'On road' Culture in Context:
Masculinities, religion, and 'trapping'
in inner city London

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Ebony Reid

Department of Clinical Sciences

Brunel University

17 January 2017

Abstract

The gang has been a focal concern in UK media, political discourse, policy, and policing interventions in the last decade, occupying the position of contemporary 'folk devil'. Despite the heightened attention on urban 'gang culture', sociological research on gangs in the UK is limited. However, some sociologists do stress a deterministic relationship between gangs and black urban youth, rendering urban men a source of fascination and repulsion, easy scapegoats in explaining street violence. Arguably, current work that privileges the idea of gang membership misunderstands much about the lives of some men involved. This thesis contributes to correcting that misunderstanding.

The study adopts a social constructionist perspective in understanding the (multiple) ways urban men in an inner city area of London construct their lives when immersed in what they refer to as being 'on road', a symbolic space in which everyday lives are played out. As a broadly ethnographic study, the data for the thesis were generated using participant observation and semi-structured interviews with a range of participants, including young and adult men.

The study identifies three distinct ways in which some men become *trapped* in difficult experiences and identities 'on road'. It focuses on the implications of the notion of 'trappedness' on their experiences in public space, employment opportunities and, self- identity. The 'on road' lives of the men in the study represent a paradox: the road appears to offer opportunity to build masculine identity but entangles them further in a trap, restricting freedom and stunting personal growth.

This study has significance for sociological theory. Theoretically, the idea of being 'on road' can be understood as a discourse that persists in the language and symbolism that flows through these men's experiences and narratives. As such the idea of 'onroadness' powerfully shapes all aspects of their lives. It is argued that more focus is needed on the psychosocial factors that force some men into volatile social worlds, and the personal contexts that frame local narratives of 'on road' culture, especially within wider experiences of friendship, faith, and identity. The thesis suggests that this form of analysis offers a critical explanatory framework within which it is possible to understand the lives of some of the young and adult men in certain inner city areas in the UK.

Contents

Glossary

Ackee- refers to a former road man who has converted to Islam

Baby mother- the mandem use the term to describe the mother of their child

Bad up- to treat someone in a disrespectful manner. It also refers to being victimised or victimising others

Bait- being too obvious

Boy dem- the police

Bruk- refers to having no money

Bussing a skank- to dance

Fuckery- the mandem often used this term to describe criminal activity or violence

Garms- clothing

Grind- refers to working hard in the illegal drug economy

Gwarning with tings- doing well on road

Head back lick off- shot in the head

Hype- exaggerated/over the top behaviour

Nuff- a lot

Prick- dick head/idiot

Stunting/Stunter- to show off, a person who shows off

Take set on you- refers to being targeted and, potentially victimised by rivals from neighbouring estates

Wasteman- useless, poor, unsuccessful

Warring- to fight, ongoing conflict

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

Undertaking this PhD has been a long, challenging, but life-changing journey, and its completion would not have been possible without the support and contribution of many special people.

First and foremost I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the 'mandem'. Tremendous thanks to you all for your willingness to share your stories, insights, experiences, but above all your pain. I know it was not easy letting me into the more 'darker' parts of your thoughts and lives, so thank you for trusting me; I hope I have provided an accurate portrayal of your lives on road. My deepest gratitude goes to you all, because without you I would never have been able to conduct this study.

A special thanks to my supervisors; Simon Bradford, Fiona Cullen and Pam Alldred who have offered constant encouragement over the last few years patiently guiding me through the PhD process. Simon, I made it to the end and I cannot thank you enough for all your support, advice and, critical input; I learnt so much from working with you.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my beautiful mentor and friend Tara Young, who never allowed me to be doubtful and whose endless belief in me inspired me to keep writing and pushing through some very stressful moments.Thank you for all you do for me and for sharing your wisdom, warm encouragement, professionalism and, strength. I hope you know how much I appreciate you; I really couldn't have completed this thesis without you.

To my family, who over the years have provided endless support, my sincere appreciation and, thanks. I am extremely grateful for your patience with me throughout my PhD journey, you have always been there for me, and I love you all very much. Thanks to my sister, Kizzy who has acted as a listening ear and a source of comfort at every turn. Finally, to my amazing little brother Jay, you are my inspiration; I dedicate this thesis to you.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Research context

In recent years, public and political discourse has been focused on young urban masculinities and criminality in the form of the urban gang (Clements and Roberts, 2007; Pitts, 2008; Toy, 2008; Centre for Social Justice, 2009 and Harding, 2012). The gun and knife murders predominately involving young men in London over the seven years preceding the Citizens Report (2013) has been linked to a new 'gang culture'. This 'gang culture' is viewed as a catalyst for violent crime including knife, gun crime, robbery and more recently, sexual violence, which Firmin (2010) argues is now intrinsically linked to this 'bourgeoning' phenomenon. Further to this, what is at the heart of gang discourse is the notion that Britain is witnessing an increase in 'gangland' criminality similar to that of the USA. The contemporary view of gangs in the UK is a unique and dangerous phenomenon emerging from what British writer John Pitts (2008) argues is a principally violent, criminal and organised, youth subculture. According to Pitts, gangs are responsible for the multiple fatalities and disintegration in urban areas and credited as the 'new face of youth crime'. Pitts (2008) and Harding (2012) have argued that Britain is home to violent and organised super-gangs. Others, meanwhile, have suggested that there is insufficient evidence to support the sensationalist gang culture ideology and, no clear consensus on what constitutes a gang (Alexander, 2008; Hallsworth and Young, 2008). At the heart of this discourse, encouraged by the media and some gang experts, is the archetypal black male gangster who resides in the inner-city neighbourhood. This image not only pathologises black men but also, as I will show, creates widespread societal panic and controversy about which groups in society should be, regarded as criminals. As a result, the term 'gang' has become a euphemism for black-on-black violence and the vehicle through which black youth are demonised, rendering the gang a source of fascination and repulsion and a convenient scapegoat for explaining violence in a street context. To add to this, the dearth of in-depth ethnographic accounts that explore the existential experiences of urban men creates a knowledge gap on how to understand

the texture of relationships that operates in an urban context. The key objective of the thesis was to understand the everyday challenges, organisation, social and cultural traditions that constitute 'on road' culture (a discourse that persists in the language and symbolism that flows through urban males' experiences/narratives). In doing so, my study illustrates how 'on road' culture extends far beyond gangs or gang membership, to encompass larger understandings of the meanings urban men on road ascribe to their problematic transitions to adulthood in the face of entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage.

At this point, it is essential to explain what is meant by the term on road/road culture. Life on road/road culture is a relatively new concept in the UK employed to conceptualised violence in an urban context. As such, only a couple of scholars (Gunter, 2008 and Hallsworth and Young, 2011) have spoken about it. As a result, the idea of an on road culture is in its infancy. At its basic level, the term 'road' is often referred to as a physical space, a social setting (often an urban neighbourhood) characterised by a distinctive 'hood mentality' (Hallsworth and Young, 2011). Similarly, to Hallsworth and Young (2011), life on road/road culture as conceived here is also characterised by a hood mentality. However, and by extension it can also be conceptualised as an alternative space that is distinguished by distinct (road) practices and norms, shared language, beliefs and values whereby urban men adopt a particular ideology and way of looking at the world. This ideology is grounded in a survivalist attitude to the adversity they face in their lives, where urban men embrace temporary and precarious opportunities on road to construct a viable male identity. In this respect, I argue that road culture can be defined as an appealing, but fragile way of life for those who pass through it and is defined essentially by a period of vulnerability. It is an influential culture that is present in the mind, social surroundings and, practices of those young and adult on road in the local community. While Gunter's (2008) and Hallsworth and Young's (2011) theorisations of life on road/road culture are very helpful in moving away from gang discourse they both prescribe one pattern or indeed one way of living, life on road. What these writers' work does not highlight is the multiple road cultures that emerge in an urban context, but

specifically Northville. By identifying multiplicity, I draw attention to the different transitions on road and the types of social processes that mark these transitions. The focus of the research is therefore on road culture (not gangs) and explores the meaning and significance to those involved. It considers whether road culture offers an alternative way of understanding street based violence.

Within criminological study, two opposing strands of UK gang research have emerged: the 'believers' (gang talkers) and the 'sceptics' (non-gang talkers). The 'believers', for example, Pitts (2008), Centre for Social Justice (2009) and, Harding (2012) over-emphasise the dangerous and pathological tendencies of the gang-involved young person, while the 'sceptics' (Alexander, 2008; Aldridge et al, 2008; Hallsworth and Young, 2008; Fraser, 2010, 2013) suggest that the gang is a poorly defined and problematic concept. In the midst of these debates, dominant narratives are sustained about the radicalised urban gang and gang member. Such discourses are reminiscent of Stuart Hall's 1970s critique of the 'black mugger' and underline fears emanating from stereotypes associated with race, gender and class, highlighting the persistent legacy of the 'black folk devil' (Hall et al, 1978). We have therefore seen in more contemporary times the departure of the black mugger and the arrival of the black gang member who is to blame for current urban troubles, that are, in turn, sensationalised by the media.

In contemporary debates on gangs and youth violence, a pathologising undertone points to the problems inherent in the black community and, by extension, black culture. As Joseph and Gunter (2011) show, Right-wing media have focused on linking gangs to 'dangerous black' youth whereas several scholars have drawn attention to this racialised public and political discourse. For example, Hallsworth and Brotherton (2011) responded to negative coverage of the 2011 London riots and argued that black boys have become scapegoats for wider social issues, which has obscured society's failure to address the real issues and conditions that breed crime and violence. In the 1970s, black men faced high levels of unemployment in the face of the global oil crisis and recession, which led to the loss of many blue-collar jobs especially. Hence, some working-class black men entered

alternative careers in the face of challenging economic conditions. This period marked the beginning of economic decline, but specifically, what Solomos (1988) identifies as damaging racist ideologies of black youth as an 'enemy within' or 'social time-bomb', which have in turn shaped representations of black men in the present period. There is, however, an argument about how useful it is to project the gang through notions of race alone. That is, while there is a racialised gang imagery that frames some elements of pop culture, like hip hop music, which has in part reflected the realities of black youth urban experience in some poor areas of the USA (The Crips/Bloods and Latin Kings, for example, have explicitly racialised identities). The racialisation of black youth, however, not only ignores 'whiteness' and gang culture (see Deuchar, 2009) but also diverts attention from the entrenched social issues that prevail in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. The thesis contributes to a body of work that moves beyond the narrow focus on gangs (see Alexander, 2008; Aldridge and Medina, 2008; Hallsworth and Young, 2005; Fraser, 2010; 2013; Ilan, 2015) providing, instead, a nuanced approach to understanding street-based violence. In this respect, it seeks a more balanced account of life in the inner city for young men: one that recognises the complexity of their lives without pathologising or sensationalising their narratives and undoing the over-racialisation of the phenomenon of street violence. Ethnographic accounts such as this subverts outsider perspectives' that are, contaminated, by contemporary 'gang talk'.

Given the racialised assumptions within dominant discourse of gangs in the UK and USA, my examination of road culture found that street based violence transcended across all ages and races and, was driven by a class and cultural dynamic, as opposed to the underlying racial and cultural dimension permeating gang discourse. I found not only black men in the community, but instead, the men on road represented in this thesis reflected the demographics of the neighbourhood as a whole: they included Afro-Caribbean, African, White, Somalian, and Mixed-race men. I draw attention to race, acknowledging not only the racial construction of the gang, but also the intersection between race, class and, gender in explaining young people's involvement with street-based groups and violent behaviour. I adopt

an oppositional position to 'gang talk', one akin and sympathetic to the 'sceptics'. The thesis endeavours to move beyond commentators that draw on gang discourse and their emphasis on race and the gang, through analysis of urban males' lived experiences in the broader context of gender, the male peer group, class, work and, religion.

From reviewing the literature, it became apparent that there is the relative absence of UK based research that focuses principally on life on road/road culture. With the exception of Pryce (1986) and later Ilan (2007; 2015) whose work can be seen as attempts to explore a kind of road culture, UK enquiries into urban men's lived realities are limited, especially in comparison to the American gang research tradition in sociology (see Anderson, 1995; Bourgois, 1995, 2003; Jankowski, 1991; Mullins, 2006; Vankatesh, 2008). Here in the UK however, the focus tends to be on gangs and what Hallsworth (2013: 9) argues are narrow paradigms that attempt to '...corporatise the world of the urban street gang by ascribing to them pyramid structures, elaborate divisions of labour, cybernetic command structures and clear and distinct borders'. Further to this, the life that exists outside gang discourse is overshadowed by administrative criminology (see in particular Klein's work on the Eurogang, 2001), action and evaluative research and their emphasis on gang structure, organisation and the offending behaviour of gang members.This involves a categorisation process that dehumanises and objectifies the often diverse and challenging lifeworlds of urban men. As the 'sceptics' who seek interpretive sociological perspectives on the complexity of city life, I focus in particular on the ways in which life on road, rather than gangs, impact on urban men, their social relationships, experiences of space and place, opportunities in the labour market, and broader dimensions of self-identity.

This method for understanding life on road is informed by a blended theoretical approach that locates road culture as a gendered, class and generational social phenomenon, whilst recognising the interplay between structure and agency as a catalyst for its development. In this way, it situates urban males' practices and norms in the context of poverty, early embedded (negative) childhood experiences and the discontinuity between cultural goals and the

legitimate means available for reaching them (Merton, 1938). The approach moves beyond subcultural traditions and draws on Turner's (1967) theoretical concept of 'liminality' to analyse the significance of transition and liminal spaces in the lives of those on road. For example, this thesis explores how the 'betwixt and between' period between youth and adulthood plays out physically, socially, and mentally for young and adult men in Northville, situating their experiences in the broader context of psychosocial and cultural dynamics. I argue that in order to interpret the complexity of street-based violence, one must move away from the many myths and misconceptions underpinning 'gang talk' within broader theory, policy and practice debates, and towards understanding the lived experiences of urban men and the socio-structural factors that force them into volatile street worlds.

1.2 Moving beyond the gang: 'on road' culture in this study

Since the series of gun-related murders in 1999, considerable attention has been paid to an outer London neighbourhood, which this thesis shall refer to as Northville, and which at the time, was coined a hotspot area for violent crime (Hales and Silverstone, 2004). Northville's council-owned and managed housing development scheme is synonymous with drugs, high crime rates, unemployment and economic decline, it has transformed dramatically over the past 20 years, particularly in relation to a regeneration pledge that aimed to change the face of the neighbourhood. The Single Regeneration Budget, a government-funded initiative designed to pump money into urban neighbourhoods to tackle deprivation (Duncan and Thomas, 2000) was set up in the late 1990s against the backdrop of representations of a 'troubled' and 'dangerous 'neighbourhood. It was pioneered to resolve Northville's economic and social problems. Today, on a visual level, little in the public space reflects the rough image of Northville's past landscape. However, in spite of improvements to housing and local job opportunities, there remain a significant number of poor and isolated young and adult men in poverty, social decay and immersed in street violence as either victim or perpetrator.

My interest in Northville began some years ago when I undertook research for a MA dissertation that explored black youth, gangs, and gun crime in this area. The study drew attention to the diverse and complex motivations for firearm use in urban communities of social and economic decay. At the time of carrying out the research, I was very interested in how young men in the community in which I had grown up, that suffered high rates of crime and unemployment, navigated their way through life. I also wanted to gain insight into how these young men were impacted by gun crime or gun culture. The data for my MA rested on testimonies from members of two rival 'gangs'. Emerging from this earlier work, I wished to explore gang culture in greater depth. However, from reading the literature, particularly the work of Gunter (2008) and Hallsworth and Young (2011) who employ an alternative framework to that of 'gang talk' to understand street-based violence, I began to suspect that the gang label could not accurately describe what was taking place within my community. I started to think about the social patterns in the practices of some of the male population in Northville that pointed to a distinct way of viewing or being in the world. It was through my background experience of growing up in this outer London borough that I became aware of life on road and road culture (illustrated in the work of Gunter, 2008 and Hallsworth and Young, 2011) as an object of study. While the work of these scholars offers a useful starting point in understanding urban life, I found that something was missing in their analyses, and I struggled to understand gang discourse more generally. This prompted me to extend my research and to present a more in-depth (and sobering) picture of the life that exists in the inner city, moving beyond Gunter's (2008) exploration of road culture.

My position in the research as both insider and outsider, and the portraits I present of inner-city life, are important. The geographical area is close to my heart and carries with it a very private and personal dimension. I feel it is of pivotal importance to reveal my role in the story of the research from the outset. As with Alexander's (2000: 49) investigation on the Asian Gang, my study 'is about people that I care about deeply and with whom I have developed bonds that explode any simple discrete notion of the research relationship'. I am open about the fact that who I am, and where I have

grown up, have a direct bearing on the choice of topic. My home, my identity and, my life experiences all connect me closely to this place. As Brotherton notes (2015: 85), it is important for researchers to 'come to terms with the fact that our research and our site is not always chosen by us but rather it is chosen for us because of who we are'. Unashamedly, I was born in this estate and I am socialised in this life. These are the streets that I grew up on. As a child, I played with the boys (now men) that I interviewed. Thus, I am socially and, emotionally connected to the people in the research and have a visceral understanding of what it means to live in this environment: I am intrinsically as opposed to intellectually embodied. I am therefore what anthropologists would classify as 'native' in that I am intimately connected to the individuals that I am researching and have much in common with them. For example, not only do I have the same working-class background; I also share the experience of living within the 'estate walls'. Within these walls are all manner of negative development factors, dangers, risks, negative attitudes to life, where many people lose direction and, at times, hope. For the first time in my life, I am able to use both my personal experiences of being raised in the confines of the inner city and my academic positioning, to search for answers or understanding as to why I was able to escape road culture, but others were not. Because of the above, this study is a form of insider research. However, throughout my time in the fieldwork setting, my dual identity as both 'Ebony from the 'hood' (a slang abbreviation for neighbourhood)' (insider) and social researcher (outsider) conflicted and required a reflexive approach. This acknowledged the emotional and social investment I have to my neighbourhood, how this impacted on my methodology and how I came to know the world.

I often refer to my academic self or education as my 'hustle', as it has transported me away from the confusion of my immediate surroundings. I feel I am in a very privileged position, in the sense that I have the power to explore and ultimately theorise a research interest that is not only of great importance to me, but also arguably under-represented. However, this study is by no means a personal crusade, as it emerges from both my intimate experience with and connection to my participants, and a real urgency to

understand the changing nature of my community and its members. By revealing my insider status, particularly my shared experiences with the research participants and my emotional involvement, I am aware that some will question the credibility of my study. In my defence, however, a growing body of 'insider research' has highlighted the privileges associated with this type of study and its importance in the production of knowledge (Anguilar, 1981; Baca-zinn, 1979; Costley at el 2010; Messerschmidt, 1981 and Sikes and Potts, 2008). For example, Costley at al (2010: 3) argues that 'as an insider, you are in a unique position to study a particular issue in depth and with special knowledge about the issue'. Likewise, when studying a group to which he belonged, Hodkinson (2005: 138) found that his 'insiderness' enhanced his capacity to 'participate and observe', but also enabled 'a generous flow of informally volunteered information'. For me, my closeness and familiarity with the men in my study was advantageous in that it enabled me to access a marginalised group that others (outsiders) might not, which helped me facilitate trust and cooperation immediately and offered an invested sense of the politics and ethics of participation in the research. My insider position was thus a major factor in allowing this project to be undertaken successfully.

1.3 Design and research questions

For this ethnographic study, participant observation and semi-structured interviews were the methods deployed to explore the ways in which life on road and road culture influence everyday life in Northville. The rationale for using an ethnographic approach was constructed on 1) my insider status and familiarity with my participants and 2) the opportunity to engage in direct and first-hand observation, which in turn would enable me to produce rich and meaningful data. As an insider researcher situated in the research setting, and while also acknowledging the incomplete or partial nature of this, I relied heavily upon my status to gain access to my participants. I spent approximately eight months in the field between July 2012 and March 2013 collecting data through observing, interviewing, and, field note journaling. However, since I was part of the community that I observed, I was collecting

data informally – or indeed interpreting the social worlds of my respondents (which are also my own) – long before I entered the fieldwork setting. My personal identity, where I am situated geographically and my life experiences are therefore relevant to this study and subsequently to the data collected. The complex nature of my dual role is further discussed in Chapter Three.

Like most ethnographic studies, I started the research with a very broad research aim: to understand the distinct practices of a group of young and adult men residing in Northville. This prompted a particular line of enquiry with the following initial specific question:

1. What is road culture, and how has it influenced the lives of the community?

However, it was not until I spent time amongst my participants and gaining insight into the multifaceted nature of their experiences that I realised that the initial line of enquiry was far too vague. From a review of the literature on life on road/road culture and identifying patterns in urban men's behaviour, I revised my research questions to accurately reflect my thesis as a cultural analysis that explores the diversity of road culture. In particular, the thesis addresses the following questions:

1) What are the core beliefs, ideologies and, styles of communication embedded in road culture?

2) How might young men's local conduct and practices be regarded as a culture?

3) How does the culture influence the nature and quality of life of those in Northville?

4) What is the meaning and significance of the culture, and how is it perceived by those involved and by wider society?

5) What are the social and economic implications of being on road?

In addition to these five research questions, a key objective of the study was to provide a counter-narrative to gang discourse by way of examining the

meanings and experiences that urban men ascribe to the lives on road within the context of broader structural and agentic processes.

1.4 Thesis overview

Chapter Two, the literature review, starts by tracing the trajectories of the 'youth in crisis' debate, focusing in particular on discourses centred on delinquency and youth behaviour in modernity and late modernity. It offers a critique of some of the key debates surrounding gang and street violence. This leads into discussion on 'problematic' black youth in which I examine the construction of black youth as contemporary folk devil, focusing attention to the ways in which urban black men have been depicted in late modernity through the gang lens. This dominant framework remains prominent when theorising the UK gang situation. In contrast to overriding themes permeating much of contemporary gang discourse, the chapter draws attention to the empirical-based studies that explore urban men's lives outside the way they are constructed in the contemporary gang debate. In approaching the literature review from this angle, I outline my own approach to the research, which moves beyond a narrow focus of the gang, towards a focus on the lived experiences of those urban men immersed in on road culture.

Chapter Three, the methods chapter, describes the research approach, including a detailed discussion of the methodology and methods employed to understand the complex nature of road culture and the impact it has on the lives of members of my community. In particular, the chapter critically considers the research approach; the role of (insider) researcher, the process of data collection, analysis and, interpretation of data gathered, and, discusses the unique dilemmas that enter into this ethnography. The chapter gives particular attention to some of the ethical tensions associated with my stance in the research setting, providing some reflections of my dual positioning as researcher and local inhabitant.

Chapter Four is the first of three analysis chapters, which introduces the individual participants and the material realities of this context. As well as considering, the identities offered by life on road in Northville, this chapter examines the important role of space and place in the daily lives of those

men on road, enabling the social and cultural practices that underpin road culture to emerge. Finally, in focusing attention to the significance of key hangouts in the locale, including the flats, shebeen and the 'block' emphasis is placed on the ways in which the spatial environment shapes social life, individual and group responses and, illegitimate financial pursuits.

