability of the findings minimal (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), Sacks (1992) asserts that wider social and cultural practices can be revealed in every discursive occurrence.

2.5 **Transcription**

Interviews were recorded using an audio dictaphone and then transcribed verbatim using an adapted Jefferson Lite approach, taken from Banister *et al.* (2011). See Appendix M for transcribing conventions.

2.5.1 Analysis

The analytic steps are detailed below and followed a similar process for both the talk and text data. However, I began with the talk data before focussing on the text data, in order to ensure I was not influenced by my readings of the policy when analysing the interviews.

1. The data was carefully read and re-read several times in order to become familiar with it. In the case of the talk data, I listened to the audio interviews whilst reading transcripts in order to remind myself of each interview.

2. During later readings, I coded patterns of broader discourses within and across each interview, as well as in the policy (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). I assimilated the codes into related discursive sites³. For the interviews, codes were consolidated into nine initial discursive sites and for the policy ten initial discursive sites were identified. See appendix O for original codes and discursive sites.

3. Subsequently, I analysed the material on a micro-level, focussing on rhetorical devices, stylistic and grammatical features, and subject positioning consistent with discursive analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). See appendix N for an example of raw data. Throughout the coding process I invoked a CDA critical perspective highlighting the social and political implications of the discourses, as well moving iteratively between the levels of macro discourses and micro constructions (van Dijk, 2009). Furthermore, in line with the trans-disciplinary approach of CDA (Fairclough, 1995) I drew on some of Foucault's concepts to link micro constructions with powerful institutions. Correspondingly, Foucault states that his ideas are a 'tool box' to be utilised where relevant (Foucault, 1974, as cited in O'Farrell, 2005). In particular, I found his concepts of 'technologies of power', 'technologies of the self' and 'subjectivity' helpful in a few instances. A brief description of these concepts are below:

Technologies of Power: Institutional techniques that govern individuals' conduct from a distance. (Foucault, 1982).

³ In the context of this research, the term 'discursive site' is defined as an overarching group of available discourses, which contribute to the social construction of a particular phenomenon.

Technologies of the Self: Practices by which individuals seek to regulate and transform their bodies and selves in order to attain an enhanced state of being, as prescribed by systems of power (Foucault, 1988).

Subjectivity: The emotions, thoughts, experiences as arising from particular subjection positions (Willig, 2013).

4. After coding and analysing the material both on a macro and micro discursive level, I consolidated them further into four discursive sites for both the talk and text data. I chose an extract to represent each discursive site which is presented along with discussion in Chapter 3.

2.5.2 Reflexivity

Within qualitative research, it is acknowledged that the researcher's own belief systems, knowledge and experiences will shape the process (Willig, 2013).

Thus, through making my position clear in relation to the possible consequences of my contribution, the research is made transparent and can be validated by the reader (Goodley, 1996).

My interest in this subject began in a young offender's prison near London where I worked as an Assistant Psychologist pre-training. Pertinently, I obtained this post three months after the London riots. As a result, many of the young people I worked with had been involved in the riots and identified themselves as gang members. I was constantly struck by these young men and their articulation of current social and political issues, as well as their acute awareness of their position in society as 'forgotten', 'excluded' and ultimately 'misunderstood'. Considering many of them had dropped out of school without qualifications, the intellectual, critical and creative discussions with which they challenged me constantly surprised and moved me to rethink how I viewed gangs and gang members. Furthermore, throughout training, I have continued to foster a personal and professional interest in addressing social injustice. In this way, I position myself as a critical psychologist and endeavour to challenge apparent 'truths' about gang members. I am particularly influenced by community psychology principles and as such orient towards notions of

liberation and social transformation. Thus, in line with Fairclough's (1992) conceptualisation of CDA as having an explicitly political agenda, my aim for this research is to make right the "social wrong" of the continued marginalisation of young people who become involved in gangs (Fairclough, 1992, p.10).

From a personal perspective, I am a white middle class woman and may bring normative western ideals to the analysis. However, I took steps to minimise the impact of my assumptions on the research: I kept a reflexive diary (see Appendix Q); I attended a Discourse And Rhetoric Group (DARG) at Loughborough University where I presented data; I took part in a regular group with other discourse analysts; as well as discussed my findings in supervision. Thus, throughout the process I interrogated my personal assumptions and interests with regards to the data, in attempts to avoid constructing my own truth in a taken-for-granted manner.

3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the main research findings are presented, interpreted and discussed. The analysis is divided into two halves: text analysis and talk analysis. The text analysis includes analysis of the EGYV policy document, and the talk analysis includes analysis of the interviews conducted with self-identified gang members. Extracts from both policy data and interview data are used as evidence of how gang members are constructed in government policy, as well as how they construct their own identities and experiences. Alongside paying attention to micro discursive constructions, the analysis refers to macro discourses and their ideological effects as in line with an integrated CDA and DA approach. Taking a social constructionist position, I acknowledge that the analytic process is constituted partly by my own historical context and therefore represents one possible reading of the data.

Both the text analysis and talk analysis are separated into sections pertaining to discursive sites. However, many discursive constructions overlapped, and as such this segregation is somewhat artificial. However, the sections represent the most pertinent discourse present in the extracts and are grouped accordingly. Furthermore, each section represents particular discursive constructions which were prevalent across the data. Therefore, single extracts were chosen as one example of a discourse that is present in multiple extracts. Below, table 2 depicts the discursive sites explored in the analysis.

Table 2. Discursive sites in text and talk data.

Data Set	Text: Policy	Talk: Interviews
Discursive site 1	The demonization of gangs	Experiences of racism - Being persecuted - Avoiding persecution - Resistance
Discursive site 2	The inevitability of gangs - Social circumstances - Psychological explanations	The inevitability of gang membership - A matter of time - The power of the label
Discursive site 3	Gangs: The product of 'troubled families'	Problematized identities - Being 'othered' - Being demonised - Resistance
Discursive site 4	The racialization of gangs - Ethnicity and gangs - The racialised other	Individual & family responsibility - Resistance

3.1 Text Analysis: Ending Gang and Youth Violence Policy

This section will provide a discourse analysis of the EGYV policy (Home Office, 2011). This section is divided into 4 subsections representing different discursive constructions: the demonization of gangs; the inevitability of gangs; gangs: the product of ‘troubled families’; the racialization of gangs.

3.1.1 The Demonization of Gangs

Throughout the policy, gangs were constructed as dangerous groups of young people who have been “*a blight on our communities for years*” (Home Office, 2011, p.7). In the extract below, taken from the ministerial foreword, gangs are constructed as a threat to society from which communities need protection.

Extract 1

From: Ministerial Foreword. Page 4

The proportion of rioters known to be gang involved may be low – so too are the numbers of young people involved in gangs but we must not let that distract us from the disproportionate and devastating impact they have on some of our most deprived communities.

Gangs and serious youth violence are the product of the high levels of social breakdown and disadvantage found in the communities in which they thrive, but they are also a key driver of that breakdown. Gangs create a culture of violence and criminality that prevents the very things that can help transform those communities; community mobilisation and economic enterprise are near impossible in neighbourhoods gripped by fear.

This extract begins by stating that there are low numbers of young people involved in gangs, however “*we must not let that distract us from the disproportionate and devastating impact they have*”. The contrast of ‘low numbers’ and yet ‘disproportionate’ impact implies that gang members must be very dangerous, to cause such ‘devastation’, despite their numbers. The use of

the pronouns “we” and “us” position the reader as a concerned party regarding gangs, thus gangs are constructed as an ‘other’ (“us” vs “they”) against which “we” must protect “our” communities. In this way, gang members are constructed as not part of communities and, furthermore, an external threat to ‘us’, making available a subjectivity of fear for the reader. Such constructions contribute to moral panics around gangs whereby the societal fear of a certain threat is disproportionate to the objective danger (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). Through this process, gangs are constructed as “folk devils”, uniting public fear and subsequently justifying oppressive policies (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994, p.149).

In the second half of the extract, gangs are constructed as both a symptom and a cause of social problems with the contrasting sentence: “*they are the product of high levels of social breakdown and disadvantage found in the communities in which they thrive, but they are also a key driver of that breakdown*”. While acknowledging that gangs form as a result of social breakdown, describing disadvantage as being “*found*” in these communities constructs deprivation as both randomly and naturally occurring in certain areas. The actions and agents which cause deprivation are obscured, as if it is simply a taken-for-granted fact of life which is ‘hidden’ until ‘found’. Furthermore, the second part of the clause constructs gangs as the active agents that cause “*social breakdown*” and therefore are to blame for social disadvantage. The word “*thrive*” depicts them to be benefitting from the deprivation of others, which contributes to possible subjectivities of resentment towards them. However, as Ralphs, Medina, and Aldridge (2010) note, the lived reality of many young people labelled as gang members is one of social exclusion and fear, thus contrasting the image of thriving ‘folk devils’ constructed in the policy.

Finally, gangs are constructed as actively preventing the transformation of deprived communities by thwarting “*community mobilisation and economic enterprise*”. With this claim, the government absolves culpability for inequality and justifies punitive action against gang members, while legitimising their inaction to transform communities themselves. Imbued with neoliberal ideologies of “*economic enterprise*”, the extract implies that wellbeing is advanced by economic gain and makes no account of structural barriers that

instigate disadvantage. Thus, conceived as folk devils (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994) terrorising neighbourhoods and inciting “*social breakdown*”, the demonization of gang members warrants communities being “*gripped by fear*” and invites the reader to feel the same. Subsequently, the suppression and punishment of this group appear a reasonable response.

3.1.2 The Inevitability of Gangs

3.1.2.1 *Inevitability: Social Circumstances*

The notion that young people from certain social circumstances will inevitably join gangs was pervasive throughout the policy. Below, extract 2 and Image 1 represent examples in which this discourse was explicit.

Extract 2

From: Section 2: The Life-Stories That Lead to Violence. Page 11.

The life stories that lead to murder:

A young man, let’s call him Boy X, was born on one of the most deprived estates in London in the early 1990s. His mother was just 17 when he was born and had been involved with the gangs on the estate for some years. She had been introduced to drugs by them and had rapidly become addicted to crack cocaine. Although she did her best to control her use while she was pregnant, this was a struggle and she carried on using during his early years. Boy X’s father wasn’t around much but when he did stay he was frequently violent – beating his mother, often in front of Boy X.

Image 1

From: Section 2: The Teenage Years. Page 27.



Extract 2 forms the opening paragraph to 'Section 1: The life stories that lead to violence' which outlines a typical life course of a gang member. It opens with *"the life stories that lead to murder"* which immediately positions the *"young man"* they subsequently describe, as a 'murderer'. His 'guilt' is unequivocally foregrounded so that any following details are constructed through this knowledge. Following this, they describe the early years of *"a young man, let's call him Boy X"*. The colloquial language, as if the writer is personally addressing the reader with *"let's call him"*, serves to facilitate an illusion of intersubjectivity between reader and writer. Furthermore, *"let's"* implies that the reader and writer are connected or part of a similar grouping, and therefore are viewing 'Boy X' from a similar standpoint. By constructing connectedness and intersubjectivity between reader and writer, the policy is rendered 'reasonable' and the reader is drawn in as 'onside'.

Boy X's mother is then described as *"just 17 when he was born"*. The inclusion of *"just"* serves to highlight how young she was, and thus renders the subject position of 'teenage mother' problematic. It has only been in recent socio-political history that teenage motherhood has been constructed as a social problem, owing to their being constructed as 'welfare dependants' and therefore deviant (Wilson & Huntingdon, 2006). However, in positions of social disadvantage, delaying child bearing can be counterproductive, and as such many women in these circumstances choose to have children while younger (Wilson & Huntingdon, 2006). Thus, such deviant constructions eliminate the

stigmatised and marginalised position of young mothers from view. Working class mothers have frequently been constructed as the antithesis of good parenting and therefore to blame for juvenile delinquency and social unrest (De Benedictis, 2016).

Furthermore, the description that she *“did her best to control her [drug use] while she was pregnant, this was a struggle and she carried on using”* constructs her as personally deficient in that she was ‘unable’ to control it. Stating that she *“did her best”* might be viewed as a concession (Potter, 1996) whereby the writer acknowledges a counter claim (that she tried), before detailing her inability to control her drug addiction. Thus, the policy appears to consider positive attributes, as well as negative, which constructs the writer as considerate and therefore making a reasonable argument. Finally, Boy X’s father is described as *“he wasn’t around much”*. This phrase appears casual, much like the opening sentence of the paragraph (*“let’s call him Boy X”*). Although the policy does not state exactly where the father was, the colloquial phrase *“wasn’t around much”* allows inferences to be made by the reader. Implicit in this inference is an absent father discourse whereby the reader is left to imagine that he was in prison / being promiscuous / irresponsible (De Benedictis, 2016). Discourses of ‘absent fathers’ were utilised by the government and media as a legitimate explanation for the riots (De Benedictis, 2012) thus further demonising mothers and fathers at odds with hegemonic middle class family values (Lawler, 2002).

Finally, the first sentence *“the life stories that lead to murder”* coupled with the diagram exhibited in Image 1 uncomplicatedly predicts the outcomes of children born into deprivation, thus eliminating alternative discourses. Furthermore, given that the majority of young people who are in gangs are those who have experienced social oppression and a lack of opportunity (Goldson, 2011) an ‘inevitable discourse’ adds to the criminalisation of poverty (Kizer, 2012). The diagram in Image 1 plots the trajectory of Boy X’s teenage years with the use of discrete boxes labelled *“victim of violent crime”*, *“increasing levels of violence”*, *“excluded from school”*, while *“gang involvement”* is plotted alongside all of these events. This gerrymandering (Woolgar & Pawluch, 1985), whereby only events related to a criminal lifestyle are chosen to represent Boy X’s life, is not

only reductionist of a complex life blighted by poverty, deprivation and exclusion, but also entirely removes social factors from his story.

3.1.2.2 *Inevitability: Psychological Explanations*

As well as social circumstances, inherent psychological traits were attributed to inevitable violence, as demonstrated in extract 3.

Extract 3

From: Section 1: The Foundation Years. Page 21.

Children exposed to chronic violence or threats of violence in very early life may also suffer repeated surges of stress hormones with long-term consequences for brain development – resulting in hyperactivity, impulsive and aggressive behaviour. Graham Allen quotes a study of three-year-old boys assessed by nurses as being ‘at risk’ who had two-and-a-half times as many criminal convictions as a not at-risk comparison group by the time they turn 21, and 55% of these convictions were for violent offences, compared to 18% for the not at risk group.

Extract 3 refers to an independent review entitled ‘Early intervention: The next steps’ (2011) conducted by Graham Allen, MP. This extract is resourced by a biomedical discourse which reduces traumatic experiences i.e. “*threats of violence*”, into biological markers; “*surges of stress hormones with long-term consequences for brain development*”. Through implicating “*brain development*”, vulnerable children are constructed as irreversibly changed by their early experiences and therefore any “*aggressive behaviour*” is owing to internal deficiency and biological ontology. Such constructions invite medical, as opposed to social, remedies. Furthermore, invoking an empiricist discourse by quoting a scientific study adds legitimacy to the claim. Finally, children as young as three years old are constructed as dormant violent offenders (*three-year-old boys assessed by nurses as being ‘at risk’ who had two-and-a-half times as many criminal convictions*), and the use of statistics construct a robust account of being able to predict children’s violence later in life. Thus, as Rose (1999) postulates, the policy renders the “neglected child” as synonymous with the

“young criminal” (p.157). Ultimately, an inevitability discourse subjugates possibilities for resistance and legitimises oppressive practice in place of support.

3.1.3 Gangs: The Product of ‘Troubled Families’

Throughout the first two sections of the EGYV policy, reference to “*troubled families*” (Home Office 2011, p.14) occurred 15 times. In this way, families were positioned as problematic and responsible for raising children that ultimately joined a gang. Extract 4, below, is an example of the problematic construction of families.

Extract 4

From: Section 2: The Teenage Years. Page 28.

Intensive Family Interventions (formerly known as Family Intervention Projects or FIPs) work with the most challenging families tackling issues such as anti-social behaviour, youth crime, inter-generational disadvantage and worklessness in families by using a multi-agency approach with an ‘assertive and persistent’ style. The Government estimate that the cost of troubled families to the public is around £8 billion a year whilst recent research shows that for every £1 spent on Intensive Family Intervention generates a financial return of around £2.26.

This extract describes the implementation of an intervention aimed at “*the most challenging families*”. Problematizing families as ‘challenging’ places the blame within family units and renders attention to the context of their difficulties obsolete. Furthermore, the adjective ‘challenging’ provides a vague and reductionist formulation of complex social and relational dynamics related to family life. In this way, the policy removes the subject for whom the families are challenging and invokes normative assumptions about what is challenging or compliant behaviour. Thus, by invoking vagueness (Edwards & Potter, 1992) the policy implies that they are challenging for everyone and therefore a threat to the social order, as well as reifying the existence of specific ‘challenging

families', and therefore their counterpart and more socially valued 'non-challenging' or 'compliant' families.