Chapter Five, extends discussion of urban men's illegal financial endeavours, probing the notion of 'trapping' in all its variations, and offers an analysis of what motivates urban men to enter Northville's local drug economy. In the absence of stable well-paid jobs and linear paths from dependence to independence, men who are on road cultivate alternative employment pathways 'trapping' on road to reach their desired economic objectives. In this chapter I analyse the varying job and career opportunities available in the local drug economy, drawing out the three different 'trapper' identities that urban men take on to perform their work roles. The characteristics of each trapper type are explored separately, concentrating on the kind of criminal activity engaged in, levels of violence, types of masculinities performed and the differing cultural norms and values attached to each work status.

Chapter Six the final findings chapter, I analyse the subject positions that the men on road adopt to manage issues around safety and danger, assessing the influence of 'acting bad' in the formation of a particular masculine identity. In particular, the content of this chapter discusses the relationship between 'respect' and 'disrespect', examining how these notions shaped urban men's experiences in public space, peer relations and involvement in physical violence. The main purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss some of the ramifications of being on road, emphasising the role road culture plays in urban men's social and psychological development. In the final part of the chapter, I explore the relationship between religion and road culture, examining the basis for conversion, contextualising it within the 'localised version' of Islam practiced by some members of the community.

In Chapter Seven, I build on the key themes identified in the data analysis to provide a discussion of the painful and dangerous rites of passage that urban men endure growing up in the confines of the inner city. By focusing on three

very distinct types of 'trappedness', all of which severely impact the quality of life for some men in Northville, this chapter studies the various stages of transition on road, focusing attention to the different ways urban men become trapped in the powerful social categories and boundaries attached to life on road. In this chapter, I illustrate the process in which urban men become trapped in a liminal space and how they cope with the uncertainty that is characteristic of their rites of passage on road.

Chapter Eight draws conclusions from these findings chapters, emphasising how this thesis contributes to existing research in the field. In particular, the chapter questions some of the key research findings put forward by others on street violence, considers how road culture is constructed against a backdrop of constrained life choices, and how it is in turn, utilised by urban men as a key resource. Further, I argue for a narrative that moves away from a narrow focus on the gang to, instead, seek understandings of the complex and often insecure lifeworlds of those living in areas characterised by gang and street-based violence.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The heightened interest in serious youth violence in the UK, particularly involving knives and guns, has placed young people under close scrutiny – especially young, black men from urban areas on accounts of their (alleged) 'gang-like' tendencies. By way of example, there seems to be a vicious cycle at play here of negative representations of these men and the ways in which they negotiate space and use their unstructured free time. This has dominated much of UK media and political discourse. At the heart of such concerns (driven forward by some gang experts) is the perception that urban men and their gangs are: (1) a serious and growing problem; and (2) the 'new face of youth crime' (Pitts, 2008). This gang land thesis has captured academic and public imagination, with the word 'gang' now being applied to a wide spectrum of very different street groups. Alongside these issues, there are various debates, tensions, approaches and, responses to the gang phenomenon, which frequently reduce the complexity of urban men's lives to a single experience or reference point: the gang. For Hallsworth (2013) gang discourse has become a burgeoning industry, characterised by exaggeration and distortion that neglects hugely other issues - such as poverty, racism and, structural inequalities that impact on urban men in their social worlds. Moreover, such discourse often ignores the multifaceted, messy, and disorganised life worlds of urban men, which it seeks to describe. In this chapter, I argue for a more holistic and inclusive research approach: one that seeks to understand the ambiguous transitions from childhood to adulthood for urban men living in disadvantaged communities. I endeavour to move beyond the narrow focus on gangs in this thesis, contesting contemporary 'gang talk' with an in-depth exploration of the lived realities of urban men immersed in an on road culture.

What follows is an engagement with the current literature and arguments surrounding gangs and street violence in the UK, focusing particularly on how contemporary ideas of the dangerous 'gang menace' has not only contributed to defining and positioning young black urban men in society, but perhaps more significantly, has created an alternative Othering narrative, steeped in

racist undertones. Thus, these widely held stereotypes of black youth as an instrinsic element of gang culture has resulted in narrow paradigms that attempt to essentialise and pathologise their way of life. What I hope to demonstrate in this chapter is that while 'gang talkers' have become fixated with the 'modern' black gangster, historical evidence suggest that gangs are far from a new phenomenon but instead, mirror a long tradition of fears centred on the crisis of working class youth in British society. As will be demonstrated, through a review of the literature on the sociology of youth, this so-called media-led 'rediscovery' of the gang is a repackaging of past fears, disguised as an entirely 'new' social problem, which distorts representations of urban men. As well as focusing on research specific to gangs, the review looks at early 20th century studies on youth identities, examining specifically, the historical factors that have shaped contemporay understanding(s) of the gang menace. In doing so, it addresses broader issues, such as poverty, and marginalisation, themes, which are at the heart of the thesis narrative.

The review is separated into three main sections that frame the underlying approach within the thesis. The first section, 'Youth in Crisis', reviews literature on youth in modernity and late-modernity, looking at this within the context of early representation of delinquency/youth behaviour at the turn of the last century, and examining the extent in which 'historical amnesia' (Pearson, 2011) blinds contemporary gang discourse. The second section, 'Problematic Black Youth', examines the construction of black masculinity as the contemporary 'folk devil', arguing that although we seem to have a new narrative centred on the pathological black gang boy, in reality this discourse is a continuation of racist fears made to seem newly justified and so respectable. The third section, 'UK Gangs', critically reviews key debates in contemporary gang discourse, examining how the problem of black youth as Others has become more prevalent in gang research. I assess the way in which the gang is defined, drawing attention to the empirical-based studies that explore the lives of urban men who do not conform to the gang model.

2.2 Youth in Crisis

Youth in crisis has been a dominant narrative with a long history in British society. For example, and in spite of the so-called rediscovery of the gang, Britain has witnessed, during the post-war era in particular, its fair share of moral panics (Bell, 1993; Cohen, 1972; Critcher, 2003 and Scraton, 1997) and 'respectable fears' (Pearson, 1983). Indeed, there has been many historical examples of youthful behaviour that have been targeted by the media, ranging from the mods and rockers of the 1960s, the Gender benders of the 1970's, the ecstasy youth subculture of the 1980's to more recent moral panics, including, the new age travellers, video nasties and chavs of the 1990's (Critcher, 2003). Such moral panics have reflected the social and political landscape of the given era. Contemporary debates and tensions inherent in UK gang research are therefore illustrative of longstanding conflicts within the youth in crisis narrative. Current concerns about the urban street gang therefore represents what Pearson (2011: 20) describes as a clear case of 'historical amnesia', in that the gang is constructed as a very 'new' and threatening 'folk devil', in spite of the long and endless history of purportedly respectable British fears preceding it. That is, any attempt at analysing the gang in contemporary times must consider gang discourse as a continuation of past concerns, but also a consequence of increasing social change. Central to any attempt at understanding the modern fascination with the gang is the examination of classic depictions of youth as an ambiguous period of life to ascertain the crisis narrative framing youth, but young black youth in particular pathways into adulthood.

This section, begins by tracing the origins of the 'youth in crisis' debate, before moving on to focus on more contemporary representations of youth in the late modern era. The section is divided into two parts. The first- Youth in modernity- I argue that the problematising youth in crisis narrative has a long history in the classical tradition of the sociology of youth, which saw adolescence emerge not only as a period marked by great 'storm and stress' (Hall, 1904) but also as an increasing social problem. These debates, relate closely to the social concerns of the modern era, mobilised to explain specific

forms of youthful behaviour. Thus, I argue that any attempt to understand contemporary concerns or the treatment of urban gangs should take into account the historical context, particularly early representations of working class young people as 'problem', least of all because this era set the tone for contemporary moral panics. The second- 'Youth in late modernity'- I examine the developments in the youth in crisis narrative, arguing that fears and anxieties centred on youth in late modernity appear to be a continuation of past fears, whereby particular groups of young people, namely marginalised working class men are singled out for special attention. That is, the Othering discourse intrinsic to late modern era tells us more about the processes of negative youth representation, stigmatisation, and the unequal distribution of power and wealth than it does about the lived experiences of disadvantaged young people. Overall, my intension in this section is to unpick what underlies the youth in crisis narrative, to begin to make sense of the problematising discourse framing contemporary debates on gangs, and urban men's lived experiences.

2.2.1 Youth in modernity

The period of life between childhood and adulthood has been well documented by psychologists (Hall, 1904) and social theorists (Eisenstadt, 1956), who focus on stages of youth development and transitions into adulthood. However, according to Galland (2003: 163) 'the terms adolescence, post-adolescence, and youth are often employed as near-synonyms to designate the life period between childhood and adulthood'. Although the terms adolescence and youth are at times used interchangeably, there are some important distinctions. The term adolescence has its roots in psychology, most notably in the work of G Stanley Hall (1904) who reasoned that adolescence was a time of great storm and stress, attributed to the psychological challenges associated with growing up. Adolescence was regarded a kind of rites of passage, whereby young people adjust to both physical and mental changes as they move through puberty and into maturity. Youth, on the other hand, is a relatively new idea that emerged at the end of the 19th century, and as Frith (2005) notes, 'is a sociological category rather than a biological one' (cited in Kehily, 2007: 3). Thus, youth not only refers to the transition from childhood

to adulthood, but equally, and as importantly, the concept is characteristic of young people's attitudes and the way they interact in the social world. What becomes clear is that the subject of youth, in both psychological and sociological terms, has received considerable attention in the last 40 years (Wyn and White, 1997). As Jones (2009: 24) notes, it '…has gone through many stages reflecting shifts in societal concerns and structures'. The study of youth has always represented a visibly separate social category, distinguished fundamentally in public and theoretical discussions, as a period of danger and uncertainty.

The concept adolescence can be evidenced as far back as the 17th century in the writings of Rousseau (1911; 1762), who linked it to a period of emotional turmoil, which was said to manifest into sexual deviancy. Davis (1990: 43) notes that at this time, the problem of adolescence was essentially linked to the upper and middle classes, 'defined as individual, innate and psychological, rather than social in character'. Adolescence was thought of asa 'biologically determined norm of youthful behaviour and the appearance which was white/Anglo, middle class, heterosexual, and male' (Griffins, 1993: 18). However, it was not until the early 1900s in the work of G Stanley Hall (1904) that young people's transitions from childhood to adulthood emerged as an area of scientific research. Hall was the first social scientist to argue that adolescence was a pathological phase of life, defined essentially by storm and stress. Although Hall reasoned that adolescence was a normal/natural threshold between childhood and adulthood, he did equate it to a period of psychological turmoil, whereby 'the youth awakes to a new world and understands neither it nor himself' (Hall, 1904: xv). His conception of adolescence as biologically determined marked the beginning of the discovery of adolescence, and set the tone for the ways in which Victorian historians and social reformers defined, understood and discussed the behaviour of young people. His core ideas centred on adolescence as being chiefly the criminal age. This coincided with Victorian fears concerning the boy labour problem, which was said to manifest itself in unruly youth leisure, and which was historically observed as youth gangs (Muncie, 2009).

Hall's work has its roots in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, a historical era that is 'often regarded as the gold standard of moral worth, remembered as a time of unrivalled domestic harmony' (Pearson, 2011: 24). However, Gillis (1981: 3) reminds us there was 'no period since the 18th century when there were more complaints about youthful conduct'. In fact, life in Victorian and Edwardian Britain had a catalogue of public fears and anxieties not dissimilar to life in late modernity. For example, the more recent public concern with the contemporary 'gang menace'can be traced to the Victorian era, when those perceived to be 'hooligans' engaged in territorial violence with neighbouring gangs (see Pearson, 1983 for a full discussion). Moreover, Edwardian London witnessed heightened concerns about the troublesome and wayward behaviour of young people and, as noted earlier, much public anxiety was directed at the boy labour problem and the ways in which working-class youth negotiated their leisure time. There has been much debate in the 21st century about school-to-work transitions (see Macdonald and Marsh, 2002; 2005 and Furlong and Cartmel, 2004). Similarly, in Edwardian Britain social reformers were concerned with what Springhall (1986) described as 'blind alley jobs' and 'occupational mobility' both of which were blamed for 'the two vices of indiscipline and precocious independence' (Muncie, 2009: 71). In early Edwardian Britain, particularly the period from 1890-1914 (Davis, 1990), the boy labour issue was thought of as a major social problem and 'unruly' leisure was said to manifest in youth congregating the street corners. It was in the context of street corner leisure discourses in which working-class males, or indeed 'street children', began to stand out as problematic, creating a specific construction of adolescence as a troubled period of life.

For some scholars, adolescence emerged as a consequence of changes in class relations, education and legislation. Jones (2009), for example, notes that child protection laws and developments in education saw working-class youth being 'distinguished from adulthood'. Whereas, and as argued above, Springhall (1986) points to the growth of school leavers entering 'dead-end' and menial jobs and thus having inappropriate independence or indeed unstructured free time. Griffin (1993), however, argues that the onset of industrialisation brought with it a major shift in middle-class fears concerning

working-class youth, but that debates also surfaced about living conditions. What coexisted with the 'boy labour' and street corner leisure discourses were concerns about the growth of industrial cities and the urban young people who resided there – a narrative not that contradictory to contemporary discourses centred on the gang. As with current debates on the gang, the problems of adolescence were linked to urban working-class males and their perceived unruly behaviour. Not only was 'boy labour' targeted as a cause of urban male's problematic conduct; the urban locale was also said to breed indiscipline, delinquency, and chaos. The problems of adolescence were therefore not associated with the poor social and economic conditions endemic in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, but instead, and as Tyyska (2014: 43) argues, 'adolescence became the culprit (as is the gang today) of the vagrancy and uprootedness of urban youth'.

The perception of adolescence as a troubled period of life is in itself an invention of modernity, and here we observe the 'establishment of a distinctively modern approach towards the young as an object of study' (Davis, 1990: 59). Hall's influential study on adolescence, which was essentially shaped by Victorian ideology, provided a useful starting point for theorising adolescence as the unstable threshold between childhood and adulthood. Hall's key ideas that this phase of life was dominated by great 'storm and stress' provided an important framework through which social reformers and educationalists understood the youth problem at this time. Jones (2009: 4) points outs that the 'construction of youth during the modern age says as much about the builders as about their subjects'. Therefore, the fear of the adolescent was very much a product of this particular era, grounded in the theory of biological determinism and what Griffin (1993: 10) described as 'common sense ideas about age stages in general'. The Victorian era viewed adolescence through the lens of delinquency and immoral youth behaviour. As we shall see, these fears centred on troublesome youth were rehearsed in the years following World War II, with Hall's work providing the basis for future moral panics (Cohen, 1972).

2.2.2 Youth in late modernity

Concerns over the seemingly problematic nature of youthful behaviour continued in the latter part of the 19th century, whereby societal fears were now rooted in the increasing consumer market and the emergence of an array of youth cultures that developed post-war. While concerns about the social behaviour of youth in post-war Britain illustrate a continuation of past fears, Osgerby (1998: 17) argues that the decades following 1945 presented a 'range of factors combined to highlight the social visibility of the young, giving British youngsters definition as a distinct cultural entity as never before'. He notes that the years following World War II were characterised by profound social and economic restructuring, which was said to have a major impact on young people's lives. Not only did post-war Britain witness developments in the labour market and the emergence of consumer culture; as Osgerby (1998) argues, these factors put together served to highlight, or indeed bring to the fore, youth as a distinct social category. For Brake, the years since World War II witnessed a new construction of the young in the public sphere, commonly linked to crime, but perhaps more significantly saw 'the adolescent working-class male, especially, being portrayed as the 'folk devil' (Brake, 1980: 1). The concept 'folk devil' was introduced by Stanley Cohen (1972) in his classic book 'Folk Devils and Moral Panics', where he demonstrated the way in which the media played a significant role in creating societal anxiety around the behaviour of the mods and rockers in the 1960s.

Cohen argued that a 'folk devil' emerged through what he termed a 'moral panic'– a condition, episode, person, or group who have been depicted and, in many cases, stereotyped, by the media as a threat to society. For Cohen, 'folk devil' was a periodic characteristic of modern society, in which during every era a new 'folk devil' appeared from societal fear and discrimination. However, the 'folk devil', according to Cohen, tells us more about society than it does about serious youth violence. For example, he argued that the 'mods and rockers symbolised something far more important than what they actually did' and 'touched the delicate and ambivalent nerves through which post-war social change in Britain was experienced' (Cohen, 1972: 192). Cohen therefore stressed the significance of moral panics in the construction

of 'folk devils', but also drew attention to the deeper issues of cultural anxiety and structural crises that underpin such sensationalist media reporting.

The 'folk devil' in the moral panic offers a useful way of thinking about contemporary gang discourse, particularly as the gang label tells us very little about the lived realities of those it demonises, and more about policing tactics, racism and the exclusion processes that work to prohibit urban males from full participation in society. Furthermore, and as Hallsworth (2011: 187) notes, 'by reifying the 'gang' and constructing it as kind of fetish', criminal justice agencies focus on identifying 'troublesome' youth, therefore demonising certain sections of the youth community. The gang label, as will be discussed later, is not only unhelpful in attempting to understand serious youth violence – especially as the evidential base for its existence is weak – but because such gang imagery largely ignores the increasing anomic situation (Merton, 1938; Durkheim, 1952) of urban men, the lack of informal control mechanisms and the failure of social systems.

As noted earlier, the 19th century moral panic concerning 'blind alley jobs' was linked within contemporary public discourse with class-based concerns regarding working-class unruly leisure and the emergence of 'street children', who were largely working-class white young males. By the 1950s, however, the precarious youth labour market was still a major concern for society, but the 'folk devil' label was now applied to what were considered rebellious youth cultures. As Cohen (1972) notes, one of the most recurrent 'folk devils' in Britain were the youth subcultures that emerged post-war. The subcultures that developed post-war, most notably the teddy boys, mods and rockers, marked a significant change in the way in which the young working-class male was perceived. Central to the shift was the working-class male being redefined as a major social problem. Integral to representations of youth subcultures in the mid to late 20th century was that they came to be defined as a 'symbol of national decline and cultural degradation' (Osgerby, 1998: 13). What existed was the assumption that working-class males needed to be controlled and regulated, because their habits and lifestyles were regarded as outside mainstream culture and subsequently threatening. In this context of industrialisation and rapid social change, Jones argues that

we begin to see a move towards a sociological approach in understanding youthful behaviour and a 'shift in terminology from adolescence to youth' (Jones, 2009: 11).

Late modernity intensified the perception of adolescence as a troubled period of life, resulting in youth gaining considerable attention from sociologists from all schools of thought. By the 1960s, as we entered what Giddens (1991) argued to be a radical version of modernity (or what he later described as late modernity), the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS) was at the forefront of exploration into how capitalist social and economic relations influenced youth transitions. As Griffins (1993: 23) notes, 'radical analyses of youth subcultures developed in an attempt to bring social structures and especially class (back) into theoretical frameworks', with subcultural studies dominating much of theoretical discussions on youth at this time. Stuart Hall and colleagues, for example, were concerned with the ways in which young people were faced with rapid social change and the risks and uncertainties associated with a decade so dissimilar to previous eras. The 1970s, then, was a period in which youth was placed firmly under political scrutiny, with the development of working-class youth subcultures bringing to the fore Britain's structural disparities and widening class divisions. At the heart of the BCCCS analysis was the relationship between culture and power, and what was believed to be working-class youth's symbolic cultural resistance towards the dominant culture. Drawing upon neo-Marxist theory, the BCCCS explored the way in which subcultures resisted dominant bourgeois ideology, finding instead 'magical' or 'imaginary' solutions to class-related issues born from growing up in post-war Britain. Phil Cohen's (1972) research on the youth subcultures that emerged in East London, for example, examined the ways in which working-class youth reacted to structural changes in their communities.

Cohen argued that the development of youth subcultures, most notably the Teds, mods, rockers and skinheads, were 'magically' resolving, through a set of symbolic rituals, the contradictions hidden in the working parent culture (Cohen, 1972). Similarly, Brake (1985: 4) argued that subcultures 'arise in an attempt to resolve collectively experienced problems resulting from

contradictions in the social structure'. Therefore, rather than observing these groups as purely criminal subcultures – the dominant discourse pertaining to much of gang discourse then and today – the early work by UK-based subcultural theorists (Hall and Jefferson, 1976; Cohen, 1972) sought to explore how subcultural membership provided a mechanism for young people to cope with economic and structural marginalisation. This analysis is also prominent in American gang research.

Indeed, the idea that working class young people's deviancy should be understood in relation to growing up in global capitalism, and in particular, as a 'collective response to material and situated experience of their class' (Clarke, et al 2005: 97) was a view echoed by a number of ethnographic studies that emerged in the 1970s (see Corrigan, 1979, Parker, 1974 and Robins and Cohen, 1978). For example, these ethnographies, which captured the voices of marginalised working class men, had much in common with the subcultural tradition in that emphasis was placed upon the interrelationship between macro and micro variables in explaining incidences of deviancy or criminal behaviour. Thus, in an attempt to grasp the social worlds of young working class men Parker (1974) and, Robin and Cohen, (1978) provided detailed investigations of the cultural traditions, values and norms that have arisen in disadvantaged urban milieus in response to isolation from mainstream socioeconomic life.

Crucially, Parker (1974) examined the relationship between experiences of growing up in a disadvantaged Liverpool estate and young working class men's involvement in criminal activity, and found that criminality was heavily influenced by the social environment, but specifically, the cultural traditions intrinsic to the local community. For Parker, the neighbourhood context was said to introduce marginalised men to alternative opportunity structures and the skills needed to resolve their poverty and powerlessness. In his words, the street corner worlds, in which his boys were immersed 'both tramsmits delinquent traditions and provides an atmosphere for innovation and creation' (Parker, 1974: 61). From this point of reference, Parker emphasised that material conditions and class circumstances created cultural adaptations, where marginalised men resisted the mundanity and economic insecurity of

their lives, principally through their subcultures, creating instead their own distinct lifestyle as a means to combat their disadvantageous socioeconomic positions. Robin and Cohen undertook a similar class-based approach in Knuckle Sandwich: Growing up in the Working Class City (1978). The authors capture the lived experiences of the masculine working class male peer group, emphasing how groups of marginalised men attempted to deal with poverty and their lack of life chances, by challenging their powerlessness in their local milieu. As a paradigm for understanding the emergence of alternative lifestyles, the subcultural approach provides a useful starting point for understanding how structural constraints shape working class men's lives.

There has been growing sociological interest in youth transitions (Wyn and White, 1997; MacDonalds, 2005; Roberts, 2005) since the years following the end of World War II, which saw Britain undergo a process of profound economic and social reshaping. Of particular focus for transition researchers in the 1980's has been the economic sphere, and the obstacles, confronting disadvantaged young people as they move through education into work or indeed from the labour market to economic independence in a climate of considerable structural inequality (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Compared to pre-industrial youth, who found transitions from school to work far more straightforward, young people in post-industrial society – and specifically working-class youth – have felt the greatest impact of social and economic restructuring, 'with key contexts such as education, labour market experiences and, patterns of dependency having been transformed' (Furlong, 2009: 1). That is, traditional notions of transitions, for example what Valentine (2003) described as linear movements from dependence to independence have been placed into question, towards more concentrated attempts to understand the increasingly protracted and often non-linear routes into adulthood for some of the most marginalised young people in British society. For Bradford, (2007: 61) the 'ritual markers of independence or adulthood have all but disappeared' in late modernity, which he argues is central in accounting for young people's extended 'liminality'.

The concept liminality was first referenced by Victor Turner (1967) who borrowed the term from Arnold Van Gennep (1960) to explain the middle

stage of a rites of passage. For Turner, liminality is characteristic of a 'betwixt and between' space that transports youth into 'transitional beings', who are simultaneously outsiders to and insiders of 'conventional social categories, space and, time' (Bradford, 2007: 59). Put simply, liminality is marked by a sense of disorientation and lack of status, whereby the liminar is said to exist in a realm of ambiguity and uncertainty, as they are 'neither one thing nor another'- for example, not quite child not quite adult. Barry (2006) argues that liminality is a useful concept in explaining the lack of 'parity' between the younger and the older generation. However, she also suggests that this idea can be applied to the fragmented and broken transitions of disadvantaged young people in Britain, who she argues are having to navigate their pathways into adulthood without a clear status, few supportive structures and, increasing structural barriers.

Importantly, transition researchers focused on the socio-economic climate and its influence on disadvantaged young people's transitions to adulthood. In contrast, more recent theorists of late modernity, such as Giddens (1991) Beck (1992), have drawn attention to what they describe as a 'risk society' and 'individualisation' in understanding the fundamental changes in society and politics, and how this, in turn, infringes on all aspects of social life. For Beck (1992: 135), late modernity constitutes a 'risk society' within which 'the individual must therefore learn, on pain of permanent disadvantage to conceive himself or herself as the centre of action, as the planning office with respect to his/her biography'. Similarly, Giddens (1991: 75) points out that late modernity has produced great stress and oppression for individuals in which he argues the 'self' is now 'seen as a reflexive project for which the individual is responsible'. This new and uncompromising social order, driven forward by neoliberal politics functions on the underlying ideology that every individual regardless of their class position, should be accountable for their success, or failure. Individualisation has also been at the heart of New Labour social policy, where we have seen a commitment to social inclusion, but as Squires and Stephen (2005: 121) argue 'a profound individualisation of the delinquent', with working-class black youth unsurprisingly at the forefront of this discourse. However, as Young (2007: 4) reminds us, the

idealism of individualism 'is a situation of contradiction and of paradox' and is therefore seeped in problems for specific social groups.

For Young (2007: 3), individualism is principally an ideal that cannot be sustained in reality. He argues that although it grants individuals some level of 'flexibility' and 'reinvention', at the same time, it produces 'considerable ontological insecurity - precariousness of being'. Similarly, France (2007: 71) argues that 'the discourses of 'choice' and 'opportunity' that permeate both common sense understanding and political approaches to individualism' has created what he believes is a 'false reality' for young people. From such perspectives, individualism can be perceived as a two-edge sword in that it promotes the vision that all social groups have a range of 'choices' and 'opportunities', but such a set of ideals fails to take into account the types of options available to young people are evidently determined by factors such as class, gender and race (Roberts, 2005). In this way, individualism is observed by some social scientists as an 'epistemological fallacy' (France, 2007: 71), whereby individuals are forced to negotiate their lives on the notion of 'choice' and 'self-development'. And yet, if and when they fail to achieve autonomy, they are blamed for their own failure. There has been a readiness in late modernity to construct the problems of youth around notions of personal responsibility. This has led to a specific discourse of individual deficiencies, or as Young (1999: 5) identified, the 'deviant other', perceived through the modernist view as a minority, who is in some way distinct and, thus 'lacking in civilisation, or socialisation or sensibilities'.

Young (2011) reasoned that life in late modernity, but particularly the individualist ideology works, to exclude and 'other' segments of the population by 'distancing' and 'diminishing'. This is a process he argued involved a 'detachment of individual from the social structure', a method whereby he argues 'binaries are created of them and us where there is seen to be an economic, social and, moral hiatus between the superior and inferior, normal and deviant parts of the population' (Young, 2011: vii). This will be discussed in more detail in the following section, Problematic Black Youth. Through such individualist ideology, personal problems are individualised, social marginality ignored, and personal biographies of hardship replaced

with 'social blame' and 'recrimination' aimed at the some of the most vulnerable segments of society (Young, 1999). However, C.Wright Mills (1959) reminds us in 'The Sociological Imagination' that an individual's biography cannot be removed from the social structure. In this respect, he suggests that it remains crucial to examine the intricate relationship between the personal lives of people, the social structure and, the historical conditions of the time.

These questions, or rather tensions, between 'structure' vs 'agency' have been an important theoretical framework in transitional youth research. In contrast to Beck's individualism thesis that locate agency as central in theorising the 'risk society', Ken Roberts and colleagues, for example, have drawn attention to the opportunity structure as having a profound impact on decision making, and subsequently successful school-to-work transitions. Roberts, who examined jobs of school leavers from a structural perspective, proposed that individual opportunity had little to do with free choice, but rather was restricted by opportunities available based on gender, ethnicity and, race. Applying this model to the employment situation in the 1970s, he concluded that youth aspirations were more often than not shaped by early socialisation, most notably the environment and job opportunities available in that setting, but also school and peers. As Robert (1977: 1) argues, '…people so not typically 'choose' occupations in any meaningful sense: they simply take what is available'. He regarded the social context, for example, where one was situated geographically, plus the social and economic context to be determining factors in limiting life choices. From such a perspective, there is the acknowledgment that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely to transform their agency into what Giddens identified as a 'reflexive project'. Although Giddens and Beck underplay the significance of class in their theorisations on individualism, research clearly indicates that such factors as class, race and, gender have a profound impact on working-class youths' school-to-work transitions, with working-class youth occupying the training sector or unskilled employment (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997).

The concept of individualism draws attention to the complexity permeating youth transitions but, more crucially, acts as a starting point in how we understand contemporary gang talk. What the individualisation narrative essentially does is responsibilise the actions of the individual, not at the level of the state – although policy is in part shaped by the same ideas – but at the level of individual deficiencies or deviant behaviour. Such a narrative not only ignores the social and important issues impacting on social life but, as argued earlier, creates a very specific Othering narrative. As we enter the 21st century, it appears that black males are at the centre of popular problematising discourses. Emphasis is now placed on 'threatening' black collective 'gang' offending, unveiling more about power relations and the process of demonisation (which involves constructing black boys into the Other through negative media, political and gang discourse) than about street violence itself.

2.3 Problematic Black Youth

The previous section provided a brief overview of the ways in which youth have been depicted over time, arguing that the crisis framing young people's transitional pathways has been a dominant narrative over the last century. What is evident is that Britain has a long and endless history of respectable fears which have reflected fundamental changes in societal concerns and the social structure. In late modernity, working-class youth continue to be a source of media, government and academic fascination and repulsion, highlighted as a distinct social category and regarded as a major social problem. However, as we move into contemporary representations of youth, black urban young people and, their seemingly gang-like tendencies have become a topic of great scrutiny. Here we observe class and race working together in the pathologisation of the urban street gang. There has been heightened academic interest in the urban street gang and a range of response to tackle 'black-on-black' murders, and what is now believed to be the 'new face of street crime' (Pitts, 2008). Black youth are principally associated with gang culture, which has led to a particular construction of black youth as 'dangerous' or indeed as Other. As Sviensson (2008: 3) notes,

'gang, gun and knife violence is conceptualised as 'cultural' phenomena, albeit pathological sub-cultures distinct from and in contrast to the moral values of the law-abiding majority'. Popular representations of black youth as prone to gang activity has left researchers such as Alexander (2008) and Sviensson (2008) heavily criticising the notion of the gang.

For Alexander (2008), the fact the gang seems to be the central explanation for accounting for black criminality is in itself problematic. She suggests that this is because 'we know very little about the gang in the UK: about how 'a gang' might be defined or understood, about what being in 'a gang' means, even whether there are 'gangs' in any accepted sociological and criminological sense at all' (Alexander, 2008: 3). Alexander reasons that because the gang tends to be the baseline through which youth violence is understood, society is failing to acknowledge what she regards as 'complex and thorny questions of how youth violence or conflict can be mapped onto a broader social, economic, political and cultural context' (Alexander, 2008: 3). Drawing on Alexander's notion that the gang is a problematic concept, as well as other literature on black youth crime, I will argue that the supposed link between race, youth and, street violence has a long history in Britain. The black youth question has historically operated through a dominant ideology of black youth as Other or a 'threat' to society. In this respect, the 'black gang' can therefore be observed as a continuation of past racialised discourse about black youth, heavily loaded with pathologising ideology from which it is difficult to gain situated understandings of urban males' real lived experiences.

2.3.1 The construction of black youth as 'folk devils'

Like early representations of working-class youth as a 'problem', black youth have historically been singled out for special attention. According to Solomos (1988), the black youth question can be traced back to as early as the post-World War II era. This was a period he argued was shaped by 'political, ideological and economic developments, each with their own impact on the policy outputs in relation to immigration and 'race' issues' (Solomos, 1988: 29-30). For Solomos, black migrants in post-war Britain were at the heart of negative stereotypes, particularly after the Notting Hill race riots, and by the late 1950s much political debate was centred on 'four lines of argument: economic and employment issues, housing and environment, long-term social consequences and responses to black immigration by whites' (Solomos, 1988: 32). However, as Solomos notes, it was not until the 1970s that government moved away from the preoccupation with black immigration and turned the spotlight on the black inhabitants that were already living in Britain. The 1970s was significant in terms of negative representations of black youth and the areas in which they lived, and as Sibley (1995: 42) notes, the British inner city was regarded as a 'black inner city, characterised by lawlessness and vice'. What drove this perception forward was the moral panic centred on the 'black mugger' or 'black muggings', which 'fixed the idea of black youth as an inherently criminal minority and inner cities as inherently criminal localities' (Sibley, 1995: 43).

The black mugging debate gained much of its influence from media and political discussions about 'black criminality', and what was understood as a breakdown in law and order as a consequence of black people's seemingly criminal tendencies. The seminal work of Stuart Hall et al (1978) 'Policing the Crisis' was developed in response to debates centred on 'black muggings'. This work provided a slightly different angle to the moral panic theory employed by Cohen discussed earlier, in that Hall et al highlighted the role of race/racism in understanding the emergence of what was observed in the 1970s as the 'black mugger'– a code word for 'black youth'. In common with the moral panic argument, this is a clear example of generalising the particular. For Hall et al, Cohen's concept of the 'folk devil' was rather

familiar and was deliberately applied to black people 'on the basis of pre-existing beliefs about their supposed criminality' (Bowling and Phillips, 2002: 8). Hall et al demonstrated that the label 'mugger' triggered a media-based moral panic, which reflected racial fears and anxieties more than it reflected the actual crime rate. The black mugging craze was therefore perceived as a media and political construction that not only provided a justification for repressive and racist policing, but also created the image of black youth as 'demonic Others' (Bowling and Phillips, 2002).

Similarly, Gilroy (1982) argued that the over-reporting of black criminality was a result of racist stereotypes of black youth as 'alien criminals', whereby black youth were criminalised and overrepresented in official statistics. However, for Gilroy (1982), black criminality was essentially a myth, which acted as an easy scapegoat to divert attention from racism and capitalist social and economic relations. Gilroy reasoned that the myth of black youth as 'criminal Others' ignored the real causes of the black youth problem – for example, the crisis of capitalism and, most notably, unemployment and racial prejudice. Like Hall et al, Gilroy demonstrated that the 'black mugger' symbolised the racist ideology inherent in British society but, more significantly, drew attention to the ways in which black youth are marginalised on the grounds of their race and culture. Such a perspective, specifically the 'black mugger' theorisation offered by Hall and colleagues, becomes central in examining the contemporary 'crisis' and 'panic' centred on gangs in post-modernity. What Hall at al illustrates is that those in power, namely the media and politicians, have been a potent force in the construction of a particular image of 'black youth' over an extended period of time.

The influential role of institutions of power has become essential in understanding how the contemporary gang phenomenon has emerged in such a publicised way. What is particularly evident as we move into more contemporary discussions about black youth and criminality is that the representation of black youth has become increasingly negative in recent years, reflecting the overwhelming negative portrayal of the threatening urban street gang. The gang has become the 'new' coded term for black youth, and the lens through which black youth are stigmatised. In the following section, this idea of black

youth as criminal Other will be drawn upon to contemplate the current debates on the gang phenomenon in the UK.

2.3. 2 From 'black mugger' to contemporary 'gang member'

Historical representations of black youth as 'folk devil' offer a starting point in considering contemporary depictions of black youth as gang members. Through the 'black mugger' ideology we start to see the black criminal emerge and the assumption that this character is essentially a 'crime' problem come to the fore. The moral panic centred on the black mugger tapped into public fear, creating the construction of black youth as a dangerous and a threatening social problem. This image of black youth seems in line with recent representations of the gang. There has been an increase in moral panic about black youth following the huge number of murders that have occurred in London between 2005 and 2011 (Citizen Report, 2013). In particular, the fatal stabbing of Damilola Taylor in 2000[1] and the gun-related murders of two Birmingham young women in 2003[2] were said to signal the beginning of the media's preoccupation with the gang, and what Hallsworth and Young (2008) argue was the 'rediscovery of the gang'. Because of this, in recent times the dominant media and political discourse have become concerned with youth violence, but specifically gang-related murders. At the heart of contemporary discussion about the gang is what Hallsworth (2013) articulates as a 'gangland UK thesis' which tends to stress the territorial, hierarchal, and violent behaviour of the urban street gang. This is discussed in more detail in the following section. Such discourse stereotypically frames the characteristics of the gang member as young, black, male, and urban. Urban black youth (through gang discourse) have been socially constructed as pathological Other. But on the other hand, representations of black youth are also used to shift huge amounts of commodities, with capital having a love affair with 'edgy' black youth. They are therefore simultaneously dangerous and cool (Ilan, 2015), and a source

---

[1] Damilola Taylor was a ten-year-old school boy who was stabbed to death in Peckham on 27th November 2000. Following a retrial, brother's Ricky and Danny Preddie were convicted of manslaughter in August 2006.
[2] Teenagers Letisha Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis were shot in January 2003 in what was alleged to be a gang-related shooting.

of huge profit (through style) but also fear and repulsion. This has arguably led to a dangerous twist in the way society perceives and treats young black men.

According to Sveinsson (2008), the number of black and ethnic victims of violent crime has received sustained media attention, which he argued to be a positive development. However, he noted that the media has the tendency to report such incidents as purely gang-related and 'endemic within the black community', a narrative which he suggest detracts attention away from the structure of British society and the ways in which black youth experience their social milieu. To examine violence through the lens of 'culture', Sviensson (2008: 3) argued, creates a discourse in which culture is observed as 'an innate quality, something people have and makes them act in certain ways under certain circumstance'. The result is a pathologising narrative that criminalises entire communities on the grounds of their alleged cultural deficits. Sviensson's argument remains crucial to understanding the construction of a specific 'gang culture'. It is a noteworthy example of how special attention is given to the perceived relationship between race, violence and the communities in which black youth reside. The current climate of gang research operates through the dominant ideology of black culture as inherently criminal, and uses 'culture' as a vehicle for explaining the pathological nature of black males. In this sense, 'culture' is just as fixed as, say, 'biology'. As Solomos (1988: 187) notes, historically 'blacks, and particularly black youth were seen as the carriers of cultural values and attitudes', and such images which were said to be connected to a 'ghetto mentality' – or a distinct lifestyle – are still very much absorbed into contemporary representations of the gang today.

As discussed earlier, black youth have historically come to represent the 'dangerous Others', depicted through images of the lawlessness inner city, whereby black communities are blamed for an array of urban troubles. There is nothing new about the singling out of black youth for special attention, or indeed the demonisation of black culture more generally. What becomes apparent, however, in the current climate of representation of black youth is the emergence of a racialised gang label that has intensified the way in

which black youth specifically are depicted in society. This may be in part due to the over-representation of black youth in the criminal justice system (see Bowling and Phillips, 2002 for a full discussion) but also the disproportionate representation of black youth in relation to criminality associated with gangs. Bowling reminds us to take caution when examining official crime statistics, particularly as the over-representation of ethnic minorities in such data is often the consequence of prejudiced criminal justice procedures. Nonetheless, as Bowling notes, 'they are commonly taken as facts about 'black criminality' and, therefore, a critical examination of these statistics (and also survey data) is warranted' (Bowling, 2002: 76).

The gang label has been heavily criticised by researchers. Claire Alexander (2008) argued that due to the increasing numbers of youth murders in the UK, the gang label has become the baseline for understanding serious youth violence, which she argues is in itself problematic. In Alexander's words, 'we know less about how the gang links to levels of youth violence, the incidence of knife or gun crime, organised crime or, indeed, to more mundane practices of youth experience and identity' (Alexander, 2008: 3). In a view close to Sveinsson (2008), Alexander noted that in relation to the reporting of violent crime, the media have been overly keen to place ethnic youth at the centre of gang discourse. For Alexander, 'rather it seems that simply being a young, male and minority ethnic victim is sufficient in and of itself to warrant the label gang-related' (Alexander, 2008: 5). Alexander suggests that because the UK gang tradition is based on a weak empirical foundation, the gang in a British context has been saturated with 'Hollywood-style' gang images that say very little about the complex and mundane experiences of those immersed in youth violence in the UK context. Similarly, Hallsworth and Young (2004: 13) argue that the problem with drawing parallels between the US and UK gang situation is that there is 'little evidence to suggest that such collectives are characterised by the forms of ritual traditionally associated with the American gang'. In essence, Alexander highlights that the term gang which is driven forward by the media, politicians and policy makers is a 'potent shortcut' that reveals more about 'ghetto fantasies' and urban stereotypes than it does about the real lived experiences of urban men immersed in youth violence.

Alexander makes some interesting points in terms of thinking about the ways in which the gang has become a socially constructed category. Despite disagreements of what actually constitutes a gang, there are agreements that youth violence is a complex problem which has detrimental consequences for the young people involved. Furthermore, the gang label is far too narrow and, according to Sullivan (2005: 171), to concentrate solely on gangs treats it as 'an object of study that is broader and more intrinsically problematic'. Alexander illustrates that we cannot deny that the street violence is indeed a serious social problem. However, she highlights that it becomes essential that we 'rethink' the gang label, moving away from a narrow focus on the gang and towards an exploration of the real lived experiences of those directly involved in youth violence. More specifically, the process of seeking to define delinquent groups as gangs is a forced attempt to bring order, which crudely categories the multifaceted nature of this complex social phenomenon. The role of the latter is significant because it indicates how easily the gang label can be manipulated through a set of assumptions, misconceptions, and myths. Unsurprisingly, gangs are often inadequately represented, resulting in the media, government and policy-makers constructing their own definition of the term, which has resulted in the obsession with ethnicity, but especially black criminality (Alexander, 2008). Few British studies consider why young people may in fact join gangs, focusing instead on trying to demonstrate the threat that youth – and black youth in particular – pose to society. This has undoubtedly contributed to a narrow explanation of violence involving young people and the lack of knowledge from a ground-up perspective from those involved in an imagined 'gang culture'. In the literature that follows, there has been an attempt to locate youth violence in its rightful place. What will become apparent is that UK gang research is composed of competing and conflicting perspectives on the gang, which has created a conundrum in terms of understanding violence in a street context. It is to these discussions that I next turn.

2.4 UK Gangs

As I have argued, far from considering the socio-economic context framing marginalised young people's lives, the black youth problem has historically and disproportionately been framed around a host of stigmatising stereotypes that are often linked to their seemingly inherent criminal behaviour. This racialised framework has set the context for contemporary debates on the gang, whereby media and politicians have linked collective youth violence to 'dangerous' black youth residing in urban neighbourhoods. As a result, the black youth question tends to be framed through a set of dominant ideological assumptions based on young black mens' perceived cultural deficiencies, and collective and pathological group behaviour. Concurrent with these stereotypical and negative representations of black youth is the fixation with the study of the urban street gangs which, as Sullivan (2005:170) notes, has become a 'field of studies unto itself'. What has emerged out of the burgeoning UK gang research is a variety of methodologies and epistemological perspectives. This has created a gang arena fraught with problems whereby gang researchers have failed to reach an agreement on what constitutes a gang, whether gangs actually exist or indeed how they develop. Discussions on the UK gang have largely focused on two broadly conflicting perspectives; the 'believers' (gang talkers) and the 'sceptics' (non-gang talkers) (Young, 2015).

Pitts (2008), who has in recent times been described as a 'believer' (Young, 2015) on one hand argues that gangs are a very real threat to society, requiring punitive policy and policing interventions to counteract violent criminality, while making comparisons between his community-based studies in London and the gang situation in the US context. In contrast, 'sceptics' Tara Young and Simon Hallsworth (2005; 2010) argue that through the process of moral panic the gang has become a social construction that reveals very little about the multiple lived realities of what they identify as street collectives and men on road. Additionally, what has emerged within these distinct schools of thought is developing empirical studies that examine urban males' lived experiences first-hand. Ilan (2007) Aldridge and Medina

(2008), Alexander (2008), Gunter (2008) and Fraser (2010), the latter of whom has conducted ethnographic research with marginalised young people, for example, also maintain that there is a need to move beyond the gang, and focus instead on the often mundane lived realities of urban men. Through a critical discussion of these studies, and drawing on other key debates that contribute to the UK gang phenomenon, I argue that the empirical work carried out on gangs so far is relatively weak and requires much more of an evidential base to ascertain what is happening in the lives of men who engage in street-based violence. The issue of street violence is far more complicated than the 'believers' and 'sceptics' imply, and what is required is a ground-up perspective that accurately portrays, and is sensitive to, the multiple lived realities that exist in an urban context.

2.4.1 From post-war subcultures to gangs

In the US, gang research has a rich and well-established research tradition, with its origins in the seminal work of Frederick Thrasher (1927) 'The Gang: A study of 1313 Gangs in Chicago'. Unlike gang research in America, which is renowned for a wide range of classic ethnographies and observational research, research on youth gangs in a British context was limited. According to Hallsworth and Young (2005) the relatively little concerted research into the gang in the UK was in part due to the lack of attention from criminological theorists to assign the label 'gang' to the subcultures that emerged post-war. Also, because, these subcultures could not be understood through the lens of the gang, and nor were they said to mirror the hierarchal fighting groups discovered in the American context. Traditionally, what existed was the reluctance by British criminologists to use the term gang, although this has since changed with the gangland thesis informing much of contemporary research on black youth. In recent times, there has been the readiness to present the 'black gang' as a new phenomenon (Pitts, 2008). However, Pearson (1983) reminds us that the UK has a long history of moral panics and 'respectable fears', centred on territorial youth groups, a point neglected by Pitts (2008) in his key assumptions that 'supergangs' are taking over the streets of Britain. Pearson demonstrated that from as early as the 19th century, Britain was home to an array of street-based groups. Moreover,

historically, the streets of London, Manchester and, Liverpool were renowned for their gang-like groups, who as Fraser (2010: 28) notes 'have been akin to Thrasher's depiction of 'unsupervised peer groups', rather than later incarnations of American gangs'. By contrast to what is now perceived as the dangerous urban street gang, young working-class males in the mid-19th century were identified as non-violent and unthreatening, with their activities provoking little anxiety. The urban street gang referred to today was therefore regarded a purely American construct, and something of a myth in British society.