Subsequently, the families will be "*worked with*" in order to "[*tackle*] issues such as *anti-social behaviour, youth crime, inter-generational disadvantage and worklessness in families.*" The term "*inter-generational disadvantage*" constructs disadvantage as being 'passed on' by one generation to the next, thus rendering families as active agents in their own disadvantage.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the term "*inter-generational*" directs attention away from the pertinent word: disadvantage. Moreover, the term "*worklessness*" constructs the family as being 'without work', as if work is something that they can have but chose not to. However, "*worklessness*" euphemistically replaces 'unemployment' which would otherwise centre the government's role in generating the family's circumstance. The term 'unemployment' invites state action to 'tackle' social issues, whereas "*worklessness*" individualises this problem. Furthermore, by being placed first in the four part list, the terms "*anti-social behaviours*" and "*youth crime*" foreground deviant behaviour that "*challenging families*" engender, while rendering social issues such as disadvantage and unemployment secondary. Had the structural inequalities that these families face been highlighted, the adjective "*challenging*" might have been replaced with 'deprived'/'disadvantaged'/'discriminated against'. However, individualising and blaming constructions position them as perpetrators as opposed to victims.

Finally, an account of the cost of "*troubled families*" is provided. Although stipulated as "*£8 billion*" the cost is an "*estimate*" and "*around*" this number. By being vague, the policy avoids the possibility of counter claims, as well as implying that it could be more (Edwards & Potter, 1992). The 'economic deficit discourse' becomes a discursive device which implicates impoverished families as responsible for the economic state of the country, and therefore is perhaps resourced as an explanation of the austerity measures being implemented at the time. This discursive move negates the 'human cost' of austerity and relocates accountability away from the government. Invoking a powerful scientific discourse by stating that "*recent research*" as well as including the

specificity of “*financial return of £2.26*”, enhances the veracity of this claim and that the proposed intervention is needed.

Finally, having constructed an account of “*challenging families*” as responsible for their own demise through their “*anti-social behaviour*” and “*worklessness*”, which is costing the public (implying that these families are not members of the public) billions of pounds, the “*assertive and persistent*” intervention to which they are subjected appears justified. Although unspecified, the implementation of this intervention enacts a ‘technology of power’ available to the state which legitimises oppressive and punitive action, as opposed to support and social transformation.

3.1.4 The Racialisation of Gangs

3.1.4.1 *Ethnicity and Gangs*

In the policy, a paragraph entitled ‘Ethnicity’ is placed at the very end of ‘Section 1: The life stories that lead to violence’. In extract 5 below, taken from this paragraph, the policy constructs a relationship between ethnicity and gangs.

Extract 5

From: Section 1: The Life Stories That Lead to Murder. Page. 19.

Ethnicity is an important factor in contextualising gang involvement. For example, some ethnic minorities are overrepresented in areas of multiple deprivation, the same areas where gangs are disproportionately concentrated. Racial discrimination (real or perceived) can also form part of the reasons young people give for gang involvement.

In extract 5 the policy constructs ethnicity as an important factor in “*contextualising gang involvement*”. Young black men living in deprived areas face a triple force of unemployment, segregation and marginalisation (Clement, 2010) and as such the policy’s assertion that “*ethnic minorities are overrepresented in areas of multiple deprivation*” reflects the literature and lived experiences. However, the word “*overrepresented*” implies that there is an acceptable level of ‘representation’ of ethnic minorities in deprivation, but

currently it has gone 'over' this. In this way, racial inequality is constructed as taken-for-granted and unavoidable, as if it is natural for ethnic minorities to be represented in deprived areas to some degree. Equally, the policy notes ethnic minorities living in deprivation are in *"the same areas where gangs are disproportionately concentrated"*. The two clauses *"some ethnic minorities are overrepresented in areas of multiple deprivation"* and *"the same areas where gangs are disproportionately concentrated"* appear conceptually separate, as if multiple deprivation and gang existence just 'happen' to be in the same area. There is no contextualised explanation linking deprivation, discrimination and gang involvement. Moreover, the phrase *"disproportionately concentrated"* suggests that the existence of gangs is 'disproportionate' and therefore 'unreasonable' in relation to the disadvantage that young people face, thus further undermining a possible connection between *"multiple deprivation"* and gangs.

Secondly, the extract suggests that the discrimination experienced by young people may only be *"perceived"*, thus undermining personal accounts of racism while maintaining racial inequality through its denunciation as 'not real'.

Secondly, racial discrimination is described as a reason *"young people give for gang involvement"*. Constructed as an account young people only 'give' for joining gangs, removes its legitimacy as an actual reason. The word 'give' mediates racial discrimination as only 'reported' to be a reason by young people, as opposed to being a real reason as to why they join gangs. In this way, the sentence would read differently if constructed as such: *"racial discrimination can form part of the reasons young people join gangs"*.

3.1.4.2 *The Racialised Other*

As well as reference to ethnicity, the policy emphasises the importance of a working relationship between the UK Border Agency and the London metropolitan police. The extracts below are examples of ways in which gang membership and immigration are constructed as being related.

Extract 6

From: Executive Summary. Page 9.

Punishment and enforcement to suppress the violence of those refusing to exit violent lifestyles. We will: extend the work that the UK Border Agency undertakes with the police using immigration powers to deport dangerous gang members who are not UK citizens.

Extract 7

From: Section 2: Early Adulthood. Page 45.

Operation Bite is a pioneering joint initiative between the MPS and the UK Border Agency (UKBA), targeted at the highest harm gang members. Its aim is to bring the maximum possible joint police and immigration enforcement to bear as quickly as possible against this dangerous group.

Extract 6 recounts one of the strategies the government intends to use against those “*refusing to exit violent lifestyles.*” In this way, gang members are constructed as active agents who ‘choose’ to engage in criminal activity and are stubborn for “*refusing to leave.*” However, such a construction obscures discourses of ‘survival’ and the subjective experience of having ‘no other option’ also associated with a young person’s decision to engage in criminality (Ruble & Turner, 2000). Furthermore, while strongly encouraging young people to exit gangs, the policy makes little reference as to the environment into which gang members might be ‘exiting’. In a decreasing labour market, and increasingly unequal society (Cottrell-Boyce, 2013), constructing gang membership as an ‘active choice’ displaces the focus on social barriers.

The second half of extract 6 and extract 7 construct an apparent relationship between immigration and gang membership. Throughout the policy, every single time that it refers to ‘immigrant gang members’ the prefix “*dangerous*” is added, i.e. “*dangerous gang members*” in extract 6 and “*dangerous group*” in extract 7. In extract 7, the policy adds that these gang members are “*the highest*

harm” and thus emphasises this ‘fear-some’ foreigner against which society must be protected. Thus, race is discursively linked to a ‘dangerous other’ and reconstructs ethnic minorities as folk devils, which enables social control and regulation directed towards them (Williams, 2015). Furthermore, explicitly stating that such “*dangerous gang members*” are “*not UK citizens*” in extract 6, resources discourses of ‘nationhood’ by categorising UK citizens as one. Despite a multiplicity of identities and citizenship claims within the UK (Lewis, 2005), the confluence of immigrants as folk devils, set against the UK citizen, provides a discursive site in which the articulation of ‘them’ and ‘us’ becomes possible. Thus, being constructed as dangerous and threatening renders sensible the aim to “*bring the maximum possible...enforcement*” and “*as quickly as possible*”. The use of extreme case formulations (“*maximum*” and “*as quickly as possible*”) (Pomerantz, 1986) serves to highlight the immediate threat this ‘dangerous other’ imposes, further legitimising an urgent enactment of power through suppressive tactics.

Ultimately, through conflating ethnicity, immigration and ‘dangerous’ gangs, while undermining gang membership’s relationship to racial discrimination and exclusion, the policy discursively constructs race as a signifier for social decline. Such ‘othering’ processes facilitates the maintenance of structural inequality, devalues black and ethnic minority voices and legitimises continued regimes of power implemented against them.

3.2 Talk Analysis: Constructions of Identity And Experiences of Young People In Gangs

This section will provide a discourse analysis of the interviews conducted with young people who identify as gang members. This section is divided into 4 subsections representing the main discursive constructions within the interviews: experiences of racism, the inevitability of gang membership, problematized identities, individual and family responsibility.

3.2.1 Experiences of Racism

As discussed in the methodology, all of the participants identified as being black. Throughout the interviews the participants oriented to the category of

'black male' as being important in shaping their experiences and identities. In particular, they referred to experiences of prejudice or persecution because of their skin colour, as well as societal conflation of being black and being a gang member. For this reason, I begin by analysing one of the extracts in which being black is explicitly referred to. The material embodiment of 'being black' is a relevant concept to all subsequent analysis as its salience persisted throughout the interviews, even when not explicitly referred to.

3.2.1.1 *Being Persecuted*

In extract 8, below, Akeem is explaining that because he and his friends are black, they are more likely to be stopped by police. Immediately prior to the beginning of this extract, Akeem had been describing being stereotyped as a criminal, because he is black i.e. when he is *"tryna [trying to] sit next to someone they're moving their bags, clenching on their bag, but they won't do this...if it was a different race"* (line 73-74). However, he notes that while there has been *"a lot of black on black crime"* (line 76) there are also other types of *"race on race crime"* i.e. *"white on white...Mexican on Mexican"* (line 77), and as such constructs the stereotype about black people as unjust. The extract begins just after this assertion.

Extract 8

From: Akeem: 80 – 84

There's a, th-, there's always race on race crime, but to us it was just, you know, you couldn't walk in a big group, especially, it doesn't even matter if you've got like two, three, four white people in a group, it still doesn't matter. {BR} the majo- if the majority is full of black males we're getting stopped (.) 100 per cent and we've seen it, I've seen it from my own eyes.

By stating that there is *"always race on race crime"*, Akeem constructs this as being inevitable and common sense knowledge. In this way he is complicit with assumptions about *"black on black crime"* as, in a moment seemingly in defence against the 'black stereotype', he complies with its existence, albeit along with invoking the violence of other ethnicities as well. Persistent

inscription of hegemonic ideologies i.e. black as criminal, can result in an internalised sense of 'I' as 'other', and reproduction of dominant discourse by the oppressed subject (Jackson, 2006). As a more explicit example of this, although not presented above, Akeem says a few moments later "*society show black males to being the aggressive males out of all races, which may be true*" (line 99). With this, Akeem orients to the dominant discourse that black males are more aggressive than other males (Hooks, 2004) and reproduces this notion to ideological effect.

Having been ascribed a criminal identity by others, Akeem describes the limits on certain social practices that this subject position entails for him and his friends, as "*you couldn't walk in a big group*". He uses a three part list "*two, three four white people*" (Jefferson, 1990) to emphasise that no matter how many white people are present, the potency of 'black skin' as being a social signifier for deviance is so strong that it "*still doesn't matter*" and as such he and his friends will get stopped if "*the majority is black*". Thus, Akeem constructs a "*big group*" of black people as socially scripted to mean danger and inferentially, although not mentioned explicitly, a gang. Furthermore, the contrast between the description of white "*people*" and black "*males*" constructs the 'black subject' as more intimidating, owing to culturally available discourses about males as physical (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Conversely, the 'white subject' is positioned as the more neutral and less threatening 'people'. Thus, as a result of being a group of black males Akeem depicts that they are "*getting stopped, 100 percent*". Akeem constructs his account as factually sound by using statistics ("*100 per cent*"), as well as building consensus by invoking his friends as having had the same experience with "*we've seen it*" (Potter, 1996), and finally his own personal account being constructed as eye witness ("*from [his] own eyes*") and therefore indisputable.

Current research reflects Akeem's experience, whereby BME men are over-represented in incarceration, and the racialised construction of gangs has led to identification of gang members as susceptible to racial stereotyping (Cottrell-Boyce, 2013) and punitive strategies being used against BME men (Smithson *et al.*, 2013). Given that BME men are primarily victims of segregation and oppression (Clement, 2010), racially constructing them as gang members

enables structures of injustice to remain unchallenged and legitimises continued oppressive enforcement. Furthermore, in another interview, Tyrone explicitly orients to the inadvertent advantages to the state of maintaining a homogenous view of black men when discussing the code 'IC3', which is used by police to identify black persons.

Extract 9.

From: Tyrone: 1867 – 1870

IC3 – black, Caribbean or African heritage (.) Do you know how many different skin tones of black there is? (0.3) They haven't changed that (.) they have no intention of changin' that because it benefits them to be so blasé and not clear about it. They will say an "IC3 male were at the scene" and then go for whichever IC3 male's at home that picked their fancy at that time.

Tyrone denotes the mentality of the police by referring to their lack of "*intention*" to change their coding system, and in this way constructs them as knowingly racist. Secondly, his language of "*whichever*" black male "[*picks*] *their fancy at the time*" implies a subjectivity of self-as-object, whereby black males are interchangeable and casually 'picked' on when white police officers feel like it. Thus, the diverse subject positions of the black experience and cultural identities are reduced (Hall, 1996) to a homogenous and reductionist label – IC3. Later on in the interview with Akeem, he compares his treatment by the police to being raped:

Extract 10

From: Akeem: 417 – 422

I don't wanna compare it to it but it's like (.) see people in gangs that feel a way- as like, the police are raping us, do you know what I mean, but it's like if we go to trial with them, it's that we're the victim but (.) with the, the prosecutor's gonna (.) d'you know what I mean like, we're the victim but we're also on trial as well, do you know what I mean?

By beginning this account with the disclaimer (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975) "*I don't wanna compare it*", coupled with various hedges and repairs i.e. "*but it's like*" "*see people in gangs*", "*as like*" (Schegloff, 1987), Akeem orients to the potentially problematic (by being evocative) nature of this comparison. Perhaps this orientation is related to my identity as a woman, which might make a rape metaphor particularly sensitive. Furthermore, the disclaimer suggests that he has "reluctantly arrived at" this comparison (Edwards, 2003, p.42). By constructing the comparison as something he would 'rather not' make, Akeem ensures that it is not attributed to any dispositional tendencies to make provocative statements, and therefore enhances the statement's power in depicting the shocking nature of the treatment he endures.

His account is then resourced with a victim blaming discourse ("*we're the victim but we're also on trial as well*"), usually associated with rape, whereby rape victims are wrongfully held responsible for their assault owing to their behaviour beforehand (Ryan, 2011). Thus, Akeem discursively constructs a new subject position of 'victim', which is incongruent to the subsequent being "*on trial*". In this way, discourse about gang members being 'criminals' is decidedly resisted, and their plight as victims of the criminal justice system is powerfully constructed. This construction is made particularly powerful by the invocation of the rape metaphor as it starkly inverts dominant discourses around black males as violent (Jackson, 2006) through its emasculating implication and usual association with females.

As explored in section '3.1.4. The Racialisation of Gangs', the EGYV policy implies that racial discrimination is sometimes only "*perceived*" (Home Office, 2011, p.19) by young people in gangs. However, the participants provided vivid depictions of being racially persecuted by powerful institutions. Thus, such claims of 'perceived racism' in the policy ensures the subject position of victims of structural violence and systemic racism are not available to young black males, and the more pervasive identity as 'perpetrator' is perpetuated.

3.2.1.2 *Avoiding Persecution*

In most of the interviews, the participants discussed the need to change their clothes in order to avoid persecution. In particular ‘skinny jeans’, ‘suits’ and generally dressing smartly were associated with white people and socially valued ways-of-being, whereas ‘hoodies’ and tracksuits were associated with black males, deviance and gang membership. By changing their clothes, the participants hoped that they would be treated differently and less likely to be stopped by the police. Extract 11, below, begins just after Jahman had been explaining that he was not sure whether he was being stopped by the police because of his “*colour*” (line 456) or what he was wearing. As a result, he has decided to change the way he dresses to be “*like this, more smarter*” (line 461). In the interview he was wearing black jeans and a button shirt.

Extract 11

From: Jahman: 464 – 490.

Do you know what, I was changing for myself mainly because I don't want to be sort of looked at as a typical black person, or a typical young black person, um how society sees black people. Um (.) and obviously not everyone is the same, everyone is different and I sort of wanted to show, like do you know what, not what you say is right, it is not every young black person that's into this, it's not every young black person that's doing that, is not every young person that is doing this type of thing, even if- it's not only young black people because as we know, there's other cultures that are doing exactly the same thing, but obviously not to the degree (.) that young black people are doing it.