David Downes (1966) was the first scholar to make the distinction between the American and British youth experience. He maintained that in the areas of Stepney and Poplar in London's East End, there was little evidence to suggest that Britain was experiencing the kind of structured style of US-style gangs. For Downes, gangs in Britain had a kind of myth-like character and failed to accurately describe what he found to be UK 'street corner groups':

> *'Delinquent groups in the East End lacked both the structured cohesion of the New York gangs described by Cloward and Ohlin, and the fissile impermanence of Yablonsky's 'near-group'. If the definition of delinquent gang is that of a group whose central tenet is the requirement to commit delinquent acts — i.e. 'delinquent subcultures' as defined by Cloward and Ohlin — then observation and information combined point to the absence of delinquent gangs in the East End, except as a thoroughly atypical collectivity.' (Downes 1966: 198)*

Downes based his findings on intensive fieldwork on the streets of East London, and found that the groups there lacked the organisation of gangs in New York, as defined by, for instance, Cloward and Ohlin (1960). In addition, Downes' East End boys did not fit the subcultural model characteristic of 'status frustration' as theorised by Cohen (1955). Instead, what he discovered in East London was a group of young men dissatisfied with their mundane existence

– namely what they considered as boring full-time employment – who had therefore constructed what they deemed to be excitement and freedom, something which they felt orthodox work could not provide. This then resulted in dissociation from work and greater emphasis on leisure, or what Downes called 'leisure values'. While these groups would engage in criminality, their deviancy was only ever said to be casual, and therefore was not seen as a defining feature of their identity. The East End boys' anti-social behaviour was purely perceived as an attempt to create excitement outside of a labour market that denied such opportunities (Downes, 1966). Such a sentiment was echoed in Paul Willis's (1977) study into 'why working-class kids get working-class jobs'. For Willis, the school setting was a space in which different masculinities were created, regulated, and produced. It was a space in which working class young people who had in the face of low aspirations and what Merton (1938) described as social strain, resisted the middle-class norms embedded in mainstream education, forming their own masculine subculture that mirrored Connell (1995) articulation of hegemonic' masculinity, which celebrated toughness, aggression and, immediate gratification. Messerschmidt (1993) writing in the US also found this masculine form, arguing that crime, deviance or anti-social behaviour is often the device employed by marginalised men, especially when other traditional routes to achieving manhood are denied. In a similar vein to Downes' East End boys, the working-class males in Willis's study resisted the mundane life they associated with unskilled, low-paid work, opting instead to establish their own destinies within a capitalist society that prepared them for such an existence.

What early research into delinquent groups found, then, was not American-style hierarchal gangs per se, but rather a common theme: groups of young working-class males resisting or indeed self-excluding from dominant culture, a life they associate with hardship, the mundane and a lack of social mobility. What both Downes' and Willis's studies demonstrate is that group delinquency is a product or rational response to working-class males' low socio-economic background, and their acknowledgement that they are destined for monotonous lives. What existed amongst working-class males was resistance to their routine existence, whereby they adopt alternative, often deviant ways to

counteract disadvantage. The Birmingham School (BCCCS), for example, also understood the behaviour of working-class males as a form of resistance. In the case of the subcultural scholars, however, the conduct of the subcultures that emerged post-war was identified as a form of 'resistance through rituals' (Cohen, 1972), as discussed earlier. In this sense, the BCCCS similarly focused attention away from the gang and towards an analysis of the symbolic aspect of working-class males' behaviour, namely their style, dress and, music. The subcultural tradition with its grounded symbolic interactionist understandings of youth identities dominated much of traditional discussion on youth groups in the UK. However, with the increasing moral panics centred on dangerous urban street gangs, there has been a departure from the subcultural tradition and a re-engagement with American gang literature, and a strong emphasis on critical realist criminology.

As Squires et al (2008) notes in a report that examined UK gang behaviour, there has been a growing interest in the gang phenomenon, with the problem of knife and gun crime at the forefront of media attention and political debate. He suggests that when 'popular concern and political reactions drive the debate along, the danger often is that policy making begins to outrun the available evidence base' (Squires et al 2008: 105). What has arisen, then, in the absence of a firm evidential base is a number of studies that attempt to quantify the alleged gang problem. For example, Sharp et al (2006: v), in his 'offending, crime and justice survey', reported 'overall an estimated 6% of young people aged 10-19 were classified as belonging to a delinquent group. Meanwhile, Bennett and Holloway (2004) have noted that of the adult arrestees that featured in their study across 14 locations in England and Wales, 15% identified themselves as having past affiliations with gang members. This seems to be a difficult assessment to make, and particularly, as noted earlier, as it is difficult to define what a gang is, and therefore who counts as a gang member. Nonetheless, the Metropolitan Police and Strathclyde Police have each identified between 170 and 171 gangs operating in London and Scotland (Centre of Social Justice, 2009). Such quantitative data appears to support what was described earlier as 'gang

talk', and fits well with Pitts (2008) and Harding's (2012) key argument that gangs are a real and menacing issue, responsible for a host of problems, including drug dealing, robbery and the latest media craze: gang rape.

Pitts, who actively fuels the 'gangland thesis' (Hallsworth and Young, 2008), has also identified 13 gangs in total in research conducted in Waltham Forest. Two of these were said to mirror the structure and organisation of American-style gangs. Pitts reasoned that gang members were immersed in the illegal drug economy and violence, with older members operating through a system of coercion, forcing younger and more 'reluctant gangsters' to engage in criminality. In a dialogue similar to the quantitative research reports presented above, Pitts argued that Waltham Forest was a hotspot for gangland activity, which was essentially driven forward by the illegal drug trade. Whether these key assumptions are accurate, what is notable about Pitts' study is the way in which crucial themes such as poverty or indeed social deprivation are overlooked, to focus instead on the exaggerated violent behaviour of young people in urban milieus. Indeed this is a view also expressed by Harding (2014) who argues that inner city estates are characterised by violent street gangs who compete in the 'social field' for 'street capital', feeding the assumption that these communities and young 'gang' members within them are lawless and operate through their own set of rules and regulation. In fact, there is an absence of evidence to suggest that Pitts' 13 gangs are taking over society, with such a misrepresentation potentially reinforcing the ever-increasing stereotypes of urban men as 'distinct' or 'alien Others'. There is, of course, a methodological problem in the process of defining what counts as a 'gang', and Hallsworth and Young (2008) therefore remind us to be sceptical about the term in explanations for serious youth violence.

In contrast, what has emerged in opposition to quantitative 'gang talk' – which has the tendency to construct gangs through an American framework of hierarchal arrangements, organisation and violence – is an opposing strand of qualitative research. Such study demonstrates that 'gang talk' is essentially problematic, arguing that quantitative methodologies adopted to understand the gang problem reveal very little about the lived experiences of urban young males. Hallsworth and Young maintain that the gang is a social

construction born from media and political discourse, which Young (2015: 180) points out 'stretches back at least to the mid-twentieth century fears around the first modern youth subcultures'. Hallsworth and Young, who challenge Pitts' principle argument that gangs are responsible for the growth in violence amongst the young, caution against the labelling of the young as solely gang members.They argue that Britain is home to different street collectives, which they identified as 'organised crime groups', 'street gangs' and 'peer groups'. Hallsworth and Young therefore acknowledged that some of these street collectives may have gang-like characteristics, most notably in what they identified as the 'street gang'. However, their central argument, which they reiterate across a number of their qualitative studies, is that these street collectives lack the structure and sophistication of, say, US gangs and, rather, operate in complex social worlds, in what was referenced by their respondents as 'life on road'. 'Life on road' was defined by Hallsworth and Young as a place in which young people with shared biographies came together for a variety of socio-psychological reasons, which include 'the need to socialise, find emotional, financial and social support' (Hallsworth and Young, 2011: 60). According to Hallsworth and Young, while 'life on road' was considered dangerous and prone to violence, they maintained that violence and criminality was not integral to the men's on road identity or purpose. In this way, Hallsworth and Young argued that given the dynamics in the group, particularly in terms of the lack of structure and complexity surrounding their lives, it would be more sensible to define them as 'volatile peer groups' as opposed to assigning them the gang label.

This perspective that there is a need to move beyond the gang when exploring street violence in a street context was shared by Anthony Gunter (2008) who also found young males immersed in 'life on road' in his ethnographic study entitled 'Growing Up Bad: Black Youth, 'Road Culture' and Badness in an East London Neighbourhood'. He offered a broader examination of the significance of life on road or what he identified as road culture. For Gunter, the issues of violence should be analysed in relation to young black males' lifestyles and transitions. He therefore argued that road culture was a distinct culture that was characteristic of black young men who opted to spend the bulk of their

leisure time on road, 'catching jokes' with their childhood friends. Violence, then, was not intrinsic to being on road. However, Gunter did point out that it was those involved in 'badness', those he claimed 'lived on road', who existed in a social space in which violence and criminality was a routine feature of everyday life. The idea that street violence could be a response to the social environment but in particular, the conditions of life within urban milieus, was also a view echoed by Jonathan Ilan (2007). In an important Ethnographic study Ilan, captured the subjective experiences of a particular group of socio-economically disadvantaged young people in Dublin, who he referred to as the 'crew', not gangs. His work focused on the social and cultural factors underpinning youth crime, questioning the extent in which endemic disadvantage and exclusion fosters involvement in what he described as a 'rough' or 'street' working class culture. In the case of the 'crew', Ilan argued that they embraced particular values, practices and strategies, which facilitated survival, as a means to navigate growing up in harsh and unforgiving social environments. In effect, Ilan reasoned that street culture was mobilised by the crew, to escape the futility of their lives, acting as the vehicle by which they could find excitement, gain a sense of autonomy, obtain status, and accumulate an income, all the things they were denied in mainstream society. Ilan, unlike more critical criminologists who attempt to quantify the issue of 'gangs', demonstrates through his examination of street culture the complex interplay between local contexts, for example the neighbourhood and the complexity of urban lived experience. Concentrated research such as Ilan's that explores, for instance, the nature and dynamics of urban youth identities is limited in the UK. As Alexander notes:

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

Alexander's summary of the problems inherent in UK gang research is particularly relevant to this thesis. Although British researchers tend to be fascinated with 'gangs' and 'gangsters', existing literature suggests that there is little agreement on what actually constitutes a gang, why they indeed develop or the purpose that they serve. As such, the British gang industry has become preoccupied with gang definitions, for example, 'delinquent youth groups', 'peer groups' and 'organised gang' to mention a few, and seem to have lost sight of everyday routine struggles that shape urban life. There is certainly an emerging strand of interpretive ethnographic studies that explore from a ground-up perspective the everyday mundane activities of marginalised young people (see Aldridge at al 2008; Fraser, 2010; Gunter, 2008, and Ilan, 2007; 2015 for example). However, there remains a relative dearth of such ethnographic accounts that attempt to put urban mens' lives into context from their point of reference. While, Aldridge at el (2008) have focused on the 'messy' youth networks and socio-demographic and lifestyle factors that shape urban experience, Fraser (2010) has analysed group identity and social change in a Glasgow city, Gunter (2008) has drawn attention to road culture and black males' transitions from schooling to the labour market, and Ilan (2015) has explored street culture in urban contexts. There is a need for further insight into the complex lifeworlds of urban males immersed in road culture. Against 'gang talk' that tends to obscure the lived realities of urban communities, there is a need to understand the multiple identities that exist in urban milieus, the meanings urban males assign to their lives and the socio-psychological factors that determine particular pathways. What we know less about is the actual process of how some young males become immersed in road culture – violence and criminality. In this respect, it becomes essential to analyse the micro associations of everyday life, moving away from a narrow focus on the gang towards an understanding of the ways in which urban men experience and narrate their social worlds.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the main literature discussions on youth, criminality and, gangs in the UK. Throughout the literature review, I have argued that the 'rediscovery' of the so-called 'gang' is simply a continuation of past fears centred on problematic youth. However, what is notable about much media and political discourse on the gang is the characteristic focus on working-class black young men residing in urban areas. As such, 'black working-class youth' and their 'gangs' have been referenced as the number one 'folk devil'. While UK gang research has developed in response to the increasing moral panics centred on the 'gang', the literature suggests that contemporary UK gang research is at present limited, and requires more of an evidential base to place gangs, or indeed young urban males' lives, into context. While it is important not to ignore contemporary gang discourse (driven forward by media, politicians and policy-makers), and the varying quantitative studies that examine the prevalence or structure of gangs (Pitts, 2008; Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Sharp et al, 2006). It was argued throughout the review for research that moves beyond a narrow focus on gangs, towards interpretative ethnographic studies that allow insight into the mundane aspects of urban life. Such ethnographic explorations of the meanings urban men attach to their lifeworlds may prove more useful in capturing the complexity of street-based violence. The review has set the stage for the present study, which endeavours to challenge 'gang talk', by way of an indepth exploration of road culture in a specific community in North London. In the following section, I will outline the epistemology, methodology and, methods used in my study.

3.0 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

The chapter provides an outline of the epistemological, methodological and, ethical dimensions of the study. The fieldwork for this research took place between July 2012 and March 2013 in a North London estate. It included semi-structured and focus group interviews with 29 participants. An ethnographic approach is taken in this study which Madden (2010: 1) describes as an approach that 'values the idea of walking a mile in the shoes of others'. In doing this, there is a strong emphasis in ethnographic research on understanding subjective reality in order to as Maliknowski (2014: xiv) argues, 'grasp 'the natives point of view, his relation to life to realise his vision of the world'. The choice to use ethnography arose from the need to explore the micro features of social life and the lived experiences of the young men involved in *onroad culture*. With its 'emic' approach, ethnography is particularly favourable in that it examines cultures from an 'insider view', focusing specifically on the ways a given culture attaches meaning or interprets the social world. The interpretive process characteristic of ethnography can be employed to contrast common sense understandings about urban men and gangs, and the lived experiences of those involved in street based violence. That is, moving away from a narrow focus on gangs, towards looking at how *'on road culture'* is experienced by those directly involved.

The chapter describes the process of conducting the research, beginning by explaining the research approach, particularly the rationale for undertaking qualitative research using an ethnographic methodology. It then examines the ethnographic approaches to data collection, describes the methods used. Here I position myself as insider researcher. I explore the ethical risks associated with my research, providing some reflections on how these were managed. The final section provides an exploration of the procedures used to analyse the data.

3.2 Epistemological and Methodological Approach

"I feel different out here in the hood with the mandem[3]; researcher's hat firmly on my head. I am no longer just Ebony, the girl with a shared childhood, but an outsider, questioning the social reality of a place I call home. Everything the mandem tell me, everything they do, is critically analysed – jotted down in my diary to be critically dissected at a later date. I am taking nothing for granted, as I sit on the block[4] attaching meaning to the mandem's lives on road…" (Extract from field notes – July 2012)

The above reflection drawn from my time in the field offers some insight into my feelings regarding my dual role as researcher and girl from the hood, and how this, in turn, shapes my way of seeing the world. Growing up in Northville and researching a community I belonged to posed various challenges. Throughout the process, I was forced to question everything about my own biography and personal history. Unbeknown to me at the time, I was on a journey to understand and attach meaning to why growing up in the confines of the inner city was so difficult, complex and sometimes ambiguous for we urban people. As the above suggests, I was an 'insider', therefore critical of 'gang talk' and what I understood to be outsider perceptions of urban men that did not resonate with my experiences of living amongst them. I had always felt awkward when reading UK gang research literature, particularly that which dehumanised the experiences of urban men, and felt that dominant analyses on violence in an urban context had the tendency to obscure, as Young notes (2011: 2) 'the inner life of human actors and the historical and social setting in which they find themselves in'. As a result, urban males' lives are often objectified. They are seen as a homogeneous group rather than individuals with multifaceted troubles and needs.

From my personal experience, Northville did not seem to warrant the reputation of violence or the images represented in gang literature, which tends to depict the lives of urban men through American gang fantasies, or

---

[3] 'Mandem' is a slang expression used by males on road. In a street context, it is often employed to describe their friends and associates. The term is referred to throughout the thesis, as it represents a hegemonic and centralised force in road culture.

[4] The 'block', used to describe the area where many of the mandem congregate, is explained further in Chapter Four.

define their offending through the lens of structured and fixed gang entities (Pitts, 2008). Rather, I was sensitive of the personal context that shape urban men's lives, and especially how they constructed meaning in their social worlds. Like C. Wright Mills (1959), I felt it important to move beyond what he describes as 'abstracted empiricism' when researching the social world, towards understanding how the 'internal' worlds of an individual merges with the 'external' social structure, and how this may, in turn, produce multiple ways of being and seeing the world. By adopting such a position, I had unknowingly already selected an ontological and epistemological standpoint, one that sees the nature of being as 'socially constructed' whereby 'truth, or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world' (Crotty, 1998: 8). It is my belief, as with the naturalist paradigm (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1971; Guba, 1978 and Glaser and Strauss, 1967) that social life is complex in its range of variables and operates at different levels whereby each individual experiences a different reality. I therefore embrace the relativistic, constructionist ontology that posits that there is no single reality, but rather multiple views of reality influenced by the social context, and consequently, the actor. Since this is an in-depth exploration of a particular phenomenon, that of 'on road culture' as a subculture, in which I sought to locate and understand the meaning urban men assign to their lives, a qualitative methodology proved a legitimate and valuable approach. Ultimately, the thesis's aim is to locate and understand the meaning and significance of road culture in the lives of the people in the community, and to avoid the generalisations consuming much of contemporary 'gang talk'.

To begin with, qualitative research places emphasis on understanding social phenomenon from the position of those involved, and is characterised by a set of defining features. Denzin and Lincoln define it as follows:

> *'Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the*

self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative research study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them.' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3)

Qualitative research is thus interpretive. That is, its central premise is to understand the social world from the respondent's point of reference, through detailed observations of their lived experiences. Historically, the interpretive worldview underpinning qualitative research has its roots in Weber's Verstehen approach – a framework concerned with 'interpretive understandings' through 'sympathetic participation' (Weber, 1847 cited in Miller, 2014: 204). This empathetic understanding centred on a participant's subjective experience constitutes an important component in qualitative research. For example, there is a strong emphasis on the relationship between researcher and researched, but in particular, on researcher sharing the situated meanings of those under investigation. According to Silverman (2001: 259) 'qualitative research's greatest strength is its ability to analyse what actually happens in a naturally occurring setting (unlike quantitative research, which often turns this phenomenon into a 'black box', defined by the researcher at the outset)'. For my own study, treating my participants as people, not as mere objects of my research, was especially important. I sought to move away from the many assumptions and stereotypes underpinning 'gang talk' described in Chapter Two, and qualitative research at best functioned as an approach to counteract gang imageries by way of humanising experiences. That is, giving a voice to marginalised groups who would otherwise have no voice outside the research process. Qualitative research, therefore, enables participants to be the writers of their story, allowing for the more mundane, everyday lived experiences of human subjects to come into sharp focus.

However, the emphasis in qualitative researchon humans as both 'an object of knowledge and a subject that knows' (Golinga & Frank, 2007: xv) has come under widespread criticism by the paradigms of natural science. This is

because the empirical paradigm holds that researched and researcher should be integral to the construction of knowledge, which has resulted in many positivist researchers questioning the validity, generalisability, and reliability of the production of knowledge through qualitative inquiry (Silverman, 2006). While the qualitative paradigm views the world as socially constructed, in contrast, underpinning quantitative research is the positivist paradigm; a worldview consistent with the idea that there is a single objective reality that is external to people's perspectives (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For positivists, who use scientific objectivity, the subjective nature of qualitative research is considered undesirable and untrustworthy. From this standpoint, truth can only be discovered through quantification (namely in the form of measurably data) whereby the researcher maintains minimal contact with participants, which supposedly produces data free from values and bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As such, researchers within the positivist paradigm tend to function from an outsider perspective with the aim of maintaining detachment. In a sense, what is apparent in quantitative modes of inquiry is a rejection of personal experience, or a desire not to probe the lived experiences of participants. While the subjective experiences of both the researcher and the researched are deemed sources of bias in quantitative research, they are, nonetheless, considered essential in qualitative research, especially because human perceptions are said to enrich our interpretation and understanding of the culture under investigation (Silverman, 2010). That is, the focus on understanding human experience and social worlds generates a different kind of knowledge from that of quantitative research that relies on deductive logic and confirming and refuting hypotheses (Creswell, 2014).

Evidently, the philosophical assumptions of positivism and naturalism are at opposite extremes. One model argues that science should be uncontaminated by researchers' interpretive and socially constructed knowledge, and the other maintains that researchers should accept they are part of the world that they observe. My epistemological stance suggests I am making certain assumptions about the nature of truth, human behaviour and the representation of the participants of my study. I do, however, accept that 'truth' is fragile, and have

questioned how my truth is constructed from my perspective as a resident of Northville, and as a researcher. Thus, I recognised the need to use my situatedness as a tool to interpret, but also be conscious of any assumptions arising from this that are not supported by data from the current fieldwork. My aim was to share in the con-construction of the men's reality, as opposed to generalising their behaviour. For this study, adopting the positivist stance on science could not satisfy my quest for knowledge concerning the texture and meaning of experiences of people on road. The general purpose of my thesis, then, was to gain insight into the social and cultural practices of the dynamic individuals on road, understanding the meanings they attach to their lifeworlds. Crucially, ethnography was the chosen methodology for this investigation because I was influenced by constructionism and, interpretivism, which challenge positivist assumptions of an objective quantifiable reality. This approach enabled me to produce accounts of this community from an inside perspective, providing the means to get closer to my study interest in order to capture the rich and diverse meanings attached to life on road.

3.3 Ethnographic Research

According to Brewer (2000: 37), the 'principal methodological justification for ethnography comes from the naturalist and the humanistic model of social research'. As noted earlier, this is a paradigm that posits that the social world and its actors cannot be studied in terms of simple 'fixed laws of cause and effect' relationships (Muijs, 2011: 4). Ethnography, thus, has its philosophical roots in naturalism and holism, and has been guided by modern anthropological questions and, attempts to respond to key anthropological questions – in particular, how people interact in their naturally occurring social ecology. In this way, ethnography has its early roots in anthropology (see Radcliffe-Brown, 1964 and Malinowski, 1967). More recently, it has been associated with sociology and the pioneering work of the Chicago School, which is renowned for moving this methodological approach from faraway foreign islands to urban environments (see Barley, 1989; Burgess, 1929 and Cressey, 1968). Within the field of sociology and criminology, some of the most influential studies on gangs or street culture have involved researchers

participating in the lifeworlds of their participants, learning from them their view of reality (see Anderson, 1999, Foote-Whyte, 1943, Pryce, 1986 and Thrasher, 1927). Ethnographic practice has a distinguished history within the social sciences, particularly for researchers seeking to explore 'hidden populations' or marginalised and deviant groups. For instance, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies has drawn heavily upon ethnography in analyses of youth cultures in Britain (Clarke, 1975, Hebdige, 1977 and Jefferson, 1975) in attempts to understand collective identities. With its Marxist approach, the Birmingham School sought to critically explore, using a grounded theory approach, wider systems of power, and the impact of structural disparities in the lives of working-class young people (see, in particular, Willis, 1977 and Cohen, 1972). The work of the Birmingham School has provided important insight into the relationship between power and specific cultural practices, looking particularly at how marginalised youth construct meaning in their lives against a backdrop of rapid social change.

Unquestionably, my decision to enter the lifeworlds of urban men was greatly influenced by scholars from both the Chicago School and Birmingham School, who relied solely on observing participants in a range of urban settings. Like them, I wanted to gain insight into the lifeworlds of urban men to understand how they participated and constructed meaning within road culture and wider capitalist society. Crucially, the work of these schools has focused on the principle of in-depth ethnographic accounts of subcultures in their day-to-day life. In practice, Hammersley and Atkinson argue that ethnography should involve:

> *'...participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said...collecting whatever data is available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research...' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 1)*

This definition of ethnography provides a useful starting point in discussing the suitability of the ethnographic approach to my study. Typically, ethnography

involves the researcher immersing him or herself within the community under investigation. This was of pivotal importance to gaining insight into urban men's experiences of life on road. Ethnography allowed me to describe in detail the 'social meanings and the ordinary activities' of participants in their natural everyday lives (Brewer, 2000: 11). Focusing on observation enabled me to explore how reality is experienced in 'real time and space', and therefore get close enough to understand directly how my participants 'think and feel the way they do' (Wacquant, 2003: 5). As such, the principle justification for using ethnography arose from my need to understand the more banal, everyday struggles of city life, with the aim of drawing the reader into the social worlds of urban men. Thus, I felt that no other method would enable me to enter the social worlds of such men, develop rapport over an extended period of time and afford me the opportunity to tell their stories. Ethnography, thus, effectively blends 'narrative theory, interpretative approaches ('thick description') and the poetics and politics of representation' (Goslinga & Frank, 2007: xv) in attempts to understand the social world. For many of these researchers, the notion of 'thick description' has been influential in documenting a particular group of people's experiences of a certain phenomenon.

'Thick description' is described by Geertz (1973: 6) as an 'elaborate venture', which goes beyond reporting details of experience and seeks to understand the 'meanings' behind behaviour. Furthermore, human activity is perceived as 'symbolic'. The ethnographer, therefore, must attempt to interpret how and why behaviour is shaped in a particular way. 'Thick description' provides the foundation for analysis and reporting, and is interpretive, such that it provides detailed accounts of the meanings people attach to a phenomenon. However, it also provides a vocabulary in which the reader is invited into the social worlds of the participants, so that the researcher can understand and draw their own interpretations. This is particularly important in relation to my study. If one is to understand the reality attached to being *on road*, one must strive to grasp participants' narratives in order to appreciate the unfamiliar, and subsequently generate knowledge from a culture that is easily misunderstood. Ethnography excels at providing rich narratives about what it

means to be human, and 'thick description' remains crucial to the tradition – especially when the researcher 'seeks knowledge from the complexity of the unknown' (Vicars, 2008: 107).

The main benefit of ethnographic study, then, is the detailed and sensitive accounts that are obtained from otherwise hidden populations. Thus, this approach takes the researcher into elusive populations, through direct and first-hand observation, whereby researcher is required to take on an 'emic' perspective and 'tell it like it is'. The 'emic perspective' according to De Chesney (2015: 100) is often referred to as an 'insider view', and describes, for example, local languages, customs, or behaviour in terms of respondents' self-understanding. That is, ethnographers tell the story of a phenomenon or culture from the perspective of those involved. In this respect, ethnographic researchers are required to be both 'storytellers and scientists' (Fetterman, 2010: 2) in that researchers, on one hand, enter the lifeworlds of respondents and become active members (insiders), and on the other, they operate from a place of detachment because they also document from the outside their time in the field. As such, ethnographic researchers are noted to be both insiders and outsiders simultaneously, alternating between both these experiences (Spradley, 1980). Therefore, drawing on the work of Hoey (2008: 136), at the heart of a good ethnography is not only recognition of its potentially 'transformative nature', but also acknowledging that it is by far 'a mutual product born of the intertwining of the lives of the ethnographer and his or her subjects'. This will be discussed in the next section.

3.3.1 Ethnography, 'insider' research and reflexivity

Ethnography is a diverse methodology, associated with in-depth semi structured interviews, and particularly participant observation, which has become its main method of data collection (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009). One of the main functions of the researcher, then, is to adopt the role as participant observer and enter the 'field'. The term suggests direct involvement in community life, to learn from the participants themselves what their view of reality is (Agar, 1980). The very nature of the method suggests going beyond being a bystander, and building intimate relationships with

participants. This is said to 'produce the duality of the research role and the dilemma of being simultaneously an insider and an outsider' (Calvey, 2000: 46). There a longstanding interest in the positioning of the ethnographic researcher in the fieldwork setting. As a result, debates have arisen around the notion of insider and outsider approaches to the study of social life (Merton, 1972). The insider studies aspects of their own life or culture, whereas the outsider researches a situation they do not belong to, or an experience they do not share.

The insider position is particularly relevant to my study because, as noted in Chapter One, my current home and intimate connection with participants have informed the ethnographic approach adopted. According to Sikes and Potts (2008: 6), 'insider research has, traditionally, been a term associated with anthropologists and sociologists adopting an ethnographic approach within a specific social setting'. Indeed, there have been supportable discussions in both anthropology and sociology centred on insider and outsider research, which has understandably brought to the fore debates about objectivity and subjectivity in ethnographic research. The identity of the ethnographic researcher, but particularly his/her insiderness, has therefore raised many questions about how far the researcher can keep an objective distance and hence provide reliable and valid accounts of the social world under investigation (Hammersley, 1992). As Hoey, (2008: 135-136) argues, ethnographic fieldwork is 'shaped by personal and professional identities just as these identities are inevitably shaped by individual experience while in the field'. However, such a dimension, or as Blackman (2007: 699) argues, 'the emotional contact between observer and the participant' is often hidden in sociological fieldwork accounts. This is understandable, considering that one of the reoccurring criticisms of ethnography is its seemingly lack of reliability and validity. Whilst such criticisms should be taken into account when undertaking ethnographic research, they were not of major concern for me, since the aim of the research was to reveal the subjective nature of people's experiences rather than generalising.

The subjective nature of the research and the problematic aspects of my positioning are then epistemologically relevant, least of all because I

encountered a dramatic change in perspective and was forced to 'look in the mirror' at my insider status. For example, while observing my male participants in the 'shebeen'[5] I was approached by a 'Yardie'[6] woman who not only called me a 'half-breed'[7] reporter, but also told me I was not welcome at the location. This incident in particular served to firstly destabilised my insider identity, and secondly force me to reflect on the partial and elastic nature of my insiderness. I started to imagine myself as being outside the community; something that I had not envisaged at the start of the process. I found conducting research in my community was not an easy task; it did not run as smoothly as I anticipated. However, part of ethnography is a reflexive process in which the researchers reflect on the social world that they inhabit. In these reflections in general, however, there is a tendency to filter out controversial encounters in the field. Researchers often conceal, for example, 'origins, biography, locality, and intellectual bias' (Blackman, 2007: 700). Blackman calls this the 'hidden ethnography' in which ethnographers are reluctant to write about the emotional contact they have with participants because of the fear of 'losing legitimacy, or being discredited' (Blackman 2007: 700). Rather than hide the tensions inherent in my study, I will attempt to highlight them, adopting what Denzin and Lincoln (1998) describe as the 'reflexive turn' where I write myself and some of my experiences into the narrative.

In common with Stenhouse (1979) and Sikes and Potts (2008), I was not especially troubled by issues of 'objectivity' when I embarked on the research. The subjective nature of the study was not something that stood out to me. I perhaps commenced the research with a rather polarised view – an 'us' vs 'them' standpoint where the 'us' was me and my community (the insiders) and the 'them' were the 'gang talkers' who stigmatised and misrepresented the people I grew up with. From this simple and polarised starting point, my

---

[5] A shebeen traditionally describes an Irish or Scottish informal/unlicensed 'drinking' establishment. In Northville, young and adult men often congregated at their local shebeen, drinking alcohol, smoking weed and playing dominoes. The shebeen was also a hotspot for criminal activity.
[6] The Oxford dictionary defines a 'Yardie' as 'a fellow Jamaican' or 'a member of a Jamaican or West Indian gang of criminals'. In the context of this research, Yardie is a British slang term used to describe an individual of Jamaican descent, who may or may not engage in criminal activity.
[7] A derogatory term used to describe someone of mixed heritage.

intention was to first and foremost attend to my political and ideological sympathies; namely promoting social change towards equality. As the research progressed, however, and when I acknowledged that I was 'Ebony the academic' as opposed to 'Ebony from the hood', it dawned on me that during the initial stages of the research, like Becker (1967), I had a 'side', or I had taken a 'side'. Becker (1967: 239) argues that when studying aspects of deviance, it is impossible 'to avoid taking sides, for reasons based firmly in social structure'. He suggests that the issue is not about whether we should take sides, as such, but the questions that arise about whose side we are on and our value base. For me, I could not separate my shared biography with my participants from my academic positioning, and nor did I want to. My insider positioning would potentially provide exclusive insights, since I was unique in possessing the capabilities to get as close as possible to my community, and understand their experiences and struggle. I was keen not to be classified as a perceived outsider who lacked common empathy with the everyday struggles of urban living. Additionally, it was imperative – or so I told myself – that I remained connected to my former self and the people that I grew up with. The reality, however, was that by undertaking research on my community I had already created that divide.

The acceptance of outsider status, then, was a long and very slow process, which brought with it various conflicting and challenging emotions for me. In a similar vein to Foote-Whyte (1943), who struggled with his dual identity in his research, I moved from insider to outsider, questioning my relationships with the people around me. Not only was there new insight into my positioning, but as with the issues Pryce (1986) encountered when undertaking research in a deprived Bristol city, I, too, experienced great strain in relation to the obvious social and educational differences. Moreover, my relationships with the people I cared about the most changed, and even my closest friends started to view me through quite a different lens. I was no longer just Ebony, the girl with a shared childhood, but rather someone that they regarded as existing outside the hood, with whom they had to proceed with caution. It was not uncommon for participants to change the way they spoke or behaved in my presence, make comments in relation to my

academic identity or question my insistence on being familiar with them. These behavioural changes in my informants show the limitations of my insider identity, or the point to which my research identity conflicts with it.

I came to embrace my dual identity during the research process. As a community member I shared points of identification with my participants; I was a 'sister' and an academic entwined. I was also aware that I had distanced myself from the community and the contaminating hood mentality because of the research and my personal goals, and because I was now questioning the social reality of a place I called home. However, rather than engage in futile attempts to dismiss the limitations of my research role, my ethnography requires a cautious and reflexive approach as I play a central role in the narrative. Lawson (1985: 9) describes reflexivity 'as turning back on oneself, a form of self-awareness'. That is, researchers are sensitive to their own subjectivities, while reflection upon 'their connection to the research situation and hence their effect upon it' (Davis, 1999: 7). For my research, it is important that the differences between self and participants does not become blurred during the research process. Although I may occupy an intimate lens, this should not mean I command the power to know all things related to road culture. Furthermore, a major difference, or a way in which I am separated from research participants is in our life experiences. For example, I have not had to endure life on road, and nor have I been victim to or perpetrator of violent crime. I am placed as an outsider because of these disjunctions, but because I am in a position to tell their story, it is told through my eyes.

As Eppley (2006: 5) notes, 'there is othering in the very act of studying, a necessary stepping back or distancing in varying degrees'. Through the sheer act of observing and listening to my friends articulate the role of road culture in their lives, I realised how fundamentally disconnected I was from life *on road*. How could I assume that my research would not change me as a person, or alter the way I viewed my community? After all, I was critically examining the social reality of some of my closest friends, who were immersed in a culture that they were unable to break free from. This in itself would always act as a mechanism that separated me from them. I initially

argued that I was an insider and nothing more. However, ironically I found that accepting and revealing what Moore (2007) describes as 'forbidden fruits' (inner constructs that influence and direct the way one views the world and the people within it) enabled me to gain some critical distance from what was once a rather romanticised view of my community. By exposing the 'self' or accepting that 'researchers, then, can be neither insider nor outsider; they are instead temporarily and precariously positioned within a continuum' (Eppley, 2006: 5), by the end of the investigation I ended up somewhere in the middle; threading the lines between the subjective lives of those *on road*. Thus, reflexive ethnography has become highly significant in the study of social life and remains essential to my exploration of road culture.

3.4 Collecting Data from the Mandem

Ethnography is noted for its employment of multiple methods of data collection. As Foote-Whyte (1943) did in his study of an urban Italian neighbourhood in Boston, I used a mixture of techniques to fulfil my research objectives. Although, unlike Foote-Whyte, I did not rely heavily upon the use of a key informant, I used my shared biography as a device to befriend and engage my participants. I spent nine months collecting data in Northville, whose demographics can be found in Chapter Four. Due to my insider positioning and the fact that I had been witnessing the local customs for a number of years previously, I would argue that participant observation commenced long before this. However, from July 2012 to March, 2013, I 'officially' entered the field where three main data collection methods were employed; participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. I did not enter the field with special research training, other than my MA study block on research methods**.** Nonetheless, I used my insider positioning to the best of my ability, particularly when recording data in various locations. Spradley (1980) refers to four levels of participation, of which one involves complete participation. This refers to the researcher being completely integrated in the population under investigation. I occupied what Spardley categorised as 'complete participating'– although it is important to note that I was not in the same category of risk and vulnerability

as the men on road. I was thus a participant in the community, but not in the precise subculture entirely.

Since ethnography is an evolving process requiring constant reflection and reflexivity (Davis, 1999) I did not feel the need to put tight boundaries on the edges of my research. I did, however, adopt some measures to engage the appropriate individuals for the research. To this end, a form of purposeful sampling was employed, as well as aspects of convenience sampling. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson, (1995: 45) note, 'selecting cases for investigation is not the only form of sampling involved'. Places, contexts, settings, events, and times can also guide the selection of the objects of study and the limits of the study. For my study, sampling (studying) different locations was important in order to map elements of the culture. As such, I gathered data from various settings, most notably hotspot areas that I identified through a mapping exercise consisting of physically drawing a map of Northville highlighting where there was social, but also criminal activity (see Figure 4). Importantly, time and context also played a crucial role in the framework for sampling locations. In order to understand my respondents' routine, it was important to observe them at different times of the day and week. The rationale for this approach was to engage and interact with a wide diversity of individuals. Although my observations were not necessarily fixed to a particular time or context, I was conscious that there was a seasonal dimension, with summer periods offering more opportunities than the winter months to collect data. This is because summer in Northville is a peak time for activity, with urban men spending the most time 'hanging'[8] on road. I did, however, manage to collect data in the winter, as the goal was to generate understandings of road culture in a range of settings and at various times of the year.

The observational aspect of the research was not a managed process. Many observations occurred when I least expected, particularly on my journeys around the area and to and from home. I found that participant observation went beyond simply showing up at a location and making notes. Rather, it

[8] This term is explained in more detail in Chapter Four.

proved to be a complex method that demanded that I take the initiative. It was not uncommon, for example, to record data when I was out socially, or when my researcher's hat was supposedly off. I engaged one of my key participants during a night out with my friends, where we spent most of the evening discussing aspects of his life. Participant observation seemed to become more vital every time I came into contact with unexpected situations or respondents. Similar to Bourgois (1995/2003), who spent vast amounts of time with his study group of drug dealers and addicts in New York's Harlem neighbourhood, and tape recorded hundreds of hours of their conversations, I spent many scheduled days and nights amongst my community. I shared endless narratives about imprisonment, working in the illegal economy, the 'Babylon' system[9], violence and, revenge. I also listened to accounts of their goals, aspirations, dreams, love interests, family and, children. I regularly tape-recorded these moments with the consent of participants. Where this was not feasible – because I did not feel comfortable asking, or because I did not have my recorder with me – I compiled field notes later that day and drafted notes in my reflective diary. This was so as not to lose important information, such as my own thoughts and feelings of the day's events. The data was recorded in greater detail once I left the site, quite often formulating memos of what I was learning from it. While I was not attentive to the place of work or religion in road culture at the outset, an unexpected meeting led to a substantial collection of data on these themes. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Five and Six. Whilst the primary source of data stemmed from visual observations, the interview is a widely used method in qualitative research. I employed this technique to capture my respondents' unique perspective of the role of road culture in their lives.

---

[9] The 'Babylon' system is a key part of Rastafarian ideology and discourse. The concept is used to describe evil, oppression, corruption and racism that Rastafarians believe are at the heart of a colonial society.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews and focus groups

While interviewing is extensively used in qualitative research, it is important to note that the format adopted by researchers varies according to the methodology employed. For me, the choice of semi-structured as opposed to structured interviews provided the flexibility to arrange meetings to suit my research needs (Bryman, 2012). My approach was to simply devise a list of topics I hoped to explore, phrase the questions as I felt appropriate in the context, and, naturally, participate actively in the dialogue. Such workability would have been difficult to obtain through a structured format. The unstructured quality of the interview meant I usually felt as though I was having an informal chat with friends. The conversations were very fluid and would often deviate into unexpected directions, adding extra richness to the interactions. For example, during the interviews it was not uncommon for me to feel like I was the interviewee, as some respondents attempted to use the interactive space to find out more about my personal life. Like the male respondents in Scully's (1994) research, who asked her personal questions during the interview process, I was asked on three separate occasions whether I was single, and what I had planned that night. Indeed, literature on women researching men often highlights a number of methodological questions, the most central being how gender is performed in the research process, and how this may influence data collection (Pini, 2005). For example, critiques on cross-gender researcher interactions 'have examined the research encounter between women researcher and male participant as illustrative of, and embedded in, the social relations of power, including gendered power' (Pini and Pease, 2013: 7). In terms of the interactions that I had with the mandem, two factors were central in influencing the ways in which the male participants perform gender.

Three male respondents flirting with me showed that they had begun to view me as an attractive woman, and not necessarily as a researcher. For example, my femininity led to some participants performing their gender in ways that they assumed would impress me, notably boasting about their earning potential and perceived road capital. Secondly, however, my

insiderness, created a contrasting dynamic, whereby most male participants would tone down their masculine road bravado, therefore performing gender in ways that they assumed would not offend me. For instance, the male participants were very mindful of how they came across. I often found that they would censor themselves, framing their criminality in a broader moral code, while providing justifications for their crimes. In fact, most of the men on road engaged in self-presentation as a 'good gangster', wanting to show their more 'pleasant' side because, in their eyes, I was to be respected. I would therefore argue that while the interviews were in part shaped by my femininity, my position as 'Ebony, childhood friend' was far more significant for my participants. As Troyna (1998: 101) argues, 'researchers bring multiple identities to the research process', with such identities 'constantly being negotiated in the course of the interviews in ways which might attenuate or strengthen the insider/outsider status of the researcher'. Thus, I had far greater culture privilege (for example cultural capital) than I did gender privilege because of my insider status. I was not an unfamiliar woman, but a woman the male respondents knew, and whom they were eager to be open with. The male respondents cared more about positioning me as an insider rather than an attractive woman, and engaged with me for that reason.

The same, however, cannot be said for the women in Northville, who viewed me from quite a different position, and around whom I felt less comfortable. As noted earlier, during my time in the field I stretched between two poles: insider and outsider. The partial and elastic nature of my insiderness was made particularly apparent by the resistance I felt from the Northville women in the fieldwork setting. I did not blend in all the time, and on occasions I was made to feel like quite the novelty item, with the interest placed squarely on me rather than the participants. As described above, in the shebeen I was verbally abused by a Yardie woman because of my ethnicity and gender. This triggered an unconscious decision to stay away from women, especially since I had instinctively presumed that I would be viewed negatively for becoming close and collusive with the mandem through activities such as entering spaces women were not usually welcome. This meant that generally

I did not engage with women on road. This was partly because my research topic led me into a largely male-dominated space, but also because my perception of the women on the estate was complicated by my own experiences growing up, as well as personal prejudices. As Ely et al (1991: 122) notes, in order for researchers to understand the experiences of participants, it is important to recognise one's 'personal prejudices, stereotypes, myths, assumptions, and other thoughts or feelings that may cloud or distort the perception of other people's experiences'. To elaborate, I began the research with a predominantly negative view of the women in Northville. This was because I had watched so many women before me exhibit a version of female dependency, surrendering their lives to multiple child rearing and what I deemed as no real aspirations for the future. I have long felt a sense of disconnection with the women in Northville; an inability to relate to their experiences. Indeed, emulating their existence was something I had been desperately trying to avoid since an early age. There has been a sense of apprehension about examining the role of women or confronting what Gagaliardi defines as one's own 'hidden ghosts' (cited in Ely et al, 1991). These tensions interfered with my ability to observe and understand their lived experiences. I have attempted to be reflective about my decision in order to gain a clear sense of why women did not have a higher profile in the study.

Importantly, the semi-structured interviews conducted with male respondents created a space in which they could talk openly about their lives. This level of intimate interaction often permitted me to experience and understand their feelings, thoughts and, motivations. While it was impossible to observe every aspect of life on road, the semi-structured interviews helped attach meaning to my observations, providing a window in which to explore elements that these observations alone could not. I conducted 21 semi-structured interviews in conjunction with eight focus groups. Unlike semi-structured interviews, which consist of one-to-one interviewing, these groups were a viable tool for capturing group interaction. In the most simplistic terms, 'focus groups are group interviews' however they are a 'special kind of group in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures' (Krueger and Casey, 2000: 4). It

is no coincidence, then, that participants are usually selected due to similar backgrounds or characteristics that fall in line with the research topic.

The principle justification for employing focus groups in this research was to gain access to the views and experiences of the younger cohort of men, who declined invitations to participate in one-to-one interviews, and often left the setting before my observations were completed. In many ways, the focus groups acted as a valuable tool for engaging the 'youngers'[10] who spent the bulk of their time socialising in a group. Group cohesion in this sense was strong: the youngers were far more willing to express their opinions amongst friends rather than individually. As Fern (2000: 14) argues, 'if an individual has no sense of belonging or attraction to the group, it is doubtful that he or she will participate in the discussion'. Therefore, the collective nature of the focus group method suited the needs of my sample group, whose members have a shared identity and are mistrusting of outsiders.

The eight focus groups were relatively small in size (five people). This enabled me to keep the sessions focused, and to steer the discussion if participants deviated from the topics at hand. However, it is relevant to note that one of key advantages of focus groups is that they create a setting in which participants work in collaboration with researchers, while shifting the power dynamics in favour of participants (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1991). This balance in dynamics is particularly useful in terms of empowering participants by giving them a voice. As feminist researchers such as Wilkinson (1998) also argue, it has the added benefit of enriching data, because participants are offered the opportunity to co-construct meaning. In this respect, my role as moderator was solely to guide, probe, and promote debate, listening attentively to my participants teach me about their experiences on road.