In this extract, Jahman recounts enacting a ‘technology of self’ whereby he regulates his clothing in order to conform to ideological notions of normativity and what is socially acceptable (King, 2004). Historically, the black body has been scripted with cultural narratives of ‘other’, which is perpetuated by negative images in current media and popular culture (Jackson, 2006). Thus, signifiers such as race and clothes become embodied sites through which social problems are located and power is exercised (Williams, 2015). The

visibility of the body lends itself to corrective sanctions (Holligan, 2000) and as such while the participants are unable to change their skin colour, they change their clothes to align with the hegemonic norm against which they are judged: the white male.

Particularly, in this extract, Jahman rejects being seen as “*a typical young black person*”, and thus resists the homogenising effects of the ideological gaze (Holligan, 2000) by asserting “*obviously, not everyone is the same*”. Using the word ‘obviously’ is a device that renders this information as common sense knowledge and available to both of us, giving weight to this resistant discourse. Furthermore, the anaphora, whereby he repeats the sequence “*it’s not every*” at the beginning of neighbouring clauses, portrays this account as persuasive and convincing. However, the phrase “*it’s not every young black person*” simultaneously complies with the dominant discourse equating ‘black males’ with ‘criminality’ as it implies that at least ‘some’ young black people are living up to the stereotype. Furthermore, Jahman states that while there are others doing the same thing (inferred as crime) it is “*obviously not to the degree that young black people are doing it.*” Jahman’s ‘concession’ (Potter, 1996) that “*obviously*” young black people do it more than “*other cultures*” denotes the pervasiveness of discourse around the deviancy of black males. Concessions are usually employed by speakers as a way to acknowledge potential counter claims, and therefore enable their position to appear more robust (Potter, 1996). Here, Jahman is orienting to the fact that I might subscribe to this ideological narrative and disagree with his claim that ‘not all young black people’ are like that. The use of “*obviously*” once again indicates that this knowledge is shared by both of us and that it is widely known that ‘young black people’ are indeed like this. In this way, despite its markings of resistance, this extract highlights the ways in which negative ideologies are internalised by the dominated so that oppressive discourse is assumed as taken-for-granted knowledge. Shortly after the extract I ask Jahman what a ‘typical young black person’ is and he asserts that, according to “*other people*”, it’s “*a little criminal, a little shit*” (line 490). Thus, in order to avoid being thought of as “*a little criminal*” Jahman describes a process whereby his body becomes a site of regulation as he changes the way he dresses (King, 2004).

3.2.1.3 *Resistance: Behind Closed Doors*

Wherever there is domination, there are acts of resistance (Foucault, 1982). In the extract below, Tyrone resists the essentialising discourse which conflates material signifiers (race and clothes) with deviance, by constructing an identity at odds with his external image.

Extract 13

From: Tyrone: 1057 – 1065

When people look at me they think “yeah, his image, ah yea he’s mad, he’s nuts”, we’re all nuts. I’ve got baby sisters and big brothers that I’ve gotta babysit on the weekend. If I’m nuts, yeahh hhhh hhh my mum won’t let me look after these kids, if I’m nuts my girlfriend won’t come and stay with me, if I’m nuts I wouldn’t have sat by my grandma’s bed while she passed away with cancer (.) they don’t have a clue what goes on behind closed doors (.) all they hear and see is crime, crime, crime, murder, stabbing, attack, assault.

Tyrone uses ‘active voicing’ (Potter, 1996) to invoke the voices of those who think “*he’s mad*” based on his image. ‘Madness’ has historically been synonymous with ‘dangerousness’ (Foucault, 1978). Active voicing is a rhetorical device deployed to make his account of being perceived as ‘nuts’ more compelling (Potter, 1996). After the active voicing, he changes the pronoun from “*he’s nuts*” to “*we’re all nuts*”, as a way of extending the inclusion of people who may be judged by their image. In this way, the issue is not personal and exclusive to him, rather it affects other young black people who may also be thought of as ‘nuts’. Subsequently, recounting the social practices of babysitting, having a girlfriend, and sitting with his sick grandmother constructs an alternative subject position as someone who is kind and helpful. The use of anaphora at the beginning of each clause (repetition of “*if I’m nuts*”) adds emphasis to his account of being someone who is not “*nuts*” as implied by his detailed actions. Finally, the specific images of babysitting “*baby sisters*” as well as supporting a dying grandmother enables the construction of a particularly thoughtful identity. This alternative identity is incongruent to his

external appearance, which Tyrone concedes as ideologically signifying “*crime, crime, crime*”. The combination of the extreme case formulation “*all they hear and see*” (Pomerantz, 1986) and epizeuxis (repetition of ‘crime’), adds veracity to his account of how his identity is essentialised by onlookers, as ‘all’ they see is a ‘criminal’, ‘murderer’ and ‘attacker’. However, Tyrone resists the dominant discourse’s totalising effects, by constructing an alternative identity that exists “*behind closed doors*” that others “*don’t have a clue*” about.

3.2.2 The Inevitability of Gang Membership

Across several accounts, participants constructed the prospect of becoming part of a gang or committing crime as inevitable. This inevitability was constructed in two ways; as a matter of time or fact of life, and also as a direct result of being labelled a gang member earlier in life. These two constructions are described and evidenced in data extracts below.

3.2.2.1 *A Matter of Time*

Risk factor research, described in ‘1.3.1 Risk Factors and Gang Involvement’, discursively contributes to notions that specific sets of circumstances in childhood or personal characteristics inevitably lead to criminal life. Thus, vulnerable children are equated uncomplicatedly with teenage criminality (Rose, 1999) and this implies that social deprivation and behaviour difficulties will, in a matter of time, manifest in this way. In extract 14 below, Darrell constructs joining a gang as being cyclical between generations of young people and therefore inevitable.

Extract 14

From: Darrell: 111 – 119

Darrell: Cause, that’s a- that’s like a time thing you know. When the older group are done and that with what they’re doing they pass it on to the younger gen. Then when the younger gen all become olders they pass it on to the younger generation as well.

Emma: Mm, mm. {BR}. So you’re kind of getting err ideas and

instructions from a- from the older generation?

Darrell: Mm, mm. No, it's not really like orders but it's like what they're showing you then when you got- been doing it for so long it just becomes a reality then. That's what you do.

Darrel constructs joining a gang as being a "*time thing*". The inclusion of the word 'thing' reifies 'time' as being akin to a material object (Potter, 1996). The "*time thing*" implies that the passage of time and gang membership are tied, as if only 'time' is needed to join a gang. Furthermore, the tag "*you know*" appeals to intersubjectivity (Edwards, 2003) and indicates that the 'time thing' is knowable to both myself and Darrell, rendering it common-sensical knowledge. Subsequently, he describes how the older group pass 'it' on to the younger generation, and that they do the same when they become the 'olders'. In this instance and owing to the context of the utterance, 'it' is inferred as referring to criminal activity as part of a gang. The use of the present tense i.e. "*they pass it on*" alongside the impersonal categorisation of "*the younger gen*" and "*the older group*" constructs the cyclical nature of joining a gang as being 'generally what happens' (Edwards, 2003), as opposed to specific to himself. As the interviewer, I enquire as to whether he received instructions from the older group, assuming there to be a material element to what is passed between the generations. However, my question is deemed mistaken as it incites a dispreferred⁴ (Levinson, 1983) response from Darrel, evidenced in the hedges "*mm*" and the explicit "*no*". Darrel explains that, instead of receiving concrete orders, it is simply through the act of "*doing it for so long*" and witnessing the older group that 'it' (joining a gang) becomes a "*reality*". In the final line, Darrell remarks, "*that's what you do*". The use of the general 'you' as well as another iterative present tense constructs joining the "*olders*" as being a predictable sequence, generalizable to young people in similar circumstances (Edwards, 2003) and, ultimately, inevitable. Darrell's account aligns with Wacquant's (2007) assertion that the expanding inequality gap confines disadvantaged groups to poverty stricken areas. Described as "urban outcasts" (Densley &

⁴ 'Dispreferred' is a conversation analysis term referring to responses which are not 'preferred' in conversation i.e. a disagreement, an invitation refusal. Dispreferred responses are often characterised by their hesitant nature.

Stevens, 2015, p. 106), normative pathways to success are rendered invisible and thus alternative means are the only avenues available to take.

Furthermore, in extract 15, Ishaar constructs the inevitability of particular life circumstances amounting to criminality as being factual. Earlier in the interview, Ishaar speaks about young people growing up in certain situations (i.e. in particular neighbourhoods) as linked to certain outcomes. He recounts meeting a twelve year old boy in these circumstances who had said to him “*every black man goes to prison*” (line 114). Ishaar is referring to the same boy in extract 15.

Extract 15

From: Ishaar: 165 – 180

The chances are when he's 20 he will either be in prison or dead (.) and it's a fact. It's not just me talking, it's a fact, statistics or some analysis will show it, you know, or he is a repeated offender, one in every um (.) the first time I ever went to prison I- on my way out the person said to me – look twelve people's getting released that day, he said, out of those twelve, eight is guaranteed to come back...

[lines 169 – 179 omitted]

...He was an old chap ready to retire yea [interviewer laughs] so I do take his word for it.

Speaking of the 12 year old, Ishaar stipulates that by the time he is twenty he will be in one of two states, either “*in prison or dead*”. Ishaar is rhetorically persuasive in constructing this account as factual. Firstly, he states it as a “*fact*” and through a shift in footing (Dickerson, 1997) he rebuts any doubt that it's “*just [him] talking*” before he can be challenged. Secondly, he draws on an empiricist discourse by supporting this claim with the existence of “*statistics*” and “*analysis*” that will verify his argument. Referring to statistics is a rhetorical device which constructs accounts as being ‘out-there’ rather than owing to personal opinions (Potter, 1996). In this way, the possibility that this boy will end

up in prison or dead by the time he is twenty is robustly constructed as highly likely. Furthermore, Ishaar nearly specifies the statistics to which he refers as he states “*one in every*”, however he swiftly repairs his talk and instead provides a personal account of a conversation with a prison officer who had stated that eight out of twelve prisoners reoffend after release. Later on, Ishaar described the prison officer as an “*old chap ready to retire*” and therefore he takes “*his word for it*”. Constructed as someone who is about to retire and consequently is ‘experienced’, as well as being described as a ‘chap’ which implies an element of friendliness (as opposed to a person who might make up statistics to scare prisoners on release) gives his account credence. Thus, Ishaar corroborates his claim that this boy will end up in prison or dead with both empirical knowledge and reported professional experience, thus rendering the account difficult to dispute.

Both Darrell and Ishaar’s account of young people’s inevitable involvement in gangs and criminality reproduce discourse available in the policy described earlier. The policy’s reference to the “*life stories that lead to murder*” (Home Office, 2011, p.11) and the “*stories of young people who end up dead or wounded*” (Home Office, 2011, p.7) bear striking resemblance to Ishaar’s account of the possible outcomes for the young boy– prison or dead. Powerful institutions such as scientific research into risk factors and governmental policy pedal the discourse that certain young people from certain backgrounds are likely to join a gang or offend. Consequently, alternative discursive sites are subjugated so much so that young people themselves construct their lived experiences of joining a gang as common-sense narrative-normative reasoning (Edwards, 2003).

3.2.2.2 *The Power of the Label*

In addition to constructing joining a gang as being an inevitable fact of life, participants also attributed their actions to being labelled as deviant by others. In the extract below, Ishaar recounts the way in which the label ‘bad boy’ can impact young people’s subjectivity.

Extract 16

From: Ishaar: 428 – 441

It's like- yea, you are a bad boy. If you keep telling a young child he is a bad boy the chances are when he grows up he is going to want to be a bad boy. I mean as a psychologist you probably thoroughly understand most of the things I am saying, because yea she is qualified psychologist, you know what I mean, so it all goes back down to the self-esteem thing if you constantly tell a little child, you're a tramp the chances are you are going to be a tramp. He's gonna go in the ring and pow, pow, pow, and do his stuff if you are telling him his is a bad boy and it's all instilled in him from young or even at a late age, it can all happen at any time but yea so that's what allows the stigma and the stereotyping and sometimes you wouldn't even know it (.) That's the scariest thing about it some of the other people wouldn't even know (.) yea it's quite harrowing.

Later in the interview Ishaar states *"if you class them as a bad boy or as a criminal or a gang member when he is not"* (line 467) and thus the term 'bad boy' is considered synonymous with 'gang member' in this context.

In the extract above, Ishaar describes the enactment of a 'technology of power' whereby a child is told he is a *"bad boy"* by another. The implications of being labelled in this way is that the young boy subsequently takes up this subject position as he grows up; *"chances are when he grows up he is going to want to be a bad boy"*. By utilising a general 'you' to refer to the person 'telling' the young child he is a bad boy, Ishaar obscures the active agent and, in this way, constructs the 'labeller' as omnipotent and representative of general voices. Furthermore, by describing the subject as a *"young"* and *"little child"* he constructs him to be vulnerable, and thus amenable to having his identity shaped by others, explaining his subsequent taking up of the 'bad boy' identity ascribed to him. Being positioned as a 'bad boy' legitimises particular punitive practices and as such enables the reproduction of existing power imbalances (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). Moreover, through an avowal of the boy's mental

state (Edwards & Potter, 2005) i.e. *“he is going want to be a bad boy”* agency is placed within the child as if he makes an active choice to be a ‘bad boy’. Thus, the *“young child”* is constructed as somewhat responsible for his actions, which justifies oppressive action by powerful institutions.

Ishaar verifies his assertion that the child will become a ‘bad boy’, as he invokes a category entitlement (Potter, 1996) by referring to me as a *“qualified psychologist”* who would also know and understand this process. He constructs the *“self-esteem thing”* as being the core mechanism through which labelling a young child a ‘bad boy’ impacts their identity (*“it all goes back down to the self-esteem thing”*), and indicates that ‘self-esteem’ is an area that I, as a psychologist, would have knowledge of by saying *“you know what I mean”*. However, despite deployment of the category entitlement ‘psychologist’, he maintains his expertise on the subject by claiming that I would understand *“most”* and therefore not all, of what he is saying. In this way, by positioning himself as an expert-by-experience, he maintains authority regarding the topic. Thus, the act of labelling a young child a ‘bad boy’ or ‘tramp’ is constructed as a powerful mechanism in determining subsequent identity and subjectivities of children. Ishaar’s account aligns with labelling theory described in ‘Section 1.5.1 Labelling Theory’ which posits that young people are more likely to adopt a deviant identity having been labelled as delinquent by others (Lemert, 1951). In this way, the continued use of the term ‘gang member’ serves to essentialise the identities of young people and criminalises otherwise vulnerable children (Smithson *et al.*, 2013).

In the second half of the extract, Ishaar uses a boxing metaphor to describe the actions of the child who takes up a *“tramp”* identity as *“he’s gonna go in the ring and pow, pow, pow”*. By using this metaphor, Ishaar invokes an image of a boxing match in which the *“tramp”* is a competitor in the ring. The implication being that his violence, evoked through onomatopoeia of *“pow pow pow”*, is a spectacle for others to observe. By drawing on a competitive sporting discourse Ishaar transforms a demonised identity into an objectified one. Although not referred to explicitly, I make an inference about the relevance of the category of being ‘black’ as it is oriented to throughout the interview (Edwards, 2003). Historically, the black male body has been ideologically associated with physical

strength and violence, and subsequently is socially scripted to be simultaneously feared and admired (Lorenz & Murray, 2010). Owing to these scripts, and compounded by structural inequalities limiting opportunities for black people, the athletics arena is a site in which these contradictions are negotiated and the black body is celebrated (Lorenz & Murray, 2010). In this way, by using a boxing metaphor Ishaar depicts the 'bad boy' as being borne out of the ideological assumptions of society, and then exhibited as an object for those outside the ring to look onto. Society's role in the construction of this 'bad boy' is obscured by the spectacle of his violence.

Finally, Ishaar notes that "*the stigma and the stereotyping*" is largely undetected by its subjects as they "*wouldn't even know*" that they are being labelled a 'bad boy'. Thus, Ishaar constructs an account in which young people's identities are problematized by powerful others who then observe the fallout from a distance, and as objects upon which oppressive power is exercised (Gordon, 1997). Ultimately, Ishaar orients to the insidious and unethical nature of this 'technology of power' by acknowledging how "*harrowing*" it is.

3.2.3 Gang Members: Problematized Identities

Throughout the interviews participants oriented to their identities as 'gang members' as being inherently problematic. Below I describe two discursive sites which contribute to these constructions; 'being othered' and 'being demonised'.

3.2.3.1. *Being "Othered"*

Several participants described being considered "*different to the people on the streets*" (Ishaar: 421). In extract 4 below, from the interview with Tyrone, he constructs this experience of being 'othered' and its resulting implications for young people.

Extract 17.