As noted above, focus groups offer the platform for participants to share in the decision-making process. They also provide the space to obtain information from what Kitzinger (1994) refers to as 'difficult' population groups; that is,

---

[10] The term 'youngers', used to describe mandem aged 16 to 24, is explained in depth in Chapter Four.

communities that are socially marginalised or otherwise reluctant to take part in a research project. Although focus groups are particularly useful in accessing hard-to-reach populations, when researching such groups, such as those involved in criminality and violence, as is the case with my study, this method presents complexity and challenges. A particular challenge confronting researchers is based around issues of self-disclosure and confidentiality, given the collective nature of focus groups (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). The safest way to attend to matters of self-disclosure and confidentiality was to conduct the focus groups with childhood friends who had built and sustained relationships of trust and loyalties with each other prior to the research. This was a conscious decision on my part, given the untrusting nature of the youngers and my own anxieties around privacy and the potential of peer pressure within the group. Conducting the groups with friends, as opposed to associates, allowed for the uncensored flow of information. Further, it helped ease the building worries of some of the youngers who displayed initial reservations about taking part in the research.

In preparation for the focus groups, I drafted an information sheet and emphasised the importance of confidentiality; namely, that discussions remained in the group, and were not relayed to anyone outside the group. This caused great offence to some youngers, who assumed I was in some way insinuating that they were either 'snitches' or 'informers', and found it insulting that I would question their loyalties to their friendship group. Indeed, some of the youngers threatened to withdraw their participation for this reason. In the end, I was able to assure the youngers of the professional code to which I was bound in my research–particularly with regard to protecting them from harm. I then reiterated the importance of respecting confidentiality, especially as I was unable to control what happened beyond the focus group sessions. Negotiating ethical dilemmas such as these have played a definitive role during my time in the field amongst the mandem. It proves sensible that the ethical dimension to this study is discussed in further detail in the material that follows.

3.5 Ethics and Researching those 'on road'

3.5.1 The ethics approval process (before fieldwork)

The continual revision of my ethics approval application meant that I entered the field somewhat later than planned. I struggled to navigate ethics approval and spent approximately eight months (producing three draft ethics applications) reassuring Brunel University's Research Ethics Committee on a number of significant concerns raised as a result of my original application. Of particular concern for the Committee were the risks I faced carrying out my research in Northville, given that I lived there. It was especially concerned with the emic nature of my research and my insider position, and, because of privacy issues, had a preference that researchers do not live in the community where they are conducting a study. A foreseeable issue for the Committee, then, was to determine whether I would be taking any risks as a researcher that I would not be taking in my everyday life. However, what stood out most for me in the ethics process was its rigorousness. More specifically, despite the fact I provided elaborate responses to the potential ethical issues raised by my proposed work, by the end of the process the Committee was still not satisfied that I would be 'safe' amongst the people I had grown up with. As such, I believe that the ethics process was made complicated not only by my insiderness and the ethical tensions associated with insider research, but also by the fact that my study of on road culture was a sensitive topic.

For researchers, including myself, exploring sensitive topics, which Lee (1993: 4) defines as 'research which potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it', confronts researchers with acute methodological dilemmas. For Lee, sensitive topics can be categorised into three broad areas. The first are those that are considered private, stressful or sacred. The second relates to deviance and criminality, where there is the possibility that incriminating information may be revealed, causing stigmatisation and fear. The third are research topics that relate to political threat, are controversial or involve social conflict. This study fits within the second category of Lee's sensitive topics, as it is related to deviance and includes a

cohort of marginalised men who were immersed in criminality and violence. Regarding the ethics approval process, I would argue that since my topic is based on a research area characterised by a certain degree of stereotyping (as described in Chapter Two), misrepresentation, and an overall lack of knowledge regarding the activity of groups in disadvantaged inner-city estates, the Ethics Committee was making assumptions about the subject matter. That is, the imagery of the inner-city, which tends to include lawless 'gangs', violence, crime, and general conflict (Pitts, 2008), meant the Committee was heavily focused on my physical safety during the research process.

Jones (2011), in his analysis of 'chavs', argues that council estates and the people residing there are often institutionally vilified, which works to obscure the reality of life in inner-city locales. Likewise, urban men are reduced to single categories such as 'gangs', meaning they are feared within inner-city neighbourhoods. I believe that because of moral panics on gangs, the Committee was, perhaps unconsciously, susceptible to contemporary 'gang talk'. I am of the belief that it regarded my methodology and data collection methods as problematic because of this. Before the research could proceed, thus, I had to clearly document how I intended to manage the potential ethical dilemmas attached to my research. The third (and final) draft that I submitted to the Ethics Committee required, firstly, assurance of my physical well-being – because it was, I feel, over-cautious about my insider identity and the subject matter. Secondly, it needed me to have assessed the subjective risks to ensure that I would not be harmed emotionally by undertaking the study.

In defence of my topic area, I adopted the attitude that the advantages of researching my community outweighed the potential research dilemmas. I could not deny or disregard the dangers associated with my choice of topic. However, what I argued was that because of my insider status, and since I lived in my research setting, I was familiar with the context and as such would apply my usual safety awareness. As a result, I believed it would be possible to manage any potential risks that I may encounter. Having said that, the purpose of my research was not to hunt for criminality or to wilfully place

myself in dangerous situations. Indeed, one of the reasons I became interested in this area was to give my community a 'voice' or to dispel some of the myth that surrounds places reminiscent of Northville. Unlike the Ethics Committee, I did not feel I would be taking any risks that would not occur in my everyday life. Throughout the ethics approval process, then, I was forced to confront the possible research dangers that may arise as a consequence of researching my community and its members. I came to accept that challenges and conflicts go hand in hand with the type of research that I was undertaking. However, in the field, I realised my insider positioning, although advantageous, created various unforeseeable research issues, all of which demanded immediate responses. These will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

3.5.2 'On reflection' (after fieldwork)

As the above section illustrates, prior to entering the field I felt certain that data collection would run smoothly, and that I would be able to immerse myself in the social worlds of the mandem with no real implications for me as either Ebony (insider) or Ebony the academic (outsider). I soon came to realise that ethnography is a 'messy business' (Pearson, 1993: vii) which propels ethnographers into what Inciardi (1993) describes as 'dark corners of society'. Although one aim of the ethics process was to access potential risk in order to minimise potential harm, this did not prepare me for the emotional turmoil that I experienced when faced with real-life scenarios emerging as the research unfolded. Before entering the field, I had underestimated the risks involved in observing the brutality of the mandem's social worlds. The Ethics Committee was thus right to be concerned about my well-being, not necessarily in a physical sense (I did not experience physical threats to my safety, as anticipated), but instead,with regard to issues surrounding privacy and harm. Battling with the risk of exposure (Becker, 1963; Jacobs, 1998 and Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000) was undoubtedly where I experienced the most anxiety, opening me up to raw feelings of fear and vulnerability.

For example, on August 2012 the day of the street brawl (full reflection provided in Chapter Four) I was enmeshed in life on road, mediating the

territorial (post-code) violence consuming the youngers' social worlds. This led me into an unfamiliar and frightening domain. Not only did this challenge me morally, as my role as insider and outsider intertwined and were not clearly defined; it also exposed me to legal and ethical dilemmas where I could 'endanger my respondent by acquiring data about them that could possibly incriminate them' (Brymer and Farris, 1967: 313). As Ned Polsky argues in Howard Becker's (1967) 'Outsiders', researchers who make the conscious decision to study risky populations must therefore accept that in some way they will inevitably break the law. Although I had no intention to 'obstruct justice', or indeed be an 'accessory' to lawless activities (Becker, 1967: 171), I had to be aware of the illegal activity that I was sometimes privy to, and consider the effects of this on both myself and the mandem.

For me, the main challenge, then, of conducting research with men I had grown up with was not placing the mandem or myself in a vulnerable position. In addition, I had to be careful not to put at risk the trusted relationships that I had built prior to 'officially' entering the field, or to jeopardise my social standing in the community. Like Yates (2004), who was very conscious of her positioning and feared being labelled a 'grass', I, too, considered whether I had a professional duty to report crimes or a personal duty to turn a blind eye in order to protect myself from possible reprisals, and my respondents from harm. In a close-knit community, there is a strong emphasis on reputation, closely paired with disrespect. For example, a man who is robbed or shot does not respond by alerting the police; rather, he is expected to fight back to protect his masculinity and 'save face'[11]. For my community, respect was, then, a very powerful form of social control, particularly when other avenues of self-expression were blocked. I had to be perceptive of the notion of 'respect', particularly because I was (and am still) living within the community, interacting with the men on a day-to-day basis. I was keen not to be labelled a potential police informant, since this would jeopardise not only the trusted relationships built over time and my own safety, but also the successful completion of my study.

---

[11] A slang term or figure of speech used by some of the men in Northville to refer to protection against embarrassment and humiliation.

It was difficult to adopt a pure strategy, particularly when balancing, for example, the practicalities of my dual role as community member and researcher. I was forced to acknowledge the human consequences of the research, making 'difficult decisions about personal and professional responsibility' (Ferrell, 1998: 20). To this end, I concluded that not only did I have a professional and personal obligation to protect my participants; but, more significantly, I had a duty to myself to ensure that I did not willingly place myself in physical danger. Where feasible, I was able to employ some formalised ethical protocols to assist in the protection of the participants. For example, the mandem were asked to sign a consent form (see appendix 2). I also ensured that informed consent was sought at various points of data collection; in particular, prior to observing the mandem in the hotspot locations in and around Northville. However, as Murphy and Dingwall (2007: 2226) note, in ethnography, consent is usually 'a relational and sequential process rather than a contractual agreement', which tends to be negotiated and re-negotiated in the field. Since I was aware that risks change with time, I made it a priority to present information and discuss issues on more than one occasion with each individual, and to reflect on and re-evaluate the risks of participation. It was therefore important for me to engage in an ongoing dialogue with the participants so as to be completely satisfied that they fully understood the research, risks and benefits.

As noted above, an overriding concern was the desire to protect myself and participants from harm. It was not always possible to predict or control what happened in the field, as discussed earlier. My solution to safeguarding the privacy of the mandem so that I was not compromised was two-fold. Firstly, they were informed – in particular during interviews – that they had no obligation to disclose identifying or incriminating information (so were not required to give names, dates, times or places). However, on occasion, the mandem, forgetting that I was a researcher, divulged quite personal information. For my part, I adopted journalists' approach of dealing with such tensions, referring to 'on the record' and 'off the record' statements. The former refers to information that the source trusts will be reported fairly and accurately, while the latter describes that which is sensitive in nature and that the source

prefers not be made public (Keeble, 2001). I deemed it crucial to adopt this strategy, and found it necessary to scrutinize the data I generated and planned to publish. In addition, some researchers, most notably Claire Alexander (2000), have been known to check with research participants regarding the content of data being published. For example, in her study on the 'Asian gang', she involved the young people interviewed in every stage of her book's production. I, too, felt this was necessary for my study. This undoubtedly aided me in protecting my research participants and conserving my trusted relationships. Secondly, it was crucial to remain aware of not only inside hazards (for example other people in the community) but also outside hazards; namely the police, and the possibility of them recognising the research area and working out who was enmeshed in criminal activity. The safest way to protect the identity and rights of my participants was to anonymise the research site and my participants. It is for this reason I have referred to the neighbourhood as Northville, rather than its real name. Further, I have not disclosed the real names of the research participants; rather, the mandem have chosen pseudonyms.

3.6 Data Handling and Analysis: Thematic Analysis

I found the process of analysing data generated from my interviews and field notes demanding. Indeed, ethnography is said to produce a volume of raw data that researchers find challenging to manage and organise (Silverman, 2006). During the initial stages of data handling, I adopted a somewhat basic strategy of grasping the data, consisting of reading my datasets and looking for reoccurring themes with a set of questions in mind. Corbin and Strauss (2008) emphasise the use of 'sensitising questions' when reading through data. These questions assist the researcher in understanding what the data may represent. Approaching my data with a set of questions, for example, 'What is going on here?', 'Who are the key actors involved?' and, 'How do they define the situation?' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 72) proved very useful in overcoming the initial overwhelming nature of the analysis. Generally, I approached data handing and investigation on the notion that there had to be a correct, i.e. systematic, system to tackle my data. However, as Hammersley

and Atkinson suggest, (2004: 206) systematically analysing data as it is being produced is not always feasible, mainly because, as they argue, 'engaging in sustained data analysis alongside data collection is often very difficult'. Finding it unnecessary to develop a fixed strategy for analysing my data, it seemed sensible to simply trust my instincts and strive to be critical and reflective about my positions. I became less concerned about 'getting it right', developing a manageable formula to tackle data analysis. This included an interpretive and reflexive approach to reading my data sets and a thematic analytic strategy as a means to analyse my data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Silverman, 1997 and Saldana, 2009).

Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) define thematic analysis as a 'method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data'. That is, thematic analysis enables close engagement with a variety of information, while allowing researchers to search for themes in a rigorous manner. Flexibility is a feature of thematic analysis. As Wood et al (2009: 153) state, 'because thematic analysis does not specify too narrowly in advance what your analytical focus will be, it may allow you to work inductively to produce a rich description of the phenomenon that you are studying'. I found a data-driven approach useful, particularly as I wanted to remain open to new possibilities. As such, an approach allows researchers to work with raw information, there tends to be appreciation for buried material or the recognition of silent insights (Boyatzis, 1998). Using a thematic analysis in this way helped me move beyond my personal experiences and existing preconceptions, allowing me to look at my data afresh.

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six clearly defined phases of conducting a thematic analysis. Firstly, researchers must familiarise themselves with data, secondly, generate a set of initial codes, and thirdly, search for themes. Fourthly, they must review existing themes, fifthly, define and name themes, and lastly, produce the final report. My task from the outset was to identify key themes that reflected the wealth of raw data. I found Braun and Clarke's (2006) template very helpful in terms of determining the direction for my analysis. Thus, following data familiarisation, that involved reading and re-

reading my transcripts, field notes and entries from my reflective diary, I embarked on coding for a set of initial codes. This consisted of sitting down with my various datasets and coding manually using different coloured pens. Manual coding was preferable to using a computerised software package because I wanted to read through my data closely and not be distanced from it. Coding this way saved time in that I did not have learn how to use unfamiliar software, and also allowed me to focus on depth and meaning, which assisted in the write-up stages of the research.

This manual approach to coding involved scanning all the data line by line, jotting down notes in the margin if anything was of particular interest. The notes, which launched the coding process, consisted of initial thoughts, terminology used by my participants and their experiences and ideas. These were then organised into a 'codebook' (MacQueen et al, 1998). During this process, I allowed the codes to be guided by similarities in the data, and constantly coded text for anything that stood out as puzzling. I engaged in some level of axial coding, as I generated a total of 50 codes and thus was presented with the need to code more 'intensively and concertedly around single categories' (Strauss, 1987: 64). As coding developed, employing the constant comparative strategy of the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), I compared code frequency and the relationship between different codes to ensure that I had a stable set of core categories.

Themes gradually emerged as a result of analysing the most prominent codes (those repeated frequently across the various data sets) and considering how different codes could be grouped together to produce an overarching theme. For example, limited 'social mobility' and 'being trapped in the local area' formed a reoccurring pattern across my datasets, which suggested a link between the two codes. Hence, 'Trapped in the hood' was established as a key theme. As Braun and Clarke (2006: 82) indicate, 'a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset'. During theme development, I regularly revisited my datasets, refining themes, decoding the meaning behind them, to ensure

they were coherent and related specifically to my research objectives. Being pushed to think more analytically allowed me to interpret the meaning behind the theme and the role it played in my participants' lives. Once I was completely satisfied that the themes accurately reflected the data, I arranged data with the core themes in mind. The final themes were chosen after reflecting on my data and clarifying the meaning of themes, in relation to the overall narrative of each piece of data and of the individual participants. The major themes identified were 1) 'Trapped in the hood', which, as described above, refers to limited social mobility and being trapped in the local neighbourhood; 2) 'It's all about the Queen's heads'[12], which refers to earning/making money; and 3) 'Trapped in self', which refers to being trapped in this lifestyle. In addition, to the three main themes presented here, I identified sub-themes, for example, 'identity', 'violence' and 'faith', which was a result of codes that did not necessarily fit into a major theme, but formed significant and reoccurring patterns in the data.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described this thesis's research design, including a detailed description of the methodology and methods that were employed to understand the nature of urban men's lives on road. I have attempted to show transparency with regard to my dual research identity, and make clear that my positioning in the study guided my choice of methodology, method and, analysis. In particular, the chapter has drawn attention to my positioning as both insider and outsider, and how this dual role, although complex, formed a basis for acquiring rich descriptions of the multifaceted lives of the young and adult men in Northville. The next chapter presents the findings from the period I spent amongst the residents of Northville, exploring their transitions from childhood to adulthood in an inner-city neighbourhood characterised by crime and socio-economic disadvantage.

---

[12] This was adapted from an original comment made by Edwin in a semi-structured interview. See Chapter Four.

4.0 Findings I: The Mandem and their Lives On road: Friendship, Identity, and Culture

4.1 Entering Northville and Life on road

This chapter is the first of three consecutive findings chapters, in which I present the empirical data from my time in the field. These three chapters seek to analyse the lived experiences of the mandem, a male friendship group located in Northville, in an attempt to move beyond unsophisticated and problematic gang narratives. Broadly, the findings chapter is organised chronologically, as I believe it is important to take the reader on the journey through the mandem's transition on road - to demonstrate the rites of passage that the mandem goes through. The movement through the chapters highlight the emergent theoretical themes, and in particular the three dimensions of the mandems transitions through youth more specifically. Through exploring the intersection between the mandem's experiences in the hood, the illegal drug economy and, self-identity, the analysis allows the key crises underpinning the mandem's life journeys to emerge.

This chapter begins by offering a sense of the neighbourhood that the mandem occupy, providing an overview of the material landscape and the historical legacy that has shaped the social and cultural experiences of the community. This chapter also examines the important relationship between life on road and the urban space contextualising this within the spatial notion of the hood, and specifically how the mandem navigate their day-to-day social worlds. Finally, the chapter concludes by offering a series of short portraits of some of the individuals that take centre stage in this thesis; each detailing the life worlds of the mandem and their biographical experiences to highlight the mundane challenges, organisation and social and cultural traditions entangled in life on road.

4.1.1 Northville estate

In her study of a Nottingham working-class community, Mckenzie (2015: 19) argues that 'in order to understand any neighbourhood, and the people who live in it, it is important to know the history of that neighbourhood and the space that the people inhabit'. According to Mckenzie, any examination of the inner-city locale should not only take into account the physical space, but also the social space and the importance of this space for its residents. To gain a clearer sense of the mandem's lives on road, it is advantageous to examine the socio-economic background that shapes them, how urban spatial environments is perceived by the mandem, and how the space affects individual and group responses.

Northville is a multi-cultured and traditional working-class neighbourhood, which is often reflected in the mixture of people who reside in the community. Built in the 18th century, Northville was home to middle-class merchants and professionals and was known as an affluent spot filled with rich heritage and opportunity, open fields and canals. It was mainly rural until the middle of the 19th century when industry moved into the area. Since this time, Northville has undergone a process of deindustrialisation, population changes and, gentrification. High-rise tower blocks and industrial estates were built in the 1960s to replace the open spaces, and more recently, the single regeneration budget pioneered in 1994 to resolve the social and economic issues with the aim to change the old face of Northville (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The 'old' Northville in the 1970s

The borough council-managed public housing development has a long history of deprivation, unemployment and, criminality. Census data for Northville in 2011 from the Boroughs Index of Multiple Deprivation defined the neighbourhood as one of the most deprived wards in the borough, having the highest number of youth unemployment (males and females between the ages of 16 and 24) and young people that had never worked. Indeed, Northville's early history is synonymous with social and economic decline, drug dealing and, youth violence, having a longstanding reputation as an established gang area. The past landscape was perceived as a 'rough' place demonstrated by much coverage in the media and local newspapers that made reference to the estate. Much of the media interest attached to the past landscape was attributed to Yardies following the series of murders that occurred in 1998 to 2000 in the borough. McLagan (2005: 18), in his book about 'Guns and Gangs' in London, draws attention to the tit-for-tat 'black-on-black' murders that were a characteristic feature of the old Northville and surrounding wards, concluding that much of the gun violence that was taking place at this time was a result of 'diss killings' and 'turf wars' over drugs. The Not Another Drop project, a crime reduction steering group, was set up as a response to what was perceived as a burgeoning gang problem. Hales and Silverstone's study (2004) was at the heart of investigations aimed at conceptualising gangs and gun violence in the borough, but found little evidence of a gang culture in their research with local convicted gun crime offenders.

The early history of Northville as a gang area in the 80s and early 90s exemplified the troubled and troubling representation of a dangerous neighbourhood, providing the backdrop for major reforms to a place coined a hot-spot area for violent crime. The Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) was introduced in the late 90s to resolve Northville's economic and social problems, but was also pioneered to change the 'rough' and 'notorious' image of the neighbourhood. The SRB, as McCarthy (2007: 32-33) notes, 'essentially brought together 20 previously separate funding programmes in England'… with the aim to 'encourage employment by using public funds to leverage investment from the private sector'. At the forefront of the

regeneration initiatives that took place across many urban locales, including Northville, was what Taylor (2012: 136-137) describes as the notion of 'improving people and places' and the 'promise for a different kind of place'. The regeneration of Northville involved demolishing the old infrastructure. This included the removal of symbolic landmarks from my childhood (and, as I later found, those of my respondents), most notably the frontline, the tower blocks, basketball cage, the club and Mr C's infamous big blue bus[13]. These landmarks were all habitual locations for the residents (especially the younger generation) of Northville to assemble, and many of my own childhood tales are formed around these memorable settings. The renovation of the physical space creates difficulty in capturing the uniqueness of the past neighbourhood, particularly as there are very few traces of the prior landscape left. What exists now are visual markings of regeneration, pretty terrace houses, classy flats, a refurbished shopping parade and new sports facilities (see Figure 2). The regeneration of the area may have altered the outward appearance, but within the confined neighbourhood is a very clear sense of 'place sameness' (Taylor, 2012), but with a different facing.

Figure 2: Urban regeneration: The new face of Northville in 2016

Today, Northville is said to have been 'rescued' according to public policy documents from the years of social and economic decline, on a visual level at least. Little in the public space reflects the rough image of its past landscape. The material alteration has been remarkable, particularly the

---

[13] The Mr C blue bus (nicknamed the 'big bus of food') was a well-known catering van in Northville, renowned for its jumbo hotdogs, ice-cream, lollipops and Mr C's tasteless sense of fashion.

improvement in housing and the arrival of new businesses. Even the tone has changed in Northville, mirroring an apparently far more tranquil community than the previous landscape, which attracted criminal networks. According to local media discourse, the 'new' Northville area has fewer links to criminality. One feature of the old Northville was the presence of groups of young men congregating public space at their established hangouts (for example, the frontline). However, the new landscape has seen temporal shifts in the use of public Northville space across the years of regeneration. While the mandem in particular still 'hang' on the 'block', which will be discussed in detail later, this is not an everyday occurrence. The new Northville is far quieter than the old neighbourhood. It is now common for young people to make use of the local youth club and modern sports facilities. Despite this ambiance, what remains in Northville are patterns of poverty and disadvantage associated with the past landscape. To some extent, this is observable not only through the visible police presence (a key feature of the old landscape) and the borough council's desire to regulate criminal behaviour, but also through the patent financial hardship experienced by many residents. The ideological force underlying the regeneration pledge in Northville has been based on the local council's effort to 'clean up' and reclaim public space in order to gain control of crime in the area, reduce socio-economic disadvantage and promote business opportunities. Sibley (1995: 19) highlights that urban regeneration acts essentially as a kind of spatial purification or boundary maintenance in 'order to keep out objects or people who do not fit the classification'. In Northville, such strategies of spatial purification have exacerbated exclusion for the most marginalised residents, in that they have not allowed for conformity or advantages in the market place. Rather, the council's promise for a renewed public space is contested as many residents trail behind and struggle to become active members within the purifying regenerative framework.