From: Tyrone 1912 – 1917

The Government, the way they portray things they do it in a way where they've created who you can't trust, they've created 'them' for the 'us and them'. They make 'us' the 'them' so that people who are just going on nine to five, going work, getting on trains in the morning (.) I've seen people clutching their handbags on the train, yeah? That's why I don't do public transport.

In this extract, Tyrone orients to the role in which powerful institutions (the government) have in disseminating knowledge-systems to the general public (Holligan, 2000). By noting that the government “creates” who society can trust, Tyrone undermines otherwise taken-for-granted aspects of socio-political structures (Hall, 1996) and in this way resists the totalising ascriptions applied to him. He deconstructs the well-known phrase ‘us and them’ through explicating that “*them*” is created by the government and that “*us*” i.e. young people like Tyrone, are constructed as the ‘other’ (“*they make ‘us’ the ‘them’*”). Young people confined to deprivation, often described as ‘hoodies’ and labelled gang members, are ideologically constructed as homogenous ‘others’ thus devaluing their humanity and legitimising social exclusion (Featherstone, 2013, Beresford, 2001). Tyrone’s deconstruction of the phrase ‘them and us’ is a powerful device in starkly highlighting a process that frequently is naturalised as normal.

Furthermore, through the process of differentiating himself from the normative standard of people who go to work “*nine to five*” and who commute to a job by train, Tyrone implicitly positions himself as abnormal (Edley & Wetherell, 1997). Normative identities are frequently ‘unmarked’ and it is often only when juxtaposed to social categories marked as ‘other’ that they become visible (Bucholtz, 1999). By “*clutching their handbags*” it is inferred that Tyrone is feared by those people as a result of his assigned subject position as ‘other’. Pertinently, the implication of being ‘othered’ is that certain social practices are closed down for Tyrone who subsequently avoids public transport owing to the presumably negative subjective experiences of being unjustly ‘feared’ in public.

As discussed in '3.2.1.2 Avoiding Persecution' visible markers i.e. clothes and skin colour, are constructed as material signifiers of the uncivilised minority, and thus legitimises defensive social actions such as 'clutching bags' in their presence. Within the policy, gang members were constructed as deviant others by explicitly noting that the "*vast majority of young people are law abiding citizens*" (Home Office, 2011, p.16); the implication being that there is a deviant minority who do not abide by the law and subsequently threaten the social order, thus requiring controlling and corrective measures (Williams, 2015).

3.2.3.1 *Being Demonised*

Being considered "*scum*" (Ishaar: 502) and "*the wickedest thing*" (Tyrone: 81) were amongst some of the ways that the participants depicted their identities as being demonised. In extract 18 below, Jahman describes how he has been assigned a defective identity owing to his gang association. Immediately prior to the extract, he had been explaining that "*close family members*" had reacted negatively as a result of his spending time with people who were deemed to be in a gang.

Extract 18.

From: Jahman: 128 – 136

Jahman: Yes, you know, your company, people judge you on your company um

Emma: Were you treated differently as soon as you kind of-

Jahman: I was- I don't know- do you know what, I felt (.) as if they- that people were more ashamed to be around me, as opposed to actually (.) before they would love being around me, then they started to turn into like, they were very wary about me, they didn't particularly want to be around me (.) um I wasn't getting the love and things that obviously from certain family members that I was beforehand (.) um (.) people, when they looked at me, they looked at me differently as well, it's like so I was lo::w, like I was the bottom, like I the worst hu-, like one of the worst humans in the world

Jahman asserts that he has been judged by the people he spends time with. After asking whether he felt he was treated differently, Jahman immediately responds “*I was*” before reconfiguring his turn into a formulation of ignorance (“*I don’t know*”) and subsequently “*do you know what?*”. By downgrading his immediate definitive answer, to claiming that he ‘didn’t know’ Jahman constructs his answer as though it had just occurred to him, and therefore with “no axe being ground” (Edwards, 2003, p.45). Thus, his account appears spontaneous and an accurate reflection on the reactions of his family members. Jahman uses the device of contrast (Boyett, 2008) to highlight the difference between life before and after being considered a gang member. Prior to being considered a gang member, people would “*love*” being with him, however once ‘gang associated’ they became “*ashamed to be around*” him and “*very wary*” about him. The inclusion of the extreme case formulation ‘very’ (Pomerantz, 1986) serves to emphasise the wariness of which they felt towards him. Being positioned as someone to be wary of, constructs him as being perceived to be potentially dangerous and to be avoided.

Jahman draws on discourses of normative family relationships as he says “*I wasn’t getting the love and things that obviously from certain family member that I was beforehand*”. Through the use of ‘obviously’, he constructs ‘love’ between family members as a normative sentiment by evoking this knowledge as common sense and therefore shared by both of us. Thus, given that love is expected between family members, the implied withdrawal of love on being considered a gang member is particularly shocking and serves to vividly depict the rejection that such an identity can incur. Furthermore, Jahman extends this affliction beyond his family members by upgrading to “*people*” now look at him differently, implying a more widespread negative reaction towards him. Finally, he explicitly states that he is looked upon as being “*low*”, “*the bottom*” and like “*one of the worst humans in the world.*” Although this line is peppered with hedges and repairs (Schegloff, 1987) it forms a three part list, a rhetorical device used to emphasise the strength of its content. Equally, his extreme case formulation as “*the worst human in the world*” implicates the strength of the negative reaction towards young people considered to be gang members, and the subsequent experience of being severely denigrated by both society and close family. Combined with other extracts, it is clear that young people who are

considered gang members are acutely aware of society's condemnation of their identities, as mirrored in the EGYV policy.

3.2.3.2 *Resistance: It's Made Me Stronger.*

Young people ascribed the subject position of gang member are not necessarily passive recipients of this label and its associated vilification. Throughout the interviews, the participants demonstrated acts of resistance and rejection of the label and its negative connotations.

Extract 19.

From: Akeem: 456 – 461

I don't regret anything that I've done or been through because it's made me notice stuff. It's opened my eyes you know? (.) like it's made me a very smart person, coz I'm smart, streetwise, through studies, through the books, I could read you know, it's just made me a better person I feel because I've got the best of both worlds (.) you know? It's just made me stronger.

Extract 20

From: Akeem: 458 – 550

You just notice more like, you notice more when you've actually been rock bottom and hurt, like when you're on your face that's when you get to see the world for how it really is.

In extract 19 Akeem constructs his experience of being in a gang as a valued learning experience and one that he would not regret. Given the experiences associated with gang membership described earlier such as being 'othered' and 'demonised', this might be considered surprising. He attributes his experience of being in a gang to 'opening his eyes' and enabling him to "*notice stuff*", and as a result he is "*smart*." However, he contrasts the different types of being 'smart' as "*streetwise*" and "*through studies, through books, I could read*". The second type of intelligence to which he refers is associated with normative education and is usually privileged as being the most valid type of knowledge in society.

Asserting that he is 'smart' contradicts usual academic expectations of gang members (Spergel, 1995). Across Akeem's interview, and the interviews of other participants, they described being subjected to expectations of low attainment and unintelligence e.g.:

Extract 21

From: Akeem: 619

She [Akeem's teacher] just thought I weren't gonna make it you know, she just thought I was a gang member forced to go to school.

Extract 22

From: Tyrone: 327 - 328

Your dad's in jail and you ain't got two brain cells to scrub between you.

Extract 23

From: Karl: 1535

They [teachers] just think they're not clever and they're not going anywhere in life.

Thus, Akeem is explicit about his intellectual status as it is incongruent to usual assumptions made. He uses an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) i.e. "*very smart*" to emphasise the veracity of this statement. He then continues to construct the 'gang world' as being separate to the normal world; "*I've got the best of both worlds*". Although this might perpetuate the sense that gang members are 'others' from 'another world', he constructs this position as unique and therefore positive. Ultimately, he asserts that this makes him a "*better person*". The implication however, is that in order to be a "*better person*" he has to subscribe to normative ideals and valued ways of being in the dominant world (such as reading books and being 'smart'). Thus Akeem constructs himself as bridging two metaphorical worlds – the subjugated world where 'street wisdom' is valued, and the dominant world where 'intellect' is privileged - and as such he positions himself as possessing a unique viewpoint unattainable to those without his experience. Finally, Akeem states that his experience has made him "*stronger*", and it is inferred that this 'strength' refers to 'mental strength'. Physical strength is usually associated with gang members, and thus to

explicitly mark how he has become “*stronger*” suggests that the strength lies within a domain that is less likely to be associated with this subject position.

Furthermore, in extract 20, Akeem describes having been at “*rock bottom*”, “*hurt*” and “*on [his] face*”, which mirrors Jahman’s experience of being positioned as a “*low*” and “*worst human in the world*” (lines 136). Describing being “*hurt*” is an appeal to pathos (Howard, 2010) whereby the listener is invited to comprehend the speaker’s emotions. Given that gang members are frequently dehumanised through discursive processes such as ‘othering’, invoking his emotions is a discursive move by Akeem which shifts his subject position from being ‘violent gang member’ to ‘sensitive’, thus resisting the dominant discourse. Finally, he notes that, having been through his experiences he can see “*the world for how it really is*” and as such insinuates a journey of discovery which affords his special perspective on the world.

This extract is not unique to Akeem, several participants reimagined their negative identities of demonised gang member in ways that promoted a positive self-concept, and resisted dominant ideas about who they might be based on homogenising and stigmatizing ideologies (Case & Hunter, 2014).

3.2.4 Individual and Family Blame

During the interviews, several participants implied that individual traits accounted for young people’s criminality, and that parents were responsible, or could mediate, whether their child joined a gang. The extract below encapsulates both of these notions.

Extract 24.

From: Ishaar: 931 – 964

Emma: Why do you think someone wouldn’t be seeing the opportunities available to them at 15 - did you see the opportunities available to you then?

Ishaar: No, because the role models weren’t there, there was not that guidance there wasn’t- you know, a young person, you are a young person, you know what I mean, you are young, you have only been in this world for 15

years, you know what I mean, if you don't- you don't have- I don't know, a mentor- really and truly it's your parents' job, that's what I think, it is your parents' job (.) because if you can't manage kids and you don't know how to raise them then don't have them, it's simple as. I mean that's what I think now, but if the kids don't have that....

[lines 953 – 948 omitted]

Ishaar: yea (0.2) the opportunities there, you might not know 'cause there aint no role model there – who do you see on the estate, everything around him is, everything around him is negative, you know like, got- boiling down to the thing where I said, and if the kid don't have any self-belief or he has a psychological issue, not necessarily mental health issues, but (.) psychological issues then he might not be, you know, it's hard, yea life is going to throw all sorts of things at you and yea life will get in the way and, you know, some people can handle it and some people can't. You know, Mohammed Ali said "I am the champ" Mohammed Ali said "I am the greatest" before he was the greatest, he believed in himself he didn't have no-one to believe in him. Serena Williams and Venus Williams, their dad told them – one day you're gonna be a champ, you see where the difference is, their dad told them, and he believed in himself. So if you don't have the self-belief or you don't have no-one telling you then yeah. I mean, it could- you never know where you might go.

In the extract above, Ishaar constructs young people as being in need of "*guidance*" in order to see the opportunities available to them. In particular, through the repetition of the word "*young*" and "*you've only been in this world for 15 years*", with 'only' emphasizing how minimal 15 years is, he constructs young people as being naïve, thus warranting their need for guidance. The inclusion of "*you know what I mean*", renders this as shared knowledge and therefore

rational. Ishaar then interjects his speech regarding the need of a mentor, with the assertion that *“really and truly it’s your parent’s job, that’s what I think anyway.”* At first he constructs this statement as being ‘objective’ as it’s *“truly”* the job of the parent, subsequently there’s a change in modality as he downgrades it to what ‘he thinks’. By expressing the statement as his own thoughts, the downgrade enables him to say what might be considered a contentious statement without refutation, as it is difficult to disagree with personal thoughts.

The claim that it is the *“parents’ job”* and that *“if you can’t manage kids, don’t have them, simple as”* draws on a discourse of ‘feral parenting’ (De Benedictis, 2012) whereby ‘deviant parents’ are made responsible for social collapse through their children’s juvenile delinquency (Gillies, 2005). Discourses of ‘bad parenting’ have been reported as euphemistically referring to class (Skeggs, 2004). In this way, Ishaar’s denigration of bearing children without the ability to manage constructs parents living in poverty as socially irresponsible and *“immorally breeding”* (De Benedictis, 2012, p.11). Thus, the assertion that simply guidance from good parents is required for seizing opportunities individualises poverty and obscures the social reality of unequal access to opportunities (Densley & Stevens, 2015). In this way, Ishaar reproduces a discourse of ‘parental responsibility’ which is present in the EGYV policy as described in section ‘3.1.3. Gangs: The Product of ‘Troubled Families’, whereby *“challenging families”* are constructed as related to gang involvement. Furthermore, the policy describes *“interventions to promote warm, loving, supporting parents are particularly essential to prevent a life of violence further down the line”* (Home Office, 2011 p.21). Thus, the policy positions young people who commit crime as the products of unloving parents, while Ishaar suggests that parents haven’t ‘managed’ their children’s behaviour. Such constructions render parents to blame for social immobility (De Benedictis, 2012, Peters, 2011).

In the second half of the extract, Ishaar constructs *“self-belief”* as the crux (*“boiling down to...if the kid don’t have self-belief”*) of young people not seeing apparently available opportunities. Drawing on neoliberal ideologies that anyone can make it, if only they believed in themselves, restricts alternative avenues for

addressing social problems (Türken, Nafstad, Blakar, & Roen, 2016). This discourse reinforces the notion that no matter how difficult life is, individuals are responsible for their own successes or failures and abstract concepts such as 'self-belief' reify such claims (Turken *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, Ishaar notes that young people may have "*psychological [issues], not necessarily mental health issues*". Constructing 'mental health issues' as a 'health issue', implies that it is medical and therefore 'curable', whereas 'psychological issues' indicate complex internal difficulties which may be hard to address. The internalised construction of young people's difficulties reflects the Allen study, reported in the EGYV policy, which states that abusive childhoods can result in "*long-term consequences for brain development – resulting in hyperactivity, impulsive and aggressive behaviour*" (Home Office, 2011 p.21). Referring to 'long term consequences' and 'brain development' infers that the subsequent aggressive behaviour is biological, as opposed to social, and impermeable to change.

By invoking the Psy-complex ("*psychological issues*") for lay explanations of why young people turn to criminality (Rose, 1999), Ishaar's account appears robust. Furthermore, the vague account of life "*[throwing] all sort of things at you*" constructs hardship as universal and discounts those who navigate particularly marginalised positions. Ultimately, a psychological explanation renders the social contexts of deprivation opaque (Boyle, 2011), and implies that the ability to deal with what life 'throws at you' is down to individual strength or deficit, as Ishaar recounts "*some people can handle it and some people can't*".

Finally in the extract, Ishaar uses Muhammed Ali who "*believed in himself*", and the Williams sisters, whose father believed in them, as exemplary for his account that young people need self-belief and parental support to succeed. Referring to black athletes, Ishaar draws on discourses described earlier in section, '3.2.2.1 A Matter of Time', whereby possibilities for 'black success' are often limited to athletic and physical domains. Furthermore, glorifying examples of highly visible black sporting successes have been attributed to maintaining racial inequality by insinuating that you can succeed if only you try hard enough (Lorenz & Murray., 2010). Ultimately, neoliberal discourse individualises

success and makes available subjectivities of shame and failure, while disposing of the need to change structural inequality.

3.2.4.1 *Resistance: You've All Had a Part to Play*

Participants resisted individualised explanations for gangs by explicitly orienting to the social and political conditions in which they exist. In the extract below, Karl discusses the social causes of gangs and the government's responsibility to change them. Prior to the extract I have asked him what the causes are of young people joining gangs.

Extract 25

From: Karl:1215 - 1247

Karl: Erm I would say, obviously employment that's, well that's a major one. Employment. Erm these estates that they keep building I think that creates gangs. Uh huh.
[That]=

Emma: [In what way?]

Karl: =In a- in a sense that where most of the estates they are associated with gangs and now if you live in an estate where you feel like, okay, I live in this gang and you just get involved in it. Should build houses. Mm, mm. And some of the estates are just dirty, run down and everything. They're just left like that.

Emma: Mm, mm so almost just by where you [live you]=

Karl: [Yeah just]

Emma: =become involved?

Karl: Uh huh. And giving them more opportunities. Like when we was growing there was all like youth centres and everything we used to go to. It's none of that involved.

Emma: Yeah.

Karl: My little brother is seventeen now. He's never been to a youth centre. He ain't got none of that now. What happened to- to all of them? Just all been closed down and everything.

Emma: They've been closed down?

Karl: So now when they're out there on the streets doing whatever they're doing you wanna go blame them. Yeah it is their fault but- and to an extent you've all had a part to play. Mm, mm. Yeah.