'Permanent recession', described by Hall et al (2008) as an extreme form of socio-economic exclusion and embedded social problems, has persisted in the neighbourhood, influencing the composition of life for many residents. In Northville, there are very clear distinctions between different types of residents

and the way in which they experience their social milieu. In the same way as Pryce (1986) and Anderson (1999) identified complex residential segregation in their neighbourhood studies, within Northville, residents were also separated in terms of ethnicity, age, gender and, economic affluence, but also through spatial segregation and engagement with criminality. A walk through Northville reveals the different groups who, despite having become accustomed to interacting in the same physical space, have vastly dissimilar backgrounds. Like Pryce's 'decent' black folk, who took pride in their homes and work, I, too, identified a group of older Jamaican migrants who conform to traditional notions of working-class culture consistent with hard work and sacrifice (see appendix 3). In addition, I observed a younger cohort of males, 'boys with afros'[14] who were able to navigate the 'trap'[15].

The older residents and the 'boys with afros' are epitomes of two particular groups in Northville, and by keeping themselves to themselves they sit in opposition to the men on road. The *mandem*, a group of disconnected men who adhere to life on road, carve out their own cultural space from the rest of the community and attempt to reconstruct the social worlds that they inhabit.

4.1.2 The 'mandem' and the 'hood'

The mandem is a generic term used to describe the 29 men that form the basis of the thesis. I define the mandem as an unorganised friendship group occupying the same social space, or urban neighbourhood, who share biographies and experiences of being on road. The mandem were born in Northville and have formed intimate connections with the local urban milieu and their friendship group. While they identified collectively with the term 'mandem', within the friendship group there are differing identities. In this respect, the mandem are not necessarily unitary. There are different typologies of 'onroadness', consisting of a matrix of shifting identities and

---

[14] These young men were not associated with a life on road. They were never seen on the block and did not come into the radar of trapping. This information has been formed by my observations and prior knowledge and connections, but must be taken with caution, as I did not speak to any of these men directly.

[15] The trap is term used by the mandem to describe their lives on road. The concept will be discussed in detail in the following section.

subdivisions and visible variations amongst the mandem in terms of age, ethnicity, schooling, employment history and involvement in criminality. The table below (see Figure 3) is separated according to these five main categories. It provides insight into the different experiences into and from education and road culture, and perhaps more strikingly draws attention to where the mandem end up (the Destination). The trapper typology is discussed in detail in the following section.

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Schooling	Employed	Destination
Winston	33	Black British	Completed FE	Unemployed	Humble Trapper
Dee	16	Black British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Glutton Trapper (greedy)
TJ	19	White British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Glutton Trapper/Muslim revert
Kenzo	27	Black African	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Humble Trapper
Mikey	29	Black British	Completed FE	Unemployed	Predatory Trapper
Cris	33	White British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Predatory Trapper
Yardie	40	Black Caribbean	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Humble Trapper
Georgie	30	Black British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Works part-time	Humble Trapper
Andy	18	Mixed Heritage	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Humble Trapper
Danny	18	Somalian	Attended PRU	Unemployed	Humble Trapper
Sidney	26	Black British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Predatory Trapper
P. Dawg	31	Black British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Predatory Trapper
Neil	34	Mixed Heritage	Attended FE, but did not complete	Works part-time	Humble Trapper
Ralphy	19	Somalian	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Humble Trapper
Julian	22	Somalian	Completed secondary school	Unemployed	Glutton Trapper
Edwin	31	Black African	Secondary school completed	Unemployed	Predatory Trapper
Natty	38	Mixed Heritage	Attended FE, but did not complete	Works part-time	Humble Trapper
Bradley	25	White British	Attended FE, but did not complete	Works part-time	Humble Trapper
Travis	35	Black British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Predatory Trapper
Ash	23	Mixed Heritage	Attended PRU	Unemployed	Humble Trapper
Cassius	23	Black British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Humble Trapper/Islamic revert
Aron	22	Mixed Heritage	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Humble Trapper/Islamic revert
Smithy	34	Black African	Completed A Levels	Unemployed	Predatory Trapper
Alex	33	White British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Predatory Trapper
Anthony	33	Black British	Attended FE, but did not complete	Unemployed	Predatory Trapper/Islamic revert
Mohammed	28	Black British	Attended FE, but did not complete	Unemployed	Devoted Islamic revert
Adam	27	Black British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Glutton Trapper
Quinton	30	Black African	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Glutton Trapper
Freddie	19	White British	Permanently excluded from secondary school	Unemployed	Humble Trapper

Figure 3: The mandem's educational and employment history

As Figure 3 shows, the mandem are not confined to any specific age or ethnic group. For example, they are comprised of both young and old individuals from a variety of racial backgrounds, including not only black, but also mixed, white and Somali. In the case of the mandem, what existed was three distinct age categories that consisted of what the mandem termed the 'olders', 'elders' and 'youngers'. Each group occupied specific hangouts in

Northville and engaged in different levels of criminal activity. As Winston, an elder, explains:

> *We are all the mandem, but there are youngers, elders and olders. The olders do their ting, may sell a little weed, drink in the shebeen, the 40 year-old-olders anyway, but you won't find them selling crack on the block or involved in this postcode shit like the youngers. They ain't really inna the territorial side of the roads, some of them are actually lucky to have got through the violence and are now an older. We (the youngers and elders) are still living it you get me, warring with friends, but we are all still caught up in the trap, trying to survive, but some are more caught up than others. I would say that the olders are not that caught up – maybe in the drug business but not in the postcode beef. (Winston, 33 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

The olders, or long-time mandem, are generally aged between 35 and 45 and, as Winston notes, no longer sell drugs on the block. Instead, these men are more likely to be involved in Northville's drug economy as what Hobbs and Pearson (2001) would define as middle-level managers rather than street retailers (full discussion of Northville's drug economy is discussed later). In contrast, the elders, men in their late 20s and 30s (25 to 34-year-olds) are also engaged in Northville's drug economy, but at a different level to the olders. This particular age category of mandem are more likely to be 'independent retailer' (Hobbs and Pearson 2001: 4) and heavily invested in instrumental drug-related violence that accompanies street dealing. The youngers, aged between 16 and 24, are also engaged in drug dealing in the illegal drug economy at independent retailer level. But in opposition to the olders and elders, the youngers are immersed in territorial postcode violence. Although what exists amongst the mandem are clear age distinctions and variations in terms of criminal activity, what they all expressed was common histories of growing up in the same neighbourhood and sharing similar life experiences. As Dee explains, they are friends who met at school and spent the bulk of their time together:

> *I hate when they call us gangs. It's media hype, you get me. They don't have a clue. Were just a group of friends who spend time together in the hood.The mandem are like*

family, most of us have grown up with each other since we were young, going through the same shit together. We are all on road so we have something in common. All of our struggles are different; it can't be explained by this gang ting. It's a road ting, a hood ting – survival really –getting what you can, I guess. Nothing gangland about all this, man, just friends doing their ting on road. (Dee, 16 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

Dee conceives the mandem as a friendship group, not a gang, as perhaps defined in popular imaginary. As he illustrates, the mandem are united in terms of their shared experiences of delinquency; they did not resemble popular media reports centred on organised gangs, instead resisting the gang label. Gangs was a view challenged by Dee, and in spite of his challenge to discourse the mandem as a collective had characteristics of 'gang' as most commonly associated with street-based groups. There was some evidence of a structure, a hierarchy similar to that proposed by Pitts (2008) (discussed in detail in the following section). However, the mandem did not always conform to popular gang definition, particularly as their friendship group were organised principally around hanging around and making 'P'[16]. Therefore, the gang was considered by the mandem as too simplistic a term to describe the multiplicity of lived experiences in Northville. Rather, the mandem spoke about being 'trapped' in a particular on road culture. TJ, like Dee, does not use the gang to define his state of being, but uses the concept of 'life on road', which he contextualises here:

The roads I guess is two tings, Ebs. Like, man would say I'm going on the road today. That could mean the hood – the estate. Life on road is also the life – our lifestyle. Everyone is trapped in the same kinda life, same kinda road mentality. We are all coming from the same place, same struggle, so we relate to one another, have tings in common, you know dem ones. (TJ, 19 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

TJ described the road as a material place (a physical location) representative of the street, avenue or, close they grew up on, but also described a community tied together by experiences of exclusion and marginalisation.

---

[16] Making 'P' in the context of life on road/road culture refers to generating income in the illegal drug economy.

Life on road represents both a material setting and an idea simultaneously. In much the same way Anderson (1991) describes the idea of nation as a politically 'imagined' community socially invented by its members, the hood, although a real and active social site, is also a culturally constructed abstraction created by the mandem to denote a united bond of perpetual hardship and struggle. In many accounts, the mandem framed Northville as the 'hood'. This space had a local mythical tone and framed the setting for the rivalries in terms of a transatlantic appropriation of US street culture (Newburn, 2002). As Newburn (2002) notes, many excluded populations – particularly young men – buy into exported visions of hood/'street' life popularised in US culture: TV shows and films that glamorise elements of gangster life and promise a better life. Winston, an elder, describes the attraction to life on road:

> *The mandem are distracted by the glitz and glamour and thinking that they are going to live well. In the hood it is always the majority of the young men that get caught in the trap, man that have no other place to go. Those that aren't in school or living a normal life. It's the trap of delusion though – caught up in an illusion, something that is not really real. Road life isn't real, man; it's the biggest fake thing ever. Don't get me wrong, the money you can make from it is real, but it's all the fake shit that comes with it. It's a big lie that you tell yourself, it looks good too, so you become fooled by the glitz and glamour.The hood is negative though, but certain man make it seem glamorous with their flash cars, clothes and that, but they are just stunting – ain't nothing good about the hood, but you have to just make do. (Winston, 33 – extract taken from focus groups with the elders)*

Contrary to popularise conceptions of 'gangster life', Winston's assessment of road life betrayed this cultural narrative. He indicated that the reality was less glamorous, and that expectations were not easily fulfilled. Moreover, he drew attention to the delusionary nature of being on road, describing it like a shimmering lake in the desert in which success is a mirage, desired by so many, but obtainable by a few. For men excluded from mainstream and its institutions, those who do not have the appropriate social and cultural capital and who seek a route out of economic and social poverty via the roads, the fantasy of a promised reality (i.e. security, respect and, fame) proved particularly

alluring. The mandem have become disillusioned by the imitated model or 'simulacra' as conceived by Baudrillard (1994), and have consequently become reliant upon the displaced mental image that the roads will offer an escape from the pain, shame and hardship apparent in their social milieus. In real terms, for the mandem, the promise for a better life is not always realisable; even if financial reward is achievable, it comes with a host of tensions, risks and, dangers. Nonetheless, the fantasy embodied very real experiences for those men deeply immersed in life on road, and the hood signified what Conquergood (1993) termed a 'forbidden urban space' historically and culturally distinguished by multiple deprivation, marginalisation and resource inequality. Kenzo, an elder, explains why the hood is instrumental in determining routes into life on road and why it has arisen as alternative career pathway for more formal institutions:

> *It's in the hood where this all begins. When I was young I use to open my door and see the olders sell drugs, its normal living round here. You see everyone doing this road ting, making money, it's always out there. Most of us ain't in school or been kicked out of school, so don't really have any other option, so we go on the roads. As I see it, it's either you sink or swim. In the hood is all about trying to make ends meet. It's kinda been passed down to us from the olders; they have paved the way. They have gone through the same ting. It's hard not getting caught up in the hood shit when it's in your face every day. I don't have an education, no opportunities; all of our choices are limited really, so we do what we have to do. (Kenzo, Elder, 27 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

Kenzo draws attention to a legacy that has been passed down from previous generations. What Kenzo is referring to here is systematic failures and illegal opportunity structures, something in which Sutherland (1947) and later, Cloward and Ohlin (1960), described in the 'differential association' theory. For these scholars, delinquent behaviour is likely to occur in established criminal environments where there is an ongoing process of influential interaction in which individuals learn how to essentially be 'criminal'. Similarly, the physical setting – the hood – was quoted by the mandem as the geographical context for the transmission of established cultural norms, where they discovered illegality and its value, but more significantly it was in

this social milieu where a collective mentality emerged. What the mandem exhibited was a shared mentality – a hood mentality – which was characteristic of a distinct set of values and outlook on life, born fundamentally from feelings of relative deprivation (Lea and Young, 1984) and having to make choices in constrained circumstances. These core ideas moved beyond what Young and Hallsworth (2011: 61) described as a 'fatalistic attitude to life that held no dreams, no ambition, no drive, no nothing'. Rather, it comprised a survivalist attitude grounded on-self-reliance or friends; a commitment to achieving goals (for example, money and, respect) on road often through illegal activity, and an orientation towards stabilising the adversity that many had experienced in their lives. Brothers TJ and Freddie both illustrate the kinds of survivalist attitudes that were present in Northville:

> *Many of the mandem was born into this hood ting. Parents grew us on these estates, so we have to go out there. The hood is a little community, I would say of youts like me. Not posh people, but hood people, who have their own way of living I guess. It's the hood mentality innit, get what you can, try and survive. All of us hood people know what the hood is man, it's our reality. The hood is free; well you just don't have to be posh. This isn't a new ting, just been passed down to us. As soon as you open your door you see some fuckery, the elders and even olders selling crack on the corner. This is just the life- it's not something that you can control. Just have to make do, do what you can, get what you can, what other choice do we have. It is what it is. (Freddie, 19 – extract taken from focus groups with youngers)*

> *You grow up thinking you're gonna have a good life, just like every kid, but not round here you don't. It's about survival on the roads- keeping your head above water, fending for yourself. When you don't have anyone else in the world, you have to find your own way, feed yourself. Living in the hood is about survival of the fittest. My survival kit is staying alive really, taking care of myself, doing whatever I can do to live a good life, if that means selling my soul, so be it. We don't have the same opportunities as those posh people, Ebs, you know this. This is our community; it's all we know, all we understand. (TJ, 19 – extract taken from focus groups with youngers)*

Within these accounts emerges what I am going to describe as a hood mentality; a cultural adoption, which might be understood as a response to

the complex interplay between systematic processes. This may include, for example, blocked opportunities and educational failure, growing up in dissolute social environments, the exposure to crime and criminality and a failure to integrate into mainstream society. Limited opportunities in mainstream society created the foundation for displacement, the hood mentality and indeed entry into life on road permeated the space of exclusion. It provided the mandem, whose social worlds were fraught with instability, anxiety and, insecurity, with informal coping strategies to manage and resolve their fiscal problems and ambiguous transitions from childhood to adulthood. Merton (1938) highlighted the role structural inequality had in producing deviant lifestyles. What the mandem was describing was reminiscent of Merton's 'innovation' adaptation in that they accept the goals, but reject the means and innovate to attain widely accepted culturally ideals based in particular on making money. Instead of retreating (rejecting the goals and the means) into their fateful biographies, the mandem innovated to overcome the hardship. They sought out opportunities and drew on their cultural capital to acquire the necessities, in much the same way as Beazley's (2003) street kids used their social environment for their survival. The road became the mechanism for the mandem to, in some cases, avoid absolute poverty and resolve their powerless socio-economic positions. As Mikey notes:

> *I weren't going to live like a poor man, Ebs. We were gonna be on the roads regardless. Look around you, how many people are making money legitimately, not many. Most of the mandem are doing what they have to do. This is just a part of the hood, Ebs – hood living. We all know what this is about, how to use the hood to make money, it's a shit life – it's not even real, but it just becomes a habit man. You have to go on roads, what is the other option? Suffer? We're at the bottom end of the food chain, Ebs, I'd rather take the risk than suffer; ask any of the mandem, they'll tell you the same ting. This is something we just had to deal with cos we had nothing else to do with our lives. It's easier going on the roads – it's the easy option. You join the roads if you want, sometimes you get sucked in, other times you just test the water and see what the roads can do for you. Most of this is unplanned, you grow up here you ain't in school, you open your front door see the mandem making a life for themselves, you socialise with the mandem and sometimes*

you just get caught up. (Mikey, Elder, 29 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

Subcultural theorists (see Hall and Jefferson, 1976, for example) have argued working-class youth subcultures emerge to 'resolve magically' issues and contradictions apparent in their social worlds. Mikey, Winston, TJ and Freddie's experiences starkly illustrate how limited life trajectory and illegal opportunities influence their involvement in the illicit drug economy and road life. Unable to resolve their economic and social powerlessness caused by structural disparities inherent in society, they use the resources that are available to them. Life on road was recognised by the mandem as a viable option to improve relative deprivation and limited life chances available. This way of life had remedial appeal for those who acknowledged their peripheral position in an inequitable society that situated them at the bottom of the structural 'food chain'. For the mandem, life on road was where they ended up when structures failed them, and from which they constructed a cultural identity and lifestyle.

Life on road was potentially a rational choice made by young and adult men who foresaw no viable alternative. It was the default position, narrated as the final destination for people with limited social, economic and cultural capital and nowhere else to go. The roads became the mandem's enterprise, and much like entrepreneurs, they organised and managed their financial ventures, taking risks to obtain monetary rewards in pursuit of profit. Importantly, life on road was considered the normative expectation of growing up in difficult circumstances, free from the constraints of mainstream society and for people who lack accessible pathways, traditional social skills, education and training – or in other words, people who could not play the game. On road provided the opportunity for marginalised men to become 'sovereign agents' (Hallsworth and Silverstone, 2009) where the mandem challenged the boundaries of acceptability, whilst resisting adult control and contested marginality through interactions in the hood. In this sense, the hood or the road is both symbolic and significant to how the mandem manage their lives, and as Aikens (2001) argues, provides the context whereby dreams and practices are either constructed or constrained. The

physical space – the hood – becomes central to understanding the mandem's spatial practices, but also their way of life. As the following the section demonstrates, the hood is an important social space for not only the construction of social identity, but also the mandem's money-making endeavours.

4.1.3 A day in the life of a 'mandem'

Given life on road often manifests on the streets, it is not uncommon for the mandem to spend a considerable amount of time outside the home occupying urban space. As most of the mandem have lived in Northville permanently and had limited experience outside the estate, several locations have become central to their social life. Figure 4 highlights key locations in which the mandem congregate.
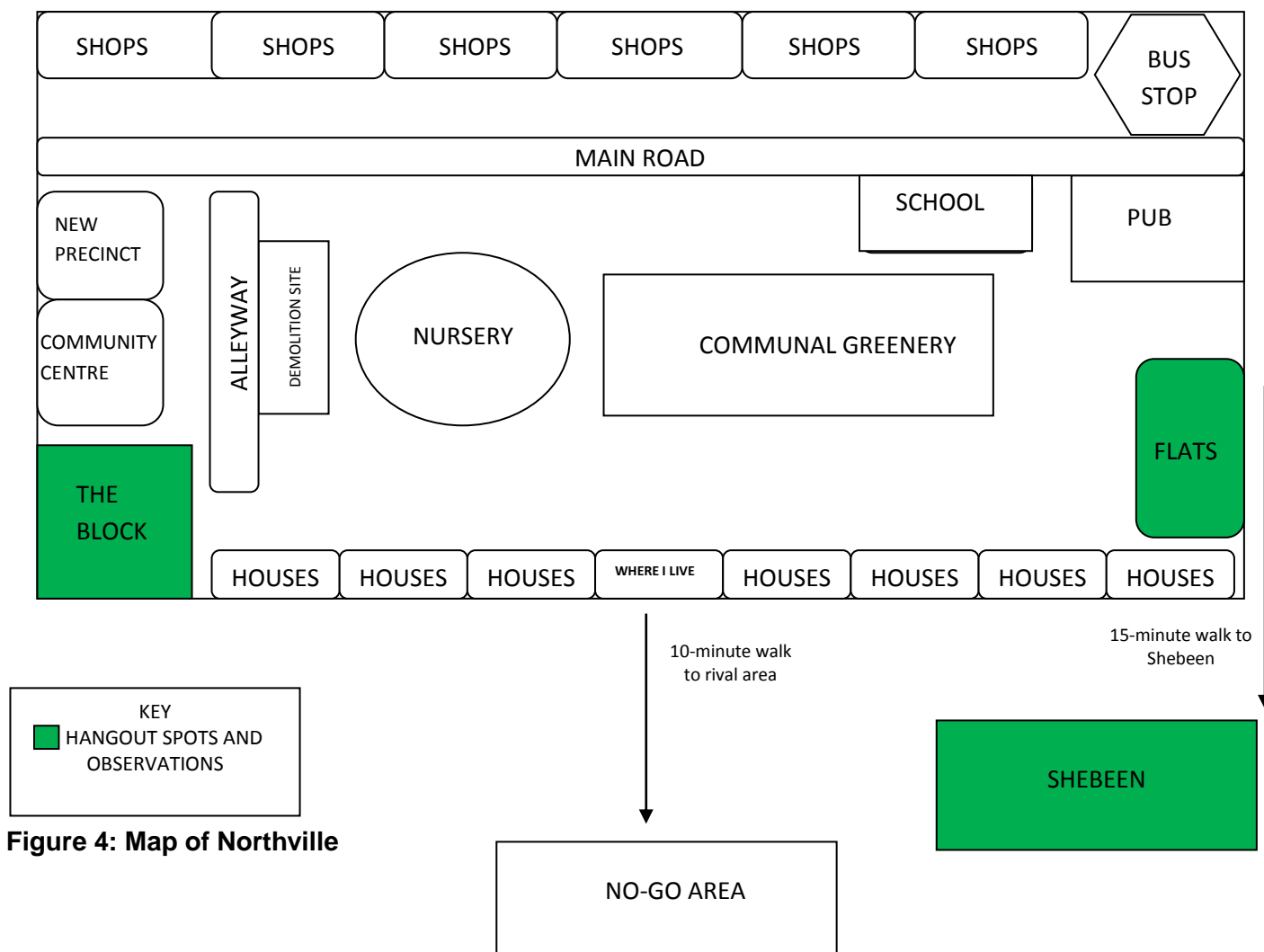
Figure 4: Map of Northville

Marked in green are prime hangouts where the mandem congregated, participated in street brawls/violence with rival gangs from the 'no-go area' or sold drugs. Some noted that they felt imprisoned by the urban space/the territory, feeling as though there was nothing else out there for them, particularly as the majority of mandem had never left the postcode or travelled outside the country. The locations in Figure 4 were cited as places to be, where the mandem had the opportunity to carve out their own space and be in charge of their territory, in spite of their marginality. The hangouts were key sites for social interaction between the mandem. They were fundamental not only for building social status, but also for providing the context for many of their financial endeavours. The shebeen was one such

location, and the central meeting point for the olders and elders. The following illustration extracted from my field notes provides insight into the mandem activities in the shebeen:

It is Friday night and I am sitting nervously in the local shebeen with a mixture of olders and some elders. The spot is located in the back of a grocery store. I had no idea that such a place existed. I am nervous because for all the time that I have lived in Northville, I have never been to a shebeen. In this way, I do not know what to expect. I can only assume that one of the 'olders'; Yardie has sensed my nerves, as he rushes over, pats me on the shoulder and informs me to 'chill, it's cool; there won't be any trouble in here'. I can hear the olders talking loudly, while smashing dominoes on the table. 'Work was hard today, I wanna give up this night job, but Sheila will kill me', an older explains. Revival music is playing in the background and there is a table on my left, which is filled with a variety of different alcohol beverages. My nerves ease over the course of the evening, as I observe the laughter and banter between the different age groups of mandem. The shebeen is filled with a mixture of men from the Caribbean. However, individuals from Jamaican heritage are visibly the most prominent in this location. Surprisingly, there are also women in the shebeen, which I find rather strange, as I did not anticipate that women would also enjoy drinking alcohol, smoking cannabis and playing dominoes in the back of a grocery store. It is just after 9pm, when two frail and untidy women enter the shebeen, asking for Lenny. Cris an elder guides the women to a corner of the shebeen – they have a chat, and the women leave the venue seemingly disappointed. I ask Cris to explain the exchange between himself and the two women. He informs me that they were 'crack heads, looking for a ting' and he had sent them away to meet him later at a location that he considered far more discreet than the shebeen. He informs me that his working world is far from glamorous: 'I sell drugs on dirty pissy balconies, in crack dens, scummy houses, some real hell holes'. As the night winds down, I observe a number of desolate 'crackheads' enter the shebeen searching frantically for one of the mandem who could offer them their next quick fix. I leave the shebeen with Winston, and on our way home, (as we walk through the estate) I encounter three more mandem selling crack on the street corner. Northville and the locations surrounding the estate is the mandem's working world; the breeding ground for illegal activity and, disturbingly, observing the more desperate sides of human life. (In the Shebeen with the mandem – extract from fieldnotes– July, 2012)

Central to the above observation was that Northville and the urban spaces surrounding it, for example the shebeen, were money-making arenas and breeding grounds for illegal activity; principally drug dealing. The mandem engaged in a variety of activities in their day-to-day life, which have particular symbolic significance, but also a kind of temporal dimension. For example, the activities that the mandem engaged in were dependent upon specific times in the day, and had a number of important functions. In particular, during the day the shebeen was a typical grocery store, used by the local community, which came alive at night. After dusk, the mandem utilised the space to play dominoes and consume alcohol and cannabis. It was a place where I observed the desperate aspects to human nature unravel. The flats, another key hangout for the youngers in particular, again was busy at particular times in the day. In the morning, it was not uncommon to encounter the mandem openly selling crack, in the flats and on the surrounding street corner to desperate clients scratching around for their next fix. Knight (2015: 72) noted in her study on pregnant drug addicts that the way in which they used time 'gave an impression of lives filled with endless repetition'. In the same way, the lives of the mandem were relentlessly monotonousness, with a typical day consisting of selling drugs, travelling to the shebeen for business purposes then retiring to the block (see Figure 5) to relax and engage in light-hearted banter with their friendship group.