Emma: What erm- what do you think they-- it would be important for them to know about, about you- young people, you know?

Karl: E:rm, just like understand how we work. Mindset and everything and (.) yeah I think more, the most important thing is to understand us and then we'll-we can tell them how they can help us. And how we can help them. (.) Yeah. So it works both ways.

In this extract, Karl's answer to the question of what are the causes of gangs, is "*obviously employment that's, well that's a major one*". The use of the word 'obviously' constructs employment (or rather, a lack of employment) as a common-sense reason for which young people would join a gang. Furthermore, Karl equates the "*estates that they keep building*" with gang membership ("*I live in this gang*"). Given that young people growing up in deprived estates face "multiple marginality" (Vigil, 2003, p.237) and a lack of employment opportunities (Densley & Stevens, 2015), Karl's account refers to the social barriers that they face, as opposed to their dispositional traits. Although by saying "*I live in this gang and you just get involved in it*", he constructs being born into a certain area as inevitably leading to gang involvement, he relocates this as being the responsibility of the state, by saying "*should build houses*". Karl makes a distinction between 'estates' and 'houses'. Although there are material differences between the two, the comparison might also be drawing on hegemonic ideals about 'family life' and images of a 'happy home' as existing within 'houses', as opposed to estates, which is corroborated by his description of some estates being "*dirty, run down and everything*." His extreme case formulation of 'everything' serves to emphasise the dilapidated condition of the estates. By asserting that "*they're just left like that*," Karl removes the actor from this sentence and constructs estates, and those who live in them, as passive recipients of the government's action, or inaction, to change their environment.

Karl then recounts that *“giving [young people] more opportunities”* would also help. He resources this argument with an anecdote of his younger brother not having access to youth centres, which exemplifies how opportunities have been restricted for young people over time. Through the use of extreme case formulations, *“he aint got **none** of that”*, *“What happened to **all** of them?”* and *“Just **all** been closed down and **everything**”* Karl constructs this circumstance as being severe. Furthermore, his rhetorical question adds impetus to his account. Subsequently, constructed as extreme conditions renders reasonable the fact that young people are *“out on the streets doing whatever they’re doing”* so that when people *“wanna go blame them”*, this seems unjust. Karl continues that *“it is their fault but, and to an extent you’ve all had a part of play”* which indicates that the state is part-responsible for young people joining gangs. His concession that it is young people’s *“fault”* to some degree, enables Karl to appear reasonable and as if he has considered both sides of an argument before presenting an informed conclusion (Potter, 1996). Subsequently, the fact that the government has had a part to play in the existence of gangs is robustly accounted for by Karl.

Finally, Karl asserts that if the government understood young people’s *“mindset”* then they could *“tell them how they can help [young people] and how [young people] can help them.”* Through advocating a reciprocal helping relationship between the government and young people, he constructs young people as having an expert knowledge about their situations that they could share with the government. In this way Karl resists the folk devil ideologies about gang members as mindless thugs (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994) by constructing them as knowledgeable and able to positively contribute, if given the opportunity. Throughout the extract Karl resists individualising discourses which place blame on young people and their families for their social predicaments and subsequent choice to join gangs. In this way, he places responsibility firmly with the government to improve employment opportunities, to cease closing down community resources and to promote social inclusion by building houses, as opposed to confining those affected by poverty to *“run down”* estates.

4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter concludes with the key findings of the study. The research is summarised, followed by an exploration of its implications for policy, clinical psychology and research. Lastly, a critical evaluation and final reflections are presented.

4.1 Summary of Results and Conclusion

Returning to the research aims, this study endeavoured to explore the 'Ending Gang and Youth Violence' government policy and how it connects to the lived experiences of young people who identify as gang members. More specifically, I aimed to understand how young people involved in gangs discursively construct their identities and experiences, and to what extent these constructions reflect or resist those identified in the policy.

Below, the connections between the discourses in policy and the discourses in the interviews are explored. These findings are presented alongside reference to literature discussed in the introduction, as well as any new articles deemed relevant in the light of the results. The subtitles begin with the discursive site of the policy, followed by the corresponding discursive site of the interviews.

4.1.1 The Demonization of Gangs / Problematised Identities

Throughout the policy, repeated reference is made to the “*disproportionate impact*” (Home Office, 2011, p.18) gangs have on communities, reiterating their dangerousness while holding them responsible for “*social breakdown*” (Home Office, 2011, p.4). The policy’s vivid language constructs gangs as an impending threat to the social order and as such contributes to moral panics about their existence (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994), for example in the policy’s assertion that communities are “*gripped by fear*” (Home Officer, 2011, p.4). However, as discussed in the introduction, young people described as gang members are more likely to be experiencing social exclusion and living in deprivation (Smithson *et al.*, 2013). Thus, perpetuating this moral panic serves to further marginalise an already powerless population, while authorising disciplinary action against them (Hall, *et al.*, 1978). Furthermore, as Reicher and Stott (2011) denote, political rhetoric frequently endorses notions of pure

criminality as explanations for collective action, which is reflected in the policy's claims that gangs "*create a culture of violence and criminality that prevent the very things that can help transform those communities*" (Home Office, 2011, p.4). However, criminal constructions obscure the oppressive social contexts within which crime occurs, while also undermining consideration of this behaviour as social protest (Reicher & Stott, 2011).

Correspondingly, in the interviews, the participants appeared painfully aware of their socially demonised identities and recounted experiences of rejection, both by the general public and familial members. Thus, both their actions ("*That's why I don't do public transport*", Tyrone: 1917) and their subjectivities ("*I wasn't getting the love*", Jahman: 136) were affected. Jahman's experience of being 'less loved' mirrors Matsueda's (1992) assertion that labelling young people as delinquent may alter their internal sense of self. Equally the resulting stigma and discrimination that their label encumbers impacts material opportunities available to them (Sampson & Laub, 2003). In this way, it appeared that the impact of macro dominant ideologies in the policy were detrimentally experienced at the micro level by the participants. Consequently certain social practices were rendered unavailable to the young people, and they reported feeling less socially valued owing to the negative ascriptions of being labelled a gang member. However, their demonization was also resisted by participants proffering alternative narratives. In line with Case & Hunter's (2014) depiction of offenders embracing their socially denigrated identities in order to positively reframe them, Akeem reconstructed his demonised identity as aiding self-growth ("*It's just made me stronger*", Akeem: 461).

4.1.2 The Inevitability of Gangs / The Inevitability of Gang Membership

Both the policy and participants constructed gang membership as an inevitable outcome for young people who are born into certain circumstances. The policy outlined the "*life stories that lead to murder*" (HM Government, 2011, p.11), as well as the 'brain changing' effects of early traumatic experiences. In this way, the policy mirrors the risk factor research described in the introduction whereby certain family circumstances (i.e. parental criminality [Howell & Egley, 2005]) and individual deficits (i.e. low levels of IQ [Spergel, 1995]), are framed as predictive of subsequent criminality. Furthermore, environmental factors such

as living in an area of limited opportunities (Melde & Pyrooz, 2013), are considered to contribute to the risk of a criminal trajectory for young people. By reproducing risk factor discourse the policy implicitly positions vulnerable children as “young [criminals]” (Rose, 1999, p.157), which renders them amenable to forms of social control. The social scripts linking impoverished backgrounds to subsequent criminality appeared so powerful that ideas about alternative futures were limited, even for the young people themselves. Darrel described joining a gang as just “*what you do*” (line 119), while Ishaar recounted the likelihood that certain young people, with a reference to being black, are inevitably likely to “*either be in prison or dead*” (line 165).

However, Ishaar and other participants also referred to the power of being labelled and its subsequent impact on subjectivity for young people (“*If you keep telling a young child he is a bad boy the chances are when he grows up he is going to want to be a bad boy*”, Ishaar: 428 – 430). In this way, Ishaar exposes one of the mechanisms by which young people are stigmatised by others, so much so that their ascribed identity becomes a reality. Furthermore, Ishaar recounts the impact of the label on young people’s self-esteem (“*it all goes back down to the self-esteem thing, if you constantly tell a little child, you’re a tramp the chances are you are going to be a tramp*”, Ishaar: 333 – 335). In this way, Ishaar inadvertently highlights the ways in which the non-material aspects of poverty, such as stigma and shame, affect young people’s subjective experiences, and cannot be separated from gangs and criminality (McLaughlin, 2007). Thus, Ishaar’s description of this process reflects labelling theory (Lemert, 1951) whereby young people internalise a sense of self as deviant, in accordance with the negative label society has ascribed. In this way, participants resisted notions that certain young people are simply destined to join gangs and located the locus of change elsewhere: in the language and the assumptions of the powerful.

4.1.3 Gangs: The Product of ‘Troubled Families’ / Individual and Family Blame

The policy cites that “*challenging families*” engender issues such as “*anti-social behaviour, youth crime, inter-generational disadvantage and worklessness*” (Home Office, 2011, p.28). In this way, it makes no account for social and

structural barriers as explanations for a family's apparent "*worklessness*". The individualised discourse present within the policy mirrors Patel's (2003) suggestion that those in power may subtly advocate blaming narratives so as to avoid the need to transform social circumstances. Furthermore 'inter-generational disadvantage' and 'worklessness' (i.e. unemployment) are akin to the systemic structures usually related to intrinsic structural violence (Galtung, 1969). Given that inequality in the UK has remained consistently high since the 1990's with little change (Belfield, *et al.*, 2016), it might be considered that the "social machinery of oppression" (Farmer, 2004, p.307) is at play, as opposed to particular challenging families being responsible for society's demise.

Moreover, in the interviews some of the participants reproduced discourses around parental responsibility and individual strengths and deficits as accounting for whether people join gangs ("*some people can handle it and some people can't*", Ishaar: 957). Participants also attributed internal dispositions, such as 'self-belief', to an individual's ability to succeed or fail in life. Such discursive constructions privilege neoliberal discourse about autonomy and individualism, while eclipsing notions of social injustice and social exclusion in explanations of criminality (Türken *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, as strain theory posits (Alleyne & Wood, 2010), society presents universally desired goals to everyone, while only enabling a privileged few the opportunity to attain them. Thus, as reflected in the interviews, failure to succeed is framed as owing to individual inability which obscures arguments for social change (Patel, 2003).

However, many of the participants also resisted individualised explanations and referred to the government's role in maintaining oppression (*What happened to- to all of them [youth centres]? Just all been closed down and everything.* Karl: 1232 – 1233), while urging them to take action and listen to the voices of the marginalised. In this way, the participants exposed seemingly naturalised inequalities alongside elements of structural violence (Galtung, 1968), thus placing onus on the government to rectify them.

4.1.4 Racialisation of Gang Members / Experiences of Racism

The policy links ethnicity with the ‘disproportionate concentration’ of gangs, as well as undermines experiences of racial discrimination by suggesting that such experiences can be merely *“perceived”* by young people (Home Office, 2011, p.19). Furthermore, ‘immigrant gang members’ are identified as among the *“highest harm gang members”* (Home Office, 2011, p.45). In this way, gang members are constructed as a racialised ‘other’ and are implicitly signified by the material embodiment of their skin colour. Thus, the policy starkly abandons Alexander’s (2008) warning against the tendency for authorities to racially stereotype gangs. Stereotyping in this way can lead to authorisation of punitive action towards black communities (Alexander, 2008). Smithson et al. (2013) cite the disproportionate incarceration of BME individuals as evidence for the unjust racialisation of gangs, which the policy seemingly perpetuates.

The participants described varying ways in which racist ideologies had manifested in their experiences. Some participants recounted experiences of racism, structural violence and persecution by the police (*“if the majority is full of black males we’re getting stopped”*, Akeem: 83 – 84). Furthermore, some participants attributed their maltreatment to the authorities’ intentions to victimise black people (*“they have no intention of changin’ that [IC3 code] because it benefits them to be so blasé and not clear about it”*, Tyrone: 1869 – 1870). In this way, Akeem used the metaphor of being ‘raped’ and then blamed by the authorities, despite being the victims of injustice. Owing to these experiences, some participants described engaging in self-regulation (changing their clothes) in order to navigate the detrimental ascriptions of being seen as a *“typical young black person”* (Jahman: 465).

However, some participants also appeared to have internalised ideologies that pertain to black males being dangerous (*“society show black males to being the aggressive males out of all races, which may be true”* Akeem: 99, and *“there’s other cultures that are doing exactly the same thing [crime], but obviously not to the degree that young black people are doing it”* Jahman: 489 – 490). From an individual’s subjective perspective, Jackson (2006) recounts the potential for black males to internalise a sense of ‘I’ as ‘other’ in the face of negative racial narratives.

Finally, participants also resisted negative discourse about black males as being aggressive by constructing alternative identities as caring, thoughtful and kind people (*“if I’m nuts I wouldn’t have sat by my grandma’s bed while she passed away”*, Tyrone: 1060 – 1061). These discursive moves by the participants engender Case and Hunter’s (2014) depiction of ‘reimagined identities’ whereby offenders distance themselves from negative assumptions about them, in order to recreate a resistant identity which affirms a positive self-concept.

4.1.5 Conclusion

During the interviews, the participants mirrored many of the major discourses present in the policy in varying ways. At times, they reproduced the political and ideological discourse, at other times they resisted it, and at other times the participants exposed the mechanisms by which dominant discourses impacted their lives. Thus, most apparent in the data was the way in which dominant political discourse negatively shaped the subjectivities and experiences of those affected by it. In this way, this study concludes that the policy is disseminating problematic discourses about gangs, which perpetuate individualising and blaming narratives and obscures structural and social explanations.

The discrepancy between discursive ideologies and the lived realities of participants highlight a ‘policy gap’ (Percy-Smith, 2007) referring to the disconnection between professional and political understandings of young people from low socio-economic backgrounds and how they view their own realities.

4.2 Implications

Below, the implications of the research for policy, clinical psychology and research are discussed.

4.2.1 Policy

4.2.1.1 *Welfare Policy*

The EGYV policy is framed within a criminological perspective, as young people are deemed ‘a risk’ to society and in need of punishment. However, situating

the policy within a 'welfare framework' would conceive young people as 'at risk' instead, and would focus on supplying support and safeguarding, through positive engagement, employment opportunities and attendance to emotional well-being.

4.2.1.2 Participatory Policy Production

The EGYV policy is commended for attending to the social contexts of young people who join gangs and for advocating support for families and young people. However, findings from this study suggest that claims about addressing "*entrenched social failures*" (Home Office, 2011, p.3) are shrouded in problematic ideologies which perpetuate individualising discourse and demonising narratives about young people growing up in deprivation. Furthermore, participants in the study demonstrated an acute awareness of their subjugated position, as well as a socio-political understanding of the mechanisms maintaining their subjugation. Thus, this study advocates an overhaul of the elitist policy making process and calls for authentic participation, whereby young people with experiences of living in deprived areas are included in its production. Lister (2007) cites the overreliance on scientific evidence-base for policy production, and the subsequent disregard of the values and voices of excluded citizens. Furthermore, a central tenet of the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC, 2009) is that young people's views are heard regarding matters that affect their lives. Thus, participatory policy production ensures a 'bottom up' process whereby policy is viewed from the perspective of the excluded (Kabeer, 2005). However, in order to ensure their inclusion avoids tokenism, Beresford and Hoban (2005) suggest capacity building is crucial to empower people to participate. Thus, it is essential that skills training and confidence building is considered part of the process. Through a participatory process, young people's assumed subject positions might shift from dormant criminal and gang member, to empowered citizen and able to positively contribute.

4.2.1.3 Attending to Race

Findings indicate that racial discrimination is a central issue for the participants, as young black men growing up in London. However, the EGYV policy

discursively links 'minority bodies' with criminality. In this way, this research suggests that the policy is underpinned by 'new racism' discourses whereby overt racism is denied, and yet subtle discursive moves emphasise 'differences' and 'deficiencies' of black and ethnic minority people (van Dijk, 2000). Unlike explicit racism, 'new racism' is difficult to challenge as it balances upon seemingly legitimate ideologies (van Dijk, 2000).

Thus, in order for policy to reflect the lived experiences and concerns of those for whom it is written, acknowledging and acting to change the pervasive existence of racial discrimination and its resulting structural barriers for young people is crucial. Jackson (2006) advocates a renewed paradigm of black masculinity which rescripts their positions away from pathological depictions. Jackson's (2006) paradigm focuses on aspects of the black experience as characterised by struggle, community, achievement, independence and recognition. Incorporating these factors into policy that affects young black men affords alternative actions that are oriented around strengths, liberation and recognition of historical social oppression, thus restoring black people as valued citizens who are to be supported by the state, as opposed to being punished.

4.2.2 Clinical Psychology

4.2.2.1 *Community Psychology*

It is widely reported that young people who offend have poor access to mental health services (Campbell & Abbott, 2013). The results of this study indicate that owing to experiences of repeated discrimination, poverty, and structural inequality, many of the participants faced emotionally challenging circumstances without the support of services. Thus, results indicate a role for community psychology. Community psychology advocates co-production of services between professionals and marginalised groups of people and emphasises prevention, collective social action and liberation from social oppression, as opposed to individualised treatments (Nelson & Prillettensky, 2010). Often these ways of working are confined to 3rd sector organisations. However, incorporating these values into NHS services is essential if real social transformation is to occur; for example, practitioners might form working partnerships with local estates, schools or organisations. Through forming working relationships with communities, psychologists can ascertain the issues

that really matter to them. In this way, psychology can remove itself, both metaphorically and literally, from its clinics and reconfigure itself alongside the marginalised.

4.2.2.2 Changing Horizons

As discussed in the analysis, black masculinity has historically been associated with physical strength, owing to long established colonial discourses regarding a history of slavery and manual labour (Jackson, 2000). In this way, black males have been constructed as 'body' as opposed to 'mind', and their abilities in intellectual arenas have been eclipsed by ideologies which privilege black athleticism (Lorenz & Murray, 2010). In this vein, many organisations supporting excluded young people are founded upon creative and sporting principles. For example, the Kicks programme which encourages teenage boys in high crime areas to play football, is cited by the EGYV policy as good practice. However, although well intentioned, such organisations perpetuate notions that professional and educational avenues are not for certain young people. Thus, in keeping with community psychology principles of prevention, this study indicates a role for clinical psychology in working with organisations to foster different horizons for young people, and make available skills and possibilities not solely associated with sport or creativity. For example, clinical psychologists can work with employers to facilitate work experience for excluded young people. Psychologists can support young people during this process, as well as provide consultation with employers regarding assumptions of this group and how to best support them in their roles. There are a few examples of existing projects engaging in such work, i.e. MAC UK is a community psychology organisation engaging excluded young people and training them to become consultants who work with employers to change cultural narratives around this group. Furthermore, such an approach aligns with the government's 'See Potential' campaign which encourages employers to recognise potential within offenders and change the way they recruit (HM Government, 2016).

4.2.2.3 Future Research

This study involved participants who were all young black males from London. Conducting research with young people who identify as gang members across

other cities in the UK, might highlight nuances in experiences. Equally, the EGYV has been updated during the process of this research. A new policy entitled 'Ending Gangs and Exploitation' (Home Office, 2016) was introduced in January 2016, and thus research into the discourses available in this policy would highlight whether the government's constructions of gangs have changed.

Furthermore, in keeping with an emancipatory theme, I suggest that future research with gangs engenders a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. Such an approach resists normative avenues of knowledge production associated with expert-led research, and enables the production of otherwise subjugated knowledge in communities (Baum, MacDougall, Smith, 2006).

4.3 Critical Evaluation

There is ongoing debate around how best to assess the quality of qualitative research (Parker, 2004). For the purpose of this research, I draw on Spencer and Ritchie's (2011) principles of contribution, credibility and rigour, as well as attend to reflexivity.

4.3.1 Contribution

Contribution refers to the applicability of the research to theory, policy or practice, as well as its enhancement of existing understanding of the lives of individuals (Spencer & Ritchie, 2011). The current study provided a unique perspective by explicitly linking policy and lived experiences. While previous studies have analysed both interviews with gang members and policy, to do so simultaneously is novel. As discussed in section '4.2 Implications' the findings yield practical applications for both clinical psychology in practice and policy.

This research makes no claims about external validity beyond the experiences of the participants. However, given that the participants were recruited from different boroughs and that only two knew each other, the overlapping discursive sites indicate that their local experiences may pertain to wider discourses (Sacks, 1992).

4.3.2 Credibility

The credibility of this research is founded upon whether its claims are deemed plausible (Spencer & Ritchie, 2011). Through provision of data extracts alongside links with relevant research, readers are able to ascertain whether analytic claims are warranted and credible. Equally, I presented some data at a DARG workshop, took part in a regular group with other discourse analysts and discussed my analysis in supervision. Through these conversations, I was able to share my interpretations in order for their integrity to be checked, while also generate alternative perspectives and refine my analysis.

4.3.3 Rigour

Rigour is conceptualised as transparency in the research process (Spencer & Ritchie, 2011). Internal coherence has been addressed through presenting the analytic steps in Chapter 2, evidencing analysis with extracts in Chapter 3 and providing an extract of raw data and original discursive sites in appendices N and O. Furthermore, I endeavoured to use extracts from a range of participants' accounts. However, only one extract each is used from interviews with Darrell and Karl. As noted in Table 1 in Chapter 2, the interview with Darrell was particularly short and therefore yielded less data, and because Karl does not identify as a gang member (albeit he considers he is labelled as one) I did not wish to make claims about gang membership with reference to his interview.

Finally, throughout the analysis I considered both the action orientation of the language (Willig, 2008), as well as its relation to broader discourse. By balancing quotations with in-depth analysis I aimed to avoid adding 'no extra value' as well as relying on 'self-evident' quotations, which Antaki *et al.* (2003) cite as possible pitfalls of discourse analysis that is not rigorous.

4.3.4 Reflexivity

4.3.4.1 *Personal Reflexivity*

Reflexivity is crucial in discourse analytic research (Willig, 2008), as it considers the influence of the researcher on the process, including how power imbalances are enacted between researcher and participants.

Race and class appeared to be salient throughout the interviews. As a white, middle class woman interviewing black males from low-socio-economic backgrounds I was aware of how our visible and invisible differences might be impacting the process. Thus, I worked hard at engagement at the beginning of each interview. In this way, I explained my relationship to the topic, including my experience of working in a prison and my concern that young people who are incarcerated are frequently those who face adverse social conditions. I also shared with them that I was struck by conversations I had had with young people while working in the prison and that this had motivated me to conduct the research and to listen to voices of the unheard. By transparently stating my relationship to the topic, I was able to build rapport with participants and position myself as 'on their side'. Furthermore, this personal transparency potentially alleviated assumptions about my position as 'professional' or 'researcher', and hopefully enabled them to be more honest about their views and experiences.

My position as a 'professional' was explicitly oriented to in two interviews ("*she is a qualified psychologist*", Ishaar: 431), and may have been implicit during other times. Equally, my position as 'white' and 'middle class' may have exacerbated power imbalances between myself and the participants. In particular Tyrone commented "*we need people to want to be around us but we can't portray that image, that's why people like you have to portray*" (lines 1174 – 1176). Although it isn't clear which aspect of my identity Tyrone is referring to i.e. people like 'me' might include white, middle-class, psychologists, professionals, women, the inference is that 'people like me' are different to 'people like him' and, furthermore, 'people like him' are unable to convey their message themselves. In this way, some participants appeared to position me as a 'vehicle for change'. This may have influenced how participants relayed their experiences of oppression. However, owing to our explicit differences, I was able to maintain authentic curiosity during the interviews thus alleviating power imbalances by positioning the participants as experts in their own lives and on this topic. Furthermore, this 'not-knowing position' afforded me the ability to comfortably question participants further on certain topics.

Finally, during the analysis stage, I was conscious that my identity as a critical and community psychologist might impact my reading of the policy and

interviews. However, through continued reflexivity with the use of a diary (Appendix Q), attending the DARG group, the use of supervision and being part of an analytic group, I aimed to reduce the impact of my assumptions on the analysis. However, I have also been transparent about my overt political lens applied to this research, in line with CDA's ethos of attending to 'social wrongs' (Fairclough, 1992). In this way and in keeping with a social constructionist position, I am not claiming to be "telling it 'like it is', but rather saying "look at it this way" (Stainton-Rogers, 1991, p.10).

4.3.4.2 *Epistemological and Methodological Reflexivity*

Willig (2013) suggests that reflecting on the epistemological and methodological assumptions of the research enables consideration of the study's limitations, as well as what may have been obscured by employing a certain approach.

Taking a critical realist social constructionist epistemological stance enabled consideration of both the material realities and discursive aspects of gang members' experiences. However, by subscribing in part to a critical realist perspective, I was conscious of reifying the existence of gangs through the use of gang terminology, as well as the implication that 'gang members' are a phenomenon that can be studied. Given that I was endeavouring to critique the gang phenomena, and problematize the continued criminalisation of young people through the term's use, I remained uncertain about whether to use the word at all. I deliberated with the idea of utilising the term 'excluded young people' instead of 'gang member', in the hope that this would reflect my consideration of their marginalised position, and be consistent with the rejection of a reductionist label. However, I felt that this term would be too broad and would not reflect the specific experiences of certain young people I was exploring. Furthermore, the term 'gang' is widely used in media, policy, and the public, as well as by young people themselves and I wanted to reflect this, while also casting a critical lens upon it.

In terms of recruitment, all of the participants consisted of young people who are receiving support from organisations. In this way, the participants were those that felt confident enough to engage in discussion, as well as being embedded within a support network. Therefore, the interviews may not reflect

wider experiences of young people involved in gangs who may be so excluded or socially isolated that they are not engaged with any organisation at all. However, access to this population was difficult (even with the support of charities) and thus recruiting those without any organisational involvement would have been very challenging at the time. Furthermore, participants were all from a similar ethnic background and as a result issues specifically related to the racialisation of gangs may have been more salient for this group. Thus, a more diverse sample might highlight nuances in the experience of young people who identify as gang involved. However, the sample may also be a strength of the study as it allowed for a more in-depth exploration of racial issues than an ethnically diverse sample would have permitted.

During the interviews, I reflected on the how my approach may have impacted the nature of the conversation and possibly closed down other avenues of discussion. For example, I shared extracts of policy with the participants by showing them a document of various quotes from it (Appendix L). As a person in a relatively privileged position, who has completed higher education and for whom literacy is unproblematic, I made assumptions that reading such a document would be a comfortable experience for the participants. The participants reacted differently to the document, with some choosing to read it silently before discussing it with me, others asked me to read it to them, and others did not engage with it at all. Policy documents are not particularly accessible and thus, on reflection, asking the participants to read it in my presence may have been an alienating experience which closed down certain conversations. In this way, had I the opportunity to revisit this particular methodological approach I would find other ways to facilitate discussing the policy which did not require literacy expectations.

With regards to analysis, in the initial stages I struggled to apply discourse analysis' principle of questioning the taken-for-granted aspects of talk to the interview data (Harper, 2006). Given that gang members are amongst the most powerless groups in UK society (Smithson et al., 2013), I felt that deconstructing their language and questioning the assumptions of their positions undermined their experiences and reproduced social power imbalances. Thus, I considered shifting to using interpretative

phenomenological analysis (IPA) which enables exploration of how people make sense of their personal experiences. However, I felt that much of the previous research had interviewed gang members in order to understand their experiences and actions (Densley & Stevens, 2015), and thus I would not be contributing to the literature if I was to generally explore their experiences. The purpose of my study was to explicitly link gang members' experience with political discourse. Thus, a DA methodology was crucial in enabling consideration of power, dominance and oppression. Reflecting on these dilemmas enabled me to continue by taking a broader social perspective and depersonalising the analysis (Harper, 2006).

As I described in section '4.3.4.1 Personal Reflexivity', I worked hard at engaging the participants by being transparent about my interests in the topic and endeavouring to alleviate unhelpful assumptions about me as a 'researcher'. However, at times I reflected on whether I was so concerned about being seen as 'on-side' and building a positive rapport that I prevented more difficult conversations from occurring. Perhaps remaining explicitly neutral would have allowed more exploration of controversial topics, as the importance of building a relationship would not have taken precedence. Nevertheless, without positive rapport and authentic connection, the participants may have felt unable to share as much as they did with me.

4.4 Final Reflections

I set out to do this research with an emancipatory aim; for voices of young people labelled as gang members to be heard. While I make no grand claims about 'liberating' my participants, at the very least I wanted to provide a space in which they could take ownership of constructing their identities and experiences, away from the powerfully pathological constructions of gang members abundant across media, wider society and research.

I had my reservations that I might be simply reifying the gang concept and inadvertently contributing to their continued objectification. Equally, I do not intend to be a "romantically inclined left-liberal", as Pitts (2012, p.32) states, and negate acts of criminality and experiences of individuals who have suffered as a result of them. However, in keeping with a critical realist approach I learnt that,

for young people, the word gang is meaningful, that there are groups with which young people identify and that have participated in illegal activity. However, 'gang' is not 'their word'; they did not ascribe it to themselves, nor did they have control over the negative ascriptions the term now encumbers. The participants reluctantly internalised this label in the face of alternative understandings of themselves being vanquished in an onslaught of negative images, persecutory interactions with authorities and a lack of compassion for their circumstances. As Karl (lines 1409-1410) describes "*with the label thing it's like they keep giving and giving and giving and just end up accepting it.*" Thus, the continued social construction of gangs only serves to dehumanise young people and alienate them from a sense of self as valuable. As such, I advocate the elimination of reductionist labels and towards re-humanising these young people in a way that recognises their unrelenting resilience and creativity in the face of more adversity than most people manage in a life time. Viewing young people in this way broadens otherwise narrow perspectives on 'victims-perpetrators', moves toward acknowledging their position as victims of historical oppression and subsequently calls for social justice, as opposed to criminal justice.

Finally, throughout the process, I was astounded by the participants' complex knowledge, informed opinions and thoughts on society, as well as the eloquent and creative ways in which they expressed themselves. They entirely undermined the stereotypes that position them as 'mindless hoodies' and demonstrated they have something to say that is worth hearing, and I urge that they are listened to. I end with a quote from the end of Tyrone's interview in which he refers to views on 'gang culture' as being unchanging and out of date:

Extract 26.

From: Tyrone: 2507 – 2511.

I can't be the only person going through what I'm goin' through, I can't be the only person who believes what I believe, and I believe someone out there in the other end of this tape is, who's a police officer or something, someone has got to say "Do you know what, that makes sense". Someone's got to say "that makes sense". Not every police officer can turn around and say "he's talking nonsense, gangs are still the same". Trainers have changed, the pavements changed, where we shop has changed, clothes we wear has changed, the music we listen to has changed. Parents have passed away by the time you get to listen to this tape. Life itself has changed. How can gang culture not have changed?

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6 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Literature Review Strategy Description

To conduct the literature review I used several databases including: Academic Search Complete, CINAHL Plus, Psycharticles, Child Development and Adolescent Studies. These databases were sought through EBSCO, an international online database resource. I also used SCOPUS as well as Google Scholar. Through reading articles, I used a snowballing technique whereby I used reference lists to lead me to other relevant papers.

Initially, I maintained a broad focus by using the term 'gangs OR youth crime'. However, this proved too broad as it yielded over 45,000 results in EBSCO. Following this initial search, I conducted subsequent searches limiting the search terms 'gang' and 'gang OR youth crime OR juvenile delinquency' to 'UK', the 'USA', 'qualitative', and 'quantitative' studies respectively. I primarily focussed on the UK and the USA because it was deemed that these geographical locations are most relevant to the current study. Latterly, once I had explored gang research generally, I focussed on the specifics of my research. I conducted searches including the terms 'gangs AND identity', 'gangs AND sense of self', 'gangs AND self-concept' 'juvenile delinquency AND identity', 'identity AND policy', 'policy AND discourse', 'policy AND discursive methodology', 'policy AND discourse AND crime', 'gang AND identity AND policy'. I read abstracts and downloaded and saved full articles which appeared relevant.

Appendix B: Ethics Approval

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

SUPERVISOR: Lara Frumkin

REVIEWER: Elizabeth Attree

STUDENT: Emma Agnew

Title of proposed study: Linking the government to the streets: Exploring the relationship between identity construction and policy for young people involved in gangs.

Course: Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

DECISION (*Delete as necessary*):

***APPROVED**

APPROVED: Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.

APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

Minor amendments required (*for reviewer*):

Major amendments required (*for reviewer*):

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments *(for students):*

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature):* Emma Agnew

Student number: u1331745

Date:

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER *(for reviewer)*

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

HIGH

MEDIUM

LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):

Reviewer *(Typed name to act as signature):*

Elizabeth Attree

Date: 18/05/2015

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (moderator of School ethics approvals)

PLEASE NOTE:

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, travel approval from UEL (not the School of Psychology) must be gained if a researcher intends to travel overseas to collect data, even if this involves the researcher travelling to his/her home country to conduct the research. Application details can be found here: <http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ethics/fieldwork/>

Appendix C: Ethics Amendment Approval for £20 Voucher

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON School of Psychology

REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

FOR BSc, MSc/MA & TAUGHT PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE STUDENTS

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed amendment(s) to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology.

Note that approval must be given for significant change to research procedure that impacts on ethical protocol. If you are not sure about whether your proposed amendment warrants approval consult your supervisor or contact Dr Mark Finn (Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee).

HOW TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT THE REQUEST

1. Complete the request form electronically and accurately.
2. Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
3. When submitting this request form, ensure that all necessary documents are attached (see below).
4. Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to: Dr Mark Finn at m.finn@uel.ac.uk
5. Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with reviewer's response box completed. This will normally be within five days. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your project/dissertation/thesis.
6. Recruitment and data collection are **not** to commence until your proposed amendment has been approved.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

1. A copy of your previously approved ethics application with proposed amendments(s) added as tracked changes.
2. Copies of updated documents that may relate to your proposed amendment(s). For example an updated recruitment notice, updated participant information letter, updated consent form etc.
3. A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.

Name of applicant: Emma Agnew

Programme of study: DClinPsych

Title of research: Linking the government to the streets: Exploring the relationship between identity construction and policy for young people involved in gangs.

Name of supervisor: Lara Frumkin

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed amendment(s) and associated rationale(s) in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
To provide shop vouchers to participants at a value of £20.	Having met with representatives from X charity, which is the establishment from which I hope to recruit, the representative informed me that participants will only be willing to participate if provided with a £20 incentive high street shop voucher. Given the 'hard-to-engage' nature of the population and the time they will be giving up to participate, this feels necessary and ethical to provide.

Please tick	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and agree to them?	X	

Student's signature (please type your name): Emma Agnew

Date: 20/07/2015

TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER		
Amendment(s) approved	YES	
Comments Approved. £20 seems generous and please note that UEL cannot reimburse your spending on participant remuneration. You may want to consider £10 and discuss this with the charity		

Reviewer: M Finn

Date: 23/07/15

Appendix D: Ethics Amendment Approval for Interviews

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON School of Psychology

REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

FOR BSc, MSc/MA & TAUGHT PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE STUDENTS

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed amendment(s) to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology.

Note that approval must be given for significant change to research procedure that impacts on ethical protocol. If you are not sure about whether your proposed amendment warrants approval consult your supervisor or contact Dr Mark Finn (Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee).

HOW TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT THE REQUEST

4. Complete the request form electronically and accurately.
5. Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
6. When submitting this request form, ensure that all necessary documents are attached (see below).
7. Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to: Dr Mark Finn at m.finn@uel.ac.uk
8. Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with reviewer's response box completed. This will normally be within five days. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your project/dissertation/thesis.
9. Recruitment and data collection are **not** to commence until your proposed amendment has been approved.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

1. A copy of your previously approved ethics application with proposed amendments(s) added as tracked changes.
2. Copies of updated documents that may relate to your proposed amendment(s). For example an updated recruitment notice, updated participant information letter, updated consent form etc.

3. A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.

Name of applicant:	Emma Agnew
Programme of study:	Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
Title of research:	Linking the government to the streets: Exploring the Relationship between identity construction and policy for young people involved in gangs.
Name of supervisor:	Lara Frumkin & Neil Rees:

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed amendment(s) and associated rationale(s) in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
To complete interviews with participants in the case that participants don't feel able to engage in a focus group.	The population of "gang members" are a hard to reach population and may experience trust difficulties when meeting with an external researcher. Having spoken with various charities who work with such a population, they have differing opinions as to whether the young people will be able to engage in a focus group. Therefore I hope to be able to be flexible in collecting data either in a Focus Group Format or one to one interview, depending on participant preference.

Please tick	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and agree to them?	X	

Student's signature (please type your name): Emma Agnew

Date: 29/09/2015

TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER	
Amendment(s) approved	YES
Comments	
Thank you Emma. I will pass this on for the records Best wishes, Dr Mark Finn	

Reviewer: Mark Finn

Date: 09 October 2015

Appendix E: Ethics Amendment Approval for Interviewing Under 16 Year Olds

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON School of Psychology

REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

FOR BSc, MSc/MA & TAUGHT PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE STUDENTS

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed amendment(s) to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology.

Note that approval must be given for significant change to research procedure that impacts on ethical protocol. If you are not sure about whether your proposed amendment warrants approval consult your supervisor or contact Dr Mark Finn (Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee).

HOW TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT THE REQUEST

10. Complete the request form electronically and accurately.
11. Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
12. When submitting this request form, ensure that all necessary documents are attached (see below).
13. Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to: Dr Mark Finn at m.finn@uel.ac.uk
14. Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with reviewer's response box completed. This will normally be within five days. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your project/dissertation/thesis.
15. Recruitment and data collection are **not** to commence until your proposed amendment has been approved.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

4. A copy of your previously approved ethics application with proposed amendments(s) added as tracked changes.
5. Copies of updated documents that may relate to your proposed amendment(s). For example an updated recruitment notice, updated participant information letter, updated consent form etc.
6. A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.

Name of applicant:	Emma Agnew
Programme of study:	Clinical Psychology Doctorate
Title of research:	Linking the government to the streets: Exploring the Relationship between identity construction and policy for young people involved in gangs.
Name of supervisor:	Lara Frumkin & Neil Rees

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed amendment(s) and associated rationale(s) in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
To be able to interview people under the age of 16	Having been in contact with some charities who work with young people involved in gangs to recruit, I have found that some of the relevant population are under 16. A particular charity has offered me the opportunity to interview a young person who is 15 years old and has had direct experience of being in gangs. Both the young person and his mentor consent to the interview and I believe he would provide rich and relevant data to my study.

Please tick	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and agree to them?	X	

Student's signature (please type your name): Emma Agnew

Date: 20/07/2015

TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER		
Amendment(s) approved	YES	
<p>Comments</p> <p>Amended Study Information sheets that are suitable for participants aged under 16 have also been viewed by the reviewer. Approval is given upon receipt of written confirmation from the charity stating that they have approved</p>		

the participation of individuals aged under 16. This is particularly important as parental consent is not possible in these circumstances.
Approval is given upon receipt of written confirmation from the charity stating that they have approved the participation of individuals aged under 16. This is particularly important as parental consent is not possible in these circumstances.

Reviewer: Mary Spiller

Date: 5th Feb 2016

Appendix F: Email of Consent for Participant Under 16.

16th March 2016

Letter of Consent by: xxxxx

Interview undertaken by: Emma Agnew

Date of interview: 29th January 2016

The interviewed: xxx (under 16 years)

This is a notification giving the above mentioned, Emma Agnew, permission to use all data and information collected by her for her Psychology Studies at University in an interview she performed with our client, who is under the age of 16 years old.

She has agreed that our clients identity will be used anonymously and all research collected will be held in total confidence and used only for her study purposes.

Consent given by: xxx

Office Manager/ xxx

Appendix G: Title Change

Originally I intended to focus solely on identity construction. However, I broadened my focus to include constructions of experiences too and I changed the title of my research to reflect this.



**APPLICATION TO CHANGE THE REGISTERED TITLE OF A THESIS FOR
A POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMME**
(TO BE COMPLETED BY THE DIRECTOR OF STUDIES AND THE STUDENT)

In completing this form you should refer to the relevant sections of the Research Degree Regulations (Part 9 of the UEL Manual of General Regulations) and the UEL Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes.

This form must be signed and dated in advance of submission to School Research Degrees Sub-Committee (SRDSC).

1. STUDENT'S DETAILS

FULL NAME	Emma Agnew	
UEL STUDENT NUMBER	U1331745	
CURRENT MODE OF STUDY (DELETE AS APPROPRIATE)	FULL-TIME X	PART-TIME
PROGRAMME FOR WHICH YOU ARE CURRENTLY ENROLLED <i>(Please Tick)</i>	MPHIL	
	MPHIL BY PUBLICATION	
	PHD VIA MPHIL	
	PHD DIRECT	
	PHD BY PUBLICATION	
	PROF DOC	X
	PHD (EUR)	
TITLE OF PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE PROGRAMME (IF APPLICABLE)	Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology	

TITLE OF THESIS CURRENTLY REGISTERED	Linking the government to the streets: Exploring the relationship between identity construction and policy for young people involved in gangs.
SCHOOL	Psychology
NAME OF COLLABORATING ESTABLISHMENTS (IF ANY)	

2. PROPOSED CHANGE IN THE TITLE OF THE THESIS

PROPOSED NEW TITLE OF THESIS	Discourse, Policy, and Gangs: An analysis of policy and gang members' talk
REASON(S) FOR THE PROPOSED CHANGE	I am no longer only focussing on identity and would like to broaden the focus of my analysis

3. RECOMMENDATION OF THE SUPERVISORY TEAM

PLEASE NOTE THAT IN SIGNING BELOW THE DIRECTOR OF STUDIES INDICATES THAT THIS IS ON BEHALF OF, AND FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH, THE ENTIRE SUPERVISORY TEAM.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE CHANGE IN THE REGISTERED TITLE OF THE THESIS SHOULD BE APPROVED AS REQUESTED		
DIRECTOR OF STUDIES	SIGNED: NEIL REES	
	PRINTED:	DATE: 05/03/2016

4. STUDENT'S CONFIRMATION

PLEASE NOTE THAT ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE.

HAVING DISCUSSED THE PROPOSED CHANGE OF TITLE WITH MY SUPERVISORY TEAM, I AM SATISFIED WITH THE PROPOSED CHANGE	
STUDENT	SIGNED: EMMA AGNEW
	DATE: 5/03/2016

Appendix H: Participant Information Letter

The Principal Investigator

Emma Agnew

xxx@xxx.com

University of East London

School of Psychology

Stratford Campus

London E15 4LZ

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

This letter is to give you the information that you need to decide if you want to take part in a research study. This study is for my Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology degree at the University of East London.

Project Title

Linking the government to the streets: Exploring the relationship between identity construction and policy for young people involved in gangs.

What's it all about?

The terms 'gang' and 'gang member' have a lot of associations and different meanings for different people. It's hard to pass a day without reading a newspaper article that refers to a 'gang related' crime, so it seems that the associations can often be negative. Not only is the word 'gang' used widely and casually in society, it has also found its way into government documents and policies. There has been lots of research into gangs in America and often the results are used to help make policies for 'gangs' in the UK.

However, it seems that nobody ever asked young people in the UK what it might be like to be referred to as a 'gang member', and what the term actually means to them. This research hopes to hear from young people about their experiences of being associated with gangs and how this has shaped the way they think about themselves and society. I'm also going to be looking at how the government talks about gangs and how this influences the way they treat young people who they think are involved in a gang. I might be asking your opinion on the policies around gangs after I've given you some extracts to read.

Is it private?

I will be running each interview and they will take about an hour. I will record the interview on a digital recorder so I can remember what we talked about. Only I will listen to the recording and I will type it up into a transcript. Any names that are mentioned, including yours, and anything that you say that would mean someone could identify you will be changed in the typed version. This typed transcript may be read by my supervisor at the University of East London. No one else will be able to read the transcript. The audio file and transcript will be saved on a computer that is password protected, to make sure no one else sees or hears them.

After the project is complete, I will delete the audio recordings. The written transcript will be kept as a computer file for three years and might be used to write the research up into an article to be published in a psychology journal. The only time that I would have to share information you tell me, is if you say something that suggests you, or anyone else, is currently in a situation that could be

harmful or illegal. I would have to tell someone else about this. If I was able to, I would try to let you know that I was doing that first.

What do you get out of it?

I hope that by taking part you will feel like you have the chance to share your experiences and thoughts on a topic that is often discussed in newspapers and government. Considering that the government makes policies about 'gangs', I hope you feel that it would be an important topic to have your voice heard. A lot of knowledge about gangs has been transferred from the USA and so, by participating, you would be helping to build knowledge about this area in the UK. You might enjoy the experience and find it interesting as well!

What happens afterward?

After I have written up the project and been examined on it I will feedback the results to you. You might find it interesting to know what was found. However, I also want the research to be more than just a piece of academic work and hope that you can be involved in taking it further. I would love to hear from you about how we can turn the research into a live project that would be relevant and exciting for you. We might want to use the results to try and change something in government, raise awareness or education. If you are interested in taking the research further, then we can decide how we do that afterwards

Are there any risks?

In the interview, topics might be raised that could bring up difficult feelings for you. I will do my best to ensure that you feel supported if this happens. The ways I support you might include; checking in with you after the interview, telling you about services that could support you or thinking about alternative support networks.

Illegal activity might be discussed in the interview. This is not encouraged by the researcher and, as I mentioned before, if there is a current situation in which someone is at risk, I will have to pass this information on to third parties.

Where?

Interviews will take place wherever suits you. It might be easiest to meet at the offices of xxx

Please remember!

You don't have to take part in this study and should not feel that you have to. You are free to pull out right up until I have finished the analysis and you don't have to say why. If you do pull out, your relationship with the charity and the people there won't be affected at all. Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to go ahead you will be asked to sign a consent form before your interview.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor [Dr Lara Frumkin, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. Telephone: xxx or Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Subcommittee: Dr. Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Yours sincerely, Emma Agnew

Appendix I: Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON
Consent to participate in a research study.

Research Title:

Linking the government to the streets: Exploring the relationship between identity construction and policy for young people involved in gangs.

- I have the read the information letter relating to this research study and have a copy to keep. What the research involves and why it is being done have been explained to me, and I have had the chance to talk about it and ask questions. I understand what is going to happen and what I am being asked to do.
- I understand that my involvement in this study, and the things I say in the interview, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher will have access to information that could identify me. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.
- I am happy to agree to participate in the study. Having agreed to do this, I understand that I can pull out of the study at any time without causing any problems and I don't have to say why.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):

.....

Researcher's Signature:

.....

Date:

Appendix J: Accessible Participant Information Sheet For Under 16 Year Olds

LINKING THE GOVERNMENT TO THE STREETS: HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE IN GANGS CONSTRUCT THEIR IDENTITY, ALONGSIDE HOW THEY ARE CONSTRUCTED IN POLICY.

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

- The word 'gang' is used a lot in society
- It is often used in a negative way
- Government policy about "gangs" is often about young people as criminals & in need of punishment
- However, I believe young people are vulnerable and in need of support instead!
- It's important to look at how the government talks about gangs, and how this affects the way young people involved in gangs are treated in society, and how they feel about themselves.



WHAT AM I DOING?

- I want to hear from young people themselves about what the word "gang" or "gang member" means to them
- I will also be looking at the impact of the government policy on real lives.

I NEED YOU!

- One hour interview to talk about your experiences of being in a gang, what it means to you and how it has affected you.
- I might also share with you some of the government policy and ask your thoughts about it.

IS IT PRIVATE?

- I will be recording each interview so I can listen to it again & type it out
- EVERY name & place will be changed so you and others can't be identified
- Only my supervisor and I will see the transcript and hear the audio, I will keep it on a computer that is password protected
- The audio & transcript will be deleted 3 years after.
- If you say something that suggests you, or anyone else, is currently at risk of being harmed. I will have to share this information.
- If I have to do this – I will let you know if I can.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

- Some topic might be raised in the interview that bring up difficult feelings for you, I will do my best to support you.
- Afterwards, I can tell you about ways of getting support if it would be helpful.

- I don't encourage talking about any illegal activity but if you do mention something that suggests you (or anyone else!) is at risk, I might have to pass the information onto someone else.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

- Being part of a different type of research that aims to challenge the status quo
- £20 gift voucher for a shop of your choice!

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

- Not at all! You can pull out at any stage and your relationship with the charity will not be affected in any way.
- If you are happy to take part – I will ask you and your mentor to sign a consent form. As long as you are both happy to take part.

CONTACT ME:

EMMA AGNEW ~ XXX@XXX.COM

Appendix K: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

As the interviews will be utilising a semi-structured schedule, the following provides a guide to the areas to be covered in the interview. The precise way in which the interview unfolds will be influenced by the participants' responses.

Introductions and engagement

Introduce self and thank participant for attending. Re-iterate consent, confidentiality and that participants may withdraw at any time. Provide a brief explanation of the research study, for example:

“As you have read in the information I've given to you, today's interview is about hearing from you about your experiences of being in a gang, what being in a gang means to you and how it might have impacted the way you see yourself and perceive others to see you too. We will also talk a little bit about what the government says about gangs in its policy and I would be interested in hearing how you make sense of that.”

1. What does the word “gang” mean to you?
2. How and when did you become involved in gang activity? What was it that lead you to become involved?
3. How have your experiences of being in a gang shaped the way you think about or describe yourself?
4. How do you think being in a gang has shaped how other people see you?
5. Does being a gang member make you different from people your age who aren't gang members? If so, how?
6. How has being in a gang impacted your life positively? How has it impacted your life negatively?
7. How does it feel to be involved in a gang? Has it changed you in any way from before you were involved?
8. Has being in a gang influenced your ideas about your future?
9. Does being in a gang mean you are treated any different by your friends, family, teachers, police? If so, how and why do you think that is?

After showing the participants extracts of policy:

10. What does it feel like to read this? How do you make sense of it?
11. In what way does this policy relate/not relate to your life?
12. What do you think the consequences / impact of this policy might be on your life? In what way might it have helpful / unhelpful consequences?
13. If a member of the parliament was sat here right now and is involved in making this policy – what would you say to them about what you've read? Would you make any changes?
14. Is there anything else you want to share about your experiences of being in a gang and what it means to you?

Debriefing: How do you feel about the discussion we have had? Was there anything that troubled you about the interview? Do you have any questions? You can contact me if you have any questions and here are some contact details for support organisations if you feel you'd like to talk to someone later on.

Possible Prompts: Please, tell me more. What do you mean? What was that like for you? How does that make you feel? How do you think about that? Can you give me an example?

Appendix L: Extracts from Policy Shared In Interview

ENDING GANG AND YOUTH VIOLENCE A government report

GANGS – Where do they come from according to the government?

→ “Gangs and serious youth violence are the product of the high levels of social breakdown and disadvantage found in the communities in which they thrive, but they are also a key driver of that breakdown. Gangs create a culture of violence and criminality that prevents the very things that can help transform those communities; community mobilisation and economic enterprise are near impossible in neighbourhoods gripped by fear.”

→ “The factors lying behind these stories...The same themes recur time and again:

- early childhood neglect and abuse.
- ill health in the family, including mental ill health;
- parental violence and drug addiction;
- school exclusion and early conduct disorders;
- violent victimisation and repeated hospital visits;
- early involvement in local gangs; and
- early and repeat offending, inadequately punished or prevented.

→ “Harsh, negative or inconsistent discipline, lack of emotional warmth and parental conflict all increase the risk that children will develop emotional and behavioural problems that can lead to anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and crime. There is a four to five-fold increased risk of conduct disorder in childhood if a child experiences poor parenting skills.”

WHAT ARE THE WAYS OUT OF A GANG?

School:

→ “Toughening the current fines system to discourage parents from refusing to engage with schools in addressing their children’s poor attendance or condoning their truancy.”

→ “Trial a new approach to permanent exclusions which gives schools the responsibility to secure suitable alternative provision for excluded pupils, as well as accountability for those pupils’ outcomes.”

Family:

→ “Attempting to reform a gang member without also working with his broader family too may be setting him up to fail. There is an increasing recognition that intensive, sustained interventions that work simultaneously with the whole family are what is needed to turn around the most problematic families.”

→ “Intensive Family Interventions work with the most challenging families tackling issues such as anti-social behaviour, youth crime, inter-generational disadvantage and worklessness in families by using a multi-agency approach with an ‘assertive and persistent’ style. The Government estimate that the cost

of troubled families to the public is around £8 billion a year..... Parents receive support to help them influence their children to leave their gang or not to get involved in the first place, while younger siblings are also supported and diverted away from gang culture.”

Employment:

→ “We are expanding the number of apprenticeships for young vulnerable people by 40,000 while the new 16-19 bursary will provide a guaranteed £1,200 to support the most vulnerable young people.

→ “The introduction of Universal Credit aims to ensure that people are better off in work, even in low-paying jobs”

→”Jobcentre Plus are increasingly co-locating with voluntary and charitable organisationsto improve young people’s access to broader support and to contribute to community life through volunteering.”

ENFORCEMENT

→ “Those who choose not to engage are informed that police will then actively enforce any legislation or agency to apply pressure on them and their family to behave.”

→ “Every day Operation Target reviews reports of violent incidents across London, including gang violence, and decides where and how to target additional enforcement and suppression effort – including covert tactics and extra visible patrol in hotspot areas and stop and search operations against weapons carrying.”

Weapon laws:

→ “Alongside the offer of intensive support and routes out of a violent lifestyle, police and councils will need tough enforcement strategies to suppress gang and youth violence and legal powers to tackle weapons carrying and anti-social behaviour and to keep rival gangs apart. The Government will support the police and other local agencies to target and enforce the law relentlessly against those who control and direct gangs or continue to harm the public.”

→ “for those offenders who do get custody for carrying a knife or other offensive weapon the average sentence length for immediate custodial sentences has increased...Our position is clear – any adult who commits a crime using a gun or a knife can expect to be sent to prison and serious offenders can expect a long sentence.”

Gang Injunctions

→ “Gang injunctions... restrictions not to go into a specific area and not to associate with named persons”

→ “Gang injunctions...enable the police to impose a range of prohibitions and requirements on suspected gang members to stop them getting involved in further violence. Gang injunctions for 14 to 17 year olds as a way of engaging them in positive activities to prevent them becoming further involved in gang violence”.

Joint Enterprise

→ “Joint enterprise enables police and prosecutors successfully to bring to justice all those involved in gang-related violent incidents, and long prison sentences have commonly followed. We will publicise the use of joint enterprise to bring home to young people the potentially severe consequences to them of associating with gang members, even if only on the periphery”

COMBINATION OF SUPPORT & PUNISHMENT

→ “The combination of tough enforcement and surveillance and a joined up positive offer of training, employment support and drugs treatment might have given him a route out. If he and his family had been moved out of their gang-riddled estate to a completely new area it might have been enough to break the hold that his lifestyle had on him”

→ “Gang Action Groups: The group will consider suggestions to prevent offending or to keep them safe (e.g. rehousing, different school, family intervention) and positive alternatives to their gang lifestyle (e.g. training, employment, anger management, mentoring). The key rationale is to identify a ‘hook’ that can be used to get their attention and extract them from their lifestyle”.

→ In Liverpool, “gang nominals are served a notice explaining that they will be subject to a partnership enforcement approach, targeting them and their associates, for all types of crime they commit. They are given bronze, silver or gold status, based on intelligence and are re-assessed daily. They receive daily visits to their home address when at Gold status, three visits per week at Silver and one visit per week and at Bronze. A consistent message is given that they are receiving this police and partner attention because they are linked to guns and gangs. They are also encouraged to engage with partner agencies who can offer them education, training and employment as a route out of crime.”

Appendix M: Transcription Conventions

(.)	Indicate a pause of less than 1 second
(.x)	Indicate a pause of more than 1 second, with x replaced with the number of seconds e.g. 3 seconds as (.3)
[...]	Indicates part of the transcription has been omitted
hhh	Laughter
{BR}	Intake of breath
::	Emphasis and/or extending of letter sound e.g. yes:::
-	Indicates a breakoff of utterance e.g. th-
(())	Inaudible speech
xxx	Replaces any place name to preserve anonymity
mhm/mmm	Sounds transcribed phonetically
[]	Overlap in speech between interviewer and participants. Words within the square brackets denote where the overlap begins and ends. i.e. Interviewer: Where are [you going?] Participant: [I am going] to the shops.

Appendix N: Extracts Of Raw Data

Raw Data Example 1: Akeem

Foucault / Discipline of the black body
 Body is site of control
 Clothes + strength reduced to these things
 Interview 1: Akeem
 80 AKEEM: There's a, th-, there's always race on race crime, but to us
 81 it was just, you know, you couldn't walk in a big group, specially, it
 82 doesn't even matter if you've got like two, three, four white people in
 83 a group, it still doesn't matter. {BR} the major- if the majority is full
 84 of black males we're getting stopped (.) 100 per cent and we've seen
 85 it, I've seen it from my own eyes (.) There was a time when country
 86 show was going on-
 87 THE INTERVIEWER: Hmmm
 88 AKEEM: -and there's like seven, like, white males, hoody each you
 89 know, skinny jeans, just there to have a good time. We're doing
 90 exactly the same. I don't wear baggy jeans as well, I've got straight
 91 jeans on as well, but that don't change nothing. We're still getting
 92 stopped, police will walk around and stay around us. There's been
 93 times when, I've got a lot of white friends (.) they wear exactly the
 94 same as me (.) they've probably got something on them and they can
 95 walk freely past the police, but when there's me I've gotta walk all the
 96 way around because I know I'm going to get stopped.
 97 INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.
 98 AKEEM: So, that's what I mean by stereotype. There's a lot-like
 99 aggression is measurable & taken for granted society (.) show (.) black males to being the aggressive males out of
 100 all races ((2)) which may be true but it might not as well because at the
 101 end of the day you can't tell a book by its cover, you actually have to
 102 know that person, but also cliché - shared knowledge & well known phrase
 103 INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.
 104 AKEEM: I've got a lot of white friends that are stronger than me.
 105 that's more aggressive than me but it's like they don't see that, so that's
 106 what I mean by stereotype.

the commiserational? inevitability
 social practice: can't walk in big grp - black / clothing
 3 part list
 white I moderate opposing people vs males.
 no mental of police - remove perpetrator. Black male +
 image of physical / dangerous extreme care
 personal account, cannot dispute consensus.
 Embodiment: black / clothing
 Bep othered.
 people vs males.
 Black male +
 extreme care
 consensus.
 stereotyping orquip
 only possibility
 pos he as harmless, see Jackson
 then mimicked by black
 Embodiment:
 black / clothing
 existing stereotype
 demashtp that
 he is not fulfill
 stereotype
 I'm not Bep bias
 to race good enough
 whether has
 something or not
 (vague) he's
 get up stopped.
 Black males
 = aggressive.
 State inaudition
 consensus?
 interredred gen
 it's true
 Black males
 aggressive
 Presupposition
 relation to stereotype, that he is aggressive.

if he don't +
 enables social
 practice of
 bep stopped
 by police
 technology of
 self:
 body be regulated
 to fit in w/
 the norm,
 *
 this is racism,
 it's not
 about jeans
 - Black male
 - clothes
 Black =
 dangerous
 biological
 discourse
 race can be
 linked to
 aggression
 privileged
 discourse of
 individual
 disc - race
 resist stereotype

State inaudition - ?
 if he can be dispassioned then he seems more reasonable

Raw Data Example 2: Ishaar

NB. sp = subject position

Interview 3: Ishaar

prison metaphor - life?

operate beh across others *compare*

243 how it goes down, but when you are so locked in, you would have

244 no-one to talk to because you wouldn't be able to talk to your peers,

245 or anybody, you don't have no-one to talk to, you wouldn't-

246 especially if you are a man *hegemonic masc* *masculine discourse*

247 INTERVIEWER: Right.

248 ISHAAR: Yea and most people who are getting treated for um (.)

249 most people who die from suicide (.) are men, it's it's it's

250 established, but then again most people who get treated for it are

251 women, ~~but~~ the men go untreated and they wouldn't know how to,

252 they wouldn't seek that treatment or so yea at that time *when you're in a gang*

253 have no-one to speak to, there's simply no-one there, you feel like -

254 where do I go, where do I go. Just one conversation with a young

255 child can have a big impact on his life and you wouldn't even know

256 the big changes that you've done, cos I know, if someone had done

257 that for me I went to see my Probation Officer and I sat in the room

258 for an hour, so much stuff that I had to say and I felt better just to

259 have someone there to listen to and they don't really know you

260 because you have been involved in that so, so long, you have been in

261 that lifestyle. The first day I went into prison and they locked the

262 door I had the best night's sleep ever, you know what I mean, so

263 when you're kind of involved in that whole lifestyle and there's no-

264 one there to talk to (.) you are out there in a gang, there's not that

265 facade where you have to put on a hard or anything but (.) you just

266 have no-one to talk to and that's what the young people would be

267 going through, someone that they would feel comfortable.

268 (0.2) *as if it's a*
have to subscribe to heg fact
that
Wosc ever make so as a gang there
member.
is literally no one to
talk to
normalised
sense of not being able to share emotions

out there
Not + suicide
Haip nobody to talk to
sp: mentor.
Speak to someone about problems
Importance of talk?
new discourse:
sp: gap members as emotional
as a g. member/under same person as males, he is
No one to talk to
therapeutic treatment becomes available
positioning himself as a male first as
separate to
identity as
gang member

big male
heg masc
Gap members as big emo but not able to speak to job
sp: a male
Common practices of big a man
not being able to express emotion
acknowledging impact of heg masc on notes implicitly grouping himself w/ the norm
exposing heg masc & unwittingly conforming to a standard/norm
which doesn't recognise intersection of race/class.

emphatic repetition
active agent
active case
common male experience
disclaim heg masc

Appendix O: Audit Trail: Stages Of Analysis For Interviews

Stage 1: Original Codes and Initial Discursive Sites

Table 3 details the original codes identified across the interviews, which then formed initial discursive sites. Subsequently, the initial discursive sites were condensed into 4 discursive sites for the report, which is detailed in Table 4. For initial and condensed discursive sites of the policy see Stage 2, Table 5 over leaf.

Table 3. Interviews: Original codes condensed into initial discursive sites:

Original Codes	Initial Discursive Sites
Being unintelligent / intelligent	Education & Intelligence
Experiences at School	
Black people as physical / athletic	Black Masculinity
Masculinity	
Estates causing gangs / Feeling trapped in estates	Gang membership as inevitable
Gang membership is inevitable	
Individual responsibility to break out / self-blame	Individual / Family blame
Individual choice to be a criminal	
Parent / Family responsibility	
Gang members as inherently bad	
Labelled: problematized identity	Being labelled: problematized & power
Power of Label	
Race	Race & Racism
Internalised discourse around black males as dangerous	
Resistance: Being wise / mentor / personal journey	Resistance –wise / thoughtful / emotional
Resistance: Gang members as thoughtful /emotional	
Resisting dominant discourse	
Trying to be 'normal'	Technologies of the self: changing clothes, being normal & self-improvement
Changing clothes / image	
Neoliberal discourse of self-improvement	
Feeling surveilled by the system	Being persecuted by the state, government responsible for gangs (is this resistance?)
Persecuted & Victimised by the system / government	
The government: as responsible for gangs	

Stage 2 overleaf.

Stage 2. Condensing Initial Discursive Sites into Reported Discursive sites

Table 4. Interviews: Initial discursive sites condensed for report

Initial Discursive Sites	Discursive Sites in Report
Race & Racism	Experiences of Racism - Being Persecuted (Technology of power) - Avoiding Persecution (Technology of Self) - Resistance: Being kind (resisting discourse about black masculinity)
Being persecuted by the state, under surveillance,	
Technologies of the self: changing clothes, being normal & self-improvement.	
Black Masculinity	
Resistance –wise / thoughtful / emotional	
Gang membership as inevitable:	The inevitability of gang membership
Being labelled: power	- A matter of time / circumstances - The power of the label
Being labelled: problematized	Problematized Identities - Being othered - Being demonised - Resistance: Being wise/intelligent as a result of experiences in gang
Resistance –wise / thoughtful / emotional	
Education & Intelligence	
Individual / Family blame	Individual & Family Blame - Resistance: Government’s responsibility
Government responsible for gangs	

Table 5. Policy: Initial discursive sites condensed for report

Original Discursive Sites	Discursive Sites in Report
Race	The racialization of gangs - Ethnicity and gangs - The racialised other
Gang as ‘other’: immigrants	
Gang members as dangerous: moral panic	The demonization of gangs
Victim – Perpetrator	
Personal responsibility: active choice	
Gangs impacting communities	
Violence as inevitable: poverty / estates	The inevitability of gangs - Social circumstances - Psychological explanations
Pathological discourse – biomedical, diagnostic	
Family blame	Gangs: The product of ‘troubled families’
Financial & social cost of gangs	

Appendix P: Extract From Reflexive Diary

After Interview. October 2015

My participant was two hours late for the interview. The logistics of recruitment are difficult as I spend hours waiting for people to show up, sometimes they do, albeit late, and sometimes they don't at all. Each interview takes a day. It's making the process harder, but I need to remind myself that this is why it's important to persevere because the voices of these young people aren't heard often, and it's precisely because they don't fit into usual models of recruitment that probably means many researchers don't have the time or resources to try. (Most of them have rolled cigarettes on the information sheet, instead of reading it!) The waiting around hasn't proved fruitless though. I had a really interesting conversation with xxx, the support worker, today while I waited. He told me he used to be involved in gangs before became "legit" and got a job in an office, and then his role as a support worker. He spoke a lot about feeling as if he has been racially discriminated against, and what it's like to be the "only black man in the office", but he also kept saying that it's only people like 'me' that can help the situation and referred to "black people being students" and "white people" as being "the teachers" from who they can learn. I realise that I'm being perceived as someone who's powerful, perhaps because I'm a white 'professional', and who might be able to affect change with my research. After the interviews some of the participants have also alluded to feeling that because I am 'powerful' I can help them. It's important that I am aware of being positioned in this way during the interviews, as not only will it affect what the young people say to me, but it also maintains power imbalances and racial inequality. I have really been shocked at how discourses around inferiority is so alive for this group and I feel very uncomfortable that I might be seen as superior because of it. It seems as if there are expectations that my research is going to make big changes. I worry that I won't do it justice, or that my academic exercise won't translate into something useful for them. I'll have to make sure I return to try and bring the work to life for the people I'm meeting.