Figure 5: The block. Spring 2013

The block was the principlemeeting point for the elders (and some youngers). It holds relevance for understanding the ways in which social identity is formulated and negotiated, and is often facilitated by exaggerated everyday social interaction. The following illustration extracted from fieldnotes provides insight into the attitudes and normative characteristics of the mandem. Here, one can see how a social gathering on the block soon becomes a platform for performance and communication. The mandem communicate to the rest of the community a superior public identity far removed from their proposed marginal status, and as a result challenge contemporary gang narratives:

I am hanging on road with the mandem. The block, as the mandem refer to it, is the principle congregation spot, particularly for the elders. The block is situated on the road outside Robbie's house, and is regarded as the mandem's domain. Everyone one knows where to locate the mandem; it is the hotspot where they spend the bulk of their time, but also their working environment. Today, the block is exceptionally busy, not only is it a sunny day (Northville comes to life during the summer), but it is also Richie's birthday. It is customary for the mandem to get together to mark special occasions. The mandem are 'on a high', music is booming through Robbie's bedroom window, champagne and Courvoisier is flowing, whilst cannabis floats through the air. The block is bursting with the mandem; amongst the assembly there are many familiar faces, but there are also a few that I do not recognise. There are 30 elders in total on the block, however, only 10 are prepared to talk on record. The first to share his experiences is a Jamaican born older who the mandem refer to as Yardie. He speaks quite passionately about the crime in the area, but is interrupted by Georgie, who is intoxicated with Champagne. Georgie (more forceful in describing his narrative) explains that he is living in a 'concrete jungle and the government do not give a damn about hood kids'. He then shouts out that 'it's all about money and bitches'. Yardie is outraged, and the two men engage in a minor squabble. Andy attempts to pacify the situation and, as I continue to question Yardie and some of the other mandem about their experiences, Mikey pulls up in his new and incredibly expensive car. The mandem charge

over to admire the self-styled sports car and take it in turns to cruise around the block, like a group of children who have been given a new toy.

The conversations during the observation are very interesting; Andy discusses his love triangle and his many sexual conquests, Danny and his group discuss the 'trap' and which individuals have been successful in the hood, whilst the others inform me of the violence consuming the youngers' everyday life. However, the earning of criminal wealth and the ability to display this fortune is very prominent during this particular observation. This is not only noticeable in terms of the reaction to Mikey's new car, but many of the mandem felt the need to inform me of their earning power after a few rounds of alcohol. 'It's not about being a waste out here; I wanna live good, buy nice things. 'Man are seen as waste man if they can't keep it up. You have to look good, do well in life – the hood is watching. When you grow with nothing, grow up in this kinda environment, you fight to be something,' Sidney explains. As I look around I notice that most, if not all, of the mandem are dressed in the latest designer wear, trainers and jewellery. If I was not an insider I would presume that the mandem were living very economically satisfying lives, but because of my insider knowledge I am mindful that even when the mandem are struggling financially, they pride themselves on presenting an image of prosperity. This is their hood, the one place where they are able to restructure their marginal position in wider society. This is the space where they engage in conspicuous material consumption as a means of cementing social identities. It becomes apparent by the end of the observation the importance of image, reputation and being able to 'survive' in environment fraught with instability and uncertainty. As the night draws to a close, I reflect on how similar the mandem's practices are to mainstream capitalist society. This is normal social behaviour, not pathological. It is just that goods, and by extension a respectable road image, tends to be acquired and sealed through illegal activity. (On the block with the mandem – extract from fieldnotes – July 2012)

Criminality and violence tends to be at the heart of much of contemporary gang discourse. However, for the most part, I discovered through a combination

of observations and interviews that a typical day consists of relaxing on the block, engaging in conventional activity, socialising with friends and discussing topics that are of interest to the group, such as girls, cars, football and money. In social environment that arenot stigmatised as a gang community, the behaviour of the mandem would be considered perfectly normal.Yet in urban areas characterised by high levels of crime, unstructured play is often associated with the forming of delinquent peer groups or gangs (Thrasher, 1927). As the extract from my fieldwork demonstrates, the practices of the mandem cannot be understood in terms of gang life. Instead, 'hanging' on the block, but especially in the company of the male peer group, embodied a variety of meanings that move beyond looking at urban men as principally pathological. What I observed on the block, for example, was different kinds of 'hanging' which encompassed a variety of activities, ranging from consuming cannabis and alcohol, playing cards and sharing bikes, to more risky activities such as drug dealing and creating new business ventures. Importantly, the mandem had a clear sense of what they needed to do to manage their lives and, peer group life. Being on the block was instrumental in facilitating particular lifestyles and identities, and central in providing the potential to generate an income (discussed in detail in 'It's All About the Queen's Heads'.).

Hanging on the block was not only a symbolic 'activity field' (Wikstrom et al, 2010), where critical interaction between the mandem occurred, it was the stage or, as Goffman (1959) suggested, the 'theatre of social life', where they composed and defended a public image far removed from their marginal working-class status. It was in this venue that the mandem engaged in presentations of self (Goffman, 1959) and performed rituals of consumption, demonstrating the material luxuries of being on road. This, in much the same way that Bourdieu (1984) suggested that patterns of consumption, but specifically aesthetic tastes, stratified different classes of people. The mandem flaunted particular goods with a high social status, such as expensive cars, clothes and, diamond jewellery. My field notes demonstrate this point further:

I'm standing on the block with the mandem. It's the usual line up; Yardie, Georgie, Danny, Andy, Sidney and a few others. Yardie and Georgie, as to be expected are at loggerheads, arguing over who is the biggest stunter in the hood. Smithy drives past the block in his expensive black BMW 5 Series blowing his horn at the mandem. Yardie turns to Andy 'Look Smithy is gwarning with tings, look at man's car, have you seen man's chain? You have to respect him, he's on this ting hard'. Andy and Sidney take it in turns to quiz Yardie about the cost of his expensive Rolex watch. I notice that Yardie is dressed in expensive designer wear. In fact, as I look around, all the mandem are dressed immaculately in branded trainers and clothes, with some even sporting expensive jewellery. (On the block with the mandem – extract from fieldnotes – August 2012)

In this display, the mandem demonstrated that they wanted what everyone has, and conspicuous material consumption was the vehicle for achieving this. In Veblen's (1899) Theory of the Leisure Class', he argued that to display wealth was to demonstrate superiority and served to 'impress one's importance on others and keep their sense of importance alive and alert' (cited in Tilman, 2015). In a similar manner, the mandem believed that acquiring possessions regarded as valuable communicated to the community, but more importantly to themselves, that they were people of honour. For the underprivileged male residing in a contradictory social environment, this was of pivotal importance. More significantly, conspicuous consumption helped to create a respectable social identity; a bold statement of being no different from the rest of society. Gang talkers (see Pitts, 2008 and Harding, 2012, for example) concentrate specifically on the behaviour of the 'gangster' as pathological. However, illustrated above, the actions of the mandem is driven by consumer culture and status. The desire to consume and express identity through the consumption of material possessions is a part of normative capitalist ideology. This is not unique to the mandem. Rather, this kind of self-conscious reflection in the context of wider cultural conventions is something that Bourdieu (1977) recently, and interactionists over a long time, have argued expresses the subjectivity of the individual. Furthermore, it proves problematic to define the mandem as an external subculture when it is quite evident that they are buying into everyday practices of social life. Nonetheless, material possessions played a defining role in communicating

identity on road, promoting an ideal image or what the mandem regarded as a persona of respectability.

There is extensive literature concerning the construction of social identities (for example, see Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959 and Giddens, 1991) that recognise that identity formation is a reflexive process involving how people see themselves, but also how they think they are perceived by others. Giddens (1991: 52) in particular noted that 'self-identity is something that is not just given, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in reflexive activities of the individual'. Much of the mandem's behaviour on the block was a reflexive response based on their daily experiences interacting in social worlds where it was customary to create, or perform, a respectable public image. In this sense, identity on road is itself performative. For the mandem it was essential to 'manage the impression' (Goffman, 1963) that they were living the lavish lifestyle embedded in on road imagery. In this way, life on road embodies practices of the self, whereby the mandem engage in what Foucault (1988) terms 'technologies of the self', aiming to transform their fateful social positions and to reach a state of perfection – the reverse of how they imagined themselves to be in the wider world. The various activities and practices underpinning life on road are key to understanding the mandem's transitions to adulthood and form part of the basis on which discussions about being 'trapped in the illegal drug economy' can be analysed in the following data chapter. However, before offering an analysis of Northville's drug economy, I will present the biographies of some of the mandem in order to put their life in context.

4.1.4 The mandem; some short biographies

Ken Pryce (1979) demonstrates clearly in his book 'Endless Pressure', that rich and meaningful data can be generated from adopting a life story approach. In this section, the focus of analysis is upon the mandem, using their histories and personal stories to: (1) develop a better understanding of the behavioural and contextual factors that unite them; and (2) illustrate their values, activities and ways of being seen and heard in the world. The portraits that follow are summaries of what I know about the mandem, and focuses on the time I spent in the field between July 2012 and March 2013. These biographies provide greater insight into the pressure they face when living their lives, the individual challenges that affect them, and their experiences of criminality and violence.

Aron

Aron is what other mandem would probably describe as 'clued up'. At the age of 22, he has a reputation for being fearless, and has already gained notoriety. While he is feared on road, he is respectable to his peers and elders. Some of his peers have informed me that they admire his ability to "handle his own"- amongst all age categories of mandem. He is, seemingly, more intelligent and confident than his counterparts, although I have observed him under-playing his abilities on occasion, for example when communicating with his peers or when there has been a need for him to adapt to different surroundings. Aron carries himself with decorum; he is a wise young boy with a wealth of knowledge. Despite a violent reputation that surpasses most of his peers, he has managed to have minimal contact with the criminal justice system. He is strikingly good looking; medium build, with hazel eyes and model features. The mandem will often joke about his good looks helping him escape the watchful eyes of law enforcement, especially police harassment.

Aron recalls his memories of being a loving son; however, his negative experiences on road have changed him. His family life is relatively stable. He lives with his mother who is estranged from his father, and his older brother

(aged, 28). Aron tells me that his parents are disappointed with his lifestyle, and routinely criticises him for not attending college or pursuing a fulltime job, but at the same time, they continue to support him financially. Aron takes their money to hide his criminality and drug dealing, but his mother often threatens to walk out of the family home due to her frustration with Aron, who finds refuge (temporarily) with Cassius, his friend. When the dust has settled, he returns to the family home. This is a constant pattern in the household. Aron has convinced himself that he is the 'black sheep' of the family and will never live up to the high expectations of his parents and older brother, who works in the IT industry.

His mother believes that his troubles began when he was expelled from secondary school at the age of 15, but Aron say his involvement in criminality and violence began much earlier, at the age of 13. He told me that he would *'chill on the block,* with the mandem after school, smoke cannabis and initiate money-making schemes, usually street robberies. Fighting with young boys from rival housing estates was also a common feature in his life, with Aron constructing his road identity through the use of threatening behaviour and violence. His reputation on road, even though he argues that he has now departed from violent crime - is of someone to be feared. He refuses to back down from petty or serious infractions, and this violent road status prevents Aron from venturing outside of Northville. Because of this, he struggles to sustain legitimate employment opportunities. During the end of my fieldwork, he managed to secure a job in the retail sector; his mother Leanne was delighted, but he was chased home by rivals on his way home, and has since not returned to work. He is fearful of leaving the estate unless he travels by car, not that he admits this to his peers.

Despite Aron's tough road reputation, he is outwardly anxious. He exhibits the psychologically scars of years of gunfights, street brawls and targeted attacks (reprisals from rivals) all of which have severely impacted on his wellbeing. He describes himself as '*forever watching his back and putting on a façade to survive the roads"*. His reputation on road is merely one aspect of his social identity; something he uses to survive the status challenges that are a part of his everyday life. For Aron, the balancing of his social identity

with his home life or indeed having to 'code switch' (see Anderson, 1999) is extremely draining. He dreams of the day when he can be 'free' and finally exit life on road. Throughout fieldwork, Aron spoke with much regret and on his 23rd Birthday during a typical gathering with the mandem, he was overwhelmed by emotion:

> *I am chilling with the younger's; it's Arons 23nd birthday. It is also a double celebration; Fraser has been released from Prison, the youngers tell me that he has been 'locked down' for some time. Fraser is a character; he sits in the corner with his arms folded refusing to move a muscle. Aron, mocks him, teasing Fraser about his 'prisoner mentality'. The room explodes with laughter; Fraser cracks a sneaky smile. The mandem are in good spirits. It is heart-warming to observe them laughing, as opposed to listening to tales of rival attacks, victimization or death. These boys are confined to 'hood' due to the fear of rival attacks, should they venture outside of their post-codes. Many of the mandem (particularly the younger age category) will not engage with college or employment as they dread travelling alone on London transport. 'Prisoners in their estate' is how they articulate their existence. Cassius, Aron, Fraser and many of their friends have appeared on 'youtube' 'dissing' rival areas. Cassius explains that they have "baited their faces" providing the motive for violent revenge attacks. The mandem are seemingly regretful for some of these childish choices, but as Aron argues, "some mandem have not matured on road or moved away from the violence, even though we may have changed, their mindsets are still the same. Although I am no longer involved in the violence, I am a marked man. We are all in danger, just at different levels Ebs".*

> *The party is in full swing, the lights dim, and Leanne hurries through with Aron's birthday cake, we all join her in singing happy birthday to Aron. Aron leaves the room shortly after his mother cuts the cake. I follow him into the living room, where he is sitting with what seems to be tears in his eyes. We do not exchange words, but I cannot help but feel Aron's pain and I also become overwhelmed with emotion. I hide this from him. Fraser pops his head around the corner hurrying us back into the dining room, as he pats Aron on his back. I assume that this is Fraser's way of showing Aron that he cares about him. Aron's tears moved me profoundly. These are young boys who have their entire lives ahead of them, but they are unable to envision life beyond Northville because of the cycle of violence consuming their social worlds. I leave the party, sad - I think to myself, I wish every*

day could be a 'party' for the mandem, but Aron's sadness on a day assumed to be joyful, reminds me of the utter heartbreak of the mandem biographies (Aron's 23rd birthday - extract from fieldnotes- Sept, 2012)

Aron frequently smokes cannabis to escape his complex reality- he is routinely 'buzzing', and states that he uses weed for stress release. Aron seems to be at a crossroads, yearning to improve his situation; however, he feels 'trapped' by his reputation, past commitment to postcode rivalries and his own insecurities. He remains dedicated to making money in the alternative economy.

Cassius

Aron describes Cassius, (23) as the comedian, whom no one takes seriously. He exhibits a playful persona, but Aron informs me that this is a facade used to hide his pain, employing laughter to repress his traumatic life experiences. Cassius displays erratic behaviour: he speaks quickly and incoherently, laughing uncontrollably without prompt, while showcasing an inability to sit still through my observations and individual interviews. It is hardly surprising that, on road, he is also known for his unpredictable temperament. As a result, Cassius has spent the majority of his teens in prison. Cassius is short and muscular. His defining feature is a scar on his left cheek; I was informed by Aron that one of Cassius's closest friends inflicted the wound during an argument about money. Cassius refused to comment on the incident. He is a young father and speaks passionately about his children and his 'baby mother drama', which take up much of his time. He has fathered two children with two different women: a complicated story that has resulted in both women engaging in street brawls when they encounter one another.

Cassius has lived Northville all his life, but as part of his current bail conditions he is prohibited from entering the area. This upsets him, and in spite of his bail conditions he is often found in the neighbourhood, usually when his peers celebrate their birthdays. His mother is a single mum, with five younger children. His father (although Cassius refuses to speak about him) is in prison, currently serving time for fraud and money laundering. Cassius's early introduction to criminality began quite early in his childhood.

His extended family, most notably his older cousins have been on road for many years, while his uncle Issac, has a notorious reputation for firearm use and drug dealing. He spent most the summer holidays with his extended family, and argues that the influence of his rebellious cousins, and observing his uncle make huge amounts of money on road diverted him from pursuing his dream to be a wealthy footballer. His mother shuns these claims, stating instead that Cassius's 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (ADHD) has hindered not only his education, but also his job prospects. Cassius, of course, disagree with these claims, suggesting instead that his mother only ever wanted him to attend college in order to sustain her housing benefit.

Residents in Northville have labelled the family as troublesome because of the perpetual police raids and gunfights outside their home; Cassius's involvement in post-code rivalries has made his home a target for rival 'tit-for-tat' shootings. His mother has requested a house move, but she believes that the police and Housing Association do not have the family's best interests at heart. Consequently, he is sent to extended family when trouble brews, returning with designer clothes and jewellery, which he refuses to discuss with his mother. During my fieldwork, Cassius breached the terms of his bail conditions, and has since returned to prison.

<u>Kenzo</u>

Kenzo lives with his mother and father, a rare occurrence in Northville. When I first met Kenzo, I often wondered why, despite his happy disposition, he often seemed sad when he spoke about his family life:

> *I use to find it difficult talking to my parents about the things going on 'on road'. My parents have their own problem, my mum is never happy; I think she is depressed, got worse when my brother was killed. I respect my dad, but he has never had a voice. I was always blamed for everything that went wrong in my house, but I guess I was the scapegoat for the issues they had. I don't have a relationship with my parents, I don't think I was supported or directed enough, so yeah, it made me uncaring, and I took it out on the roads. The death of my brother didn't help. My parents love me, I think I know that now, but back when I was younger, I was*

just left to roam the streets and do my own ting. (Kenzo 27-
extract taken from semi-structured interview)

Kenzo (27) is the oldest of three children. His youngest brother, Billy, was gunned down when he was in his early teens. The death of her Son, Billy, has affected Kenzo's mother Sophie, severely. She finds it difficult to come to terms with his death. Kenzo speaks passionately about his aspirations to become a business man but is conscious that these plans are blighted by his second passion to avenge his dead brother. The unlawful death of Billy pushes Kenzo further into the violent world of life on road, drawing him into conflict with associates who are believed to be responsible for Billy's murder.

Although Kenzo is not affiliated to a gang, the cycle of revenge that has claimed many casualties, involves volatile peer groups (see Hallsworth and Young, 2005) or what Kenzo refers to as 'pagans'- a term used 'on road' to describe some form of betrayal between what was once close friendships. Initially, his intension was to sit on the periphery of life on road, make a living in the alternative economy while avoiding the more brutal aspects of the lifestyle. The murder of his brother, however, has signalled a spiral of 'tit- for-tat' shootings with Kenzo being shot on three separate occasions; the latest incident nearly costing him his life. As Jacobs and Wright (2006) notes, the need to engage in what they term 'street justice' sits at the heart of street culture. Similarly, for those on road, seeking revenge for the death or injury of family and close friends is a customary practice, with men such as Kenzo settling interpersonal disputes through the use of violence, but principally by the method of firearm violence. Kenzo is fully immersed in a cycle of violence and is prepared to risk his freedom and future in the pursuit of revenge and retaining honour on road. Thus, seeking justice for the death of his brother has come to define his life.

TJ and Freddie

TJ and Freddie (19) are twin brothers who the mandem describe as 'loose cannons'. The brothers, but especially TJ, are prone to violent behaviour and have earned notorious reputations on road. Unlike some of the other mandem the brothers have spent the majority of their childhood with foster

families. Their biological mother, Tammy is a recovering alcoholic, while their father (also an alcoholic) spends most of his time outside the 'bookie shop'. The boys are embarrassed by his gambling and street corner lifestyle. They are currently living with their Aunt, Georgia, whom finds it an extremely challenging task to manage the boys, while caring for her daughter who was sexually abused by an extended family member. Georgia is often seen rowing or punching TJ outside the family home. The violence between TJ and his Aunt concerns the neighbours, who routinely alert the police.

TJ is exceptionally confident. His brother, Freddie, is unusually reserved; he has a nervous disposition and only ever responds to questions when prompted. The brothers' history with authority figures is one of turbulence and violence. TJ was permanently excluded from secondary education because of aggressive episodes with a number of teachers, while Freddie, was known to victimise fellow pupils. TJ's refusal to pursue his education has ensured that he and Freddie remain committed to 'getting what they can on road'. TJ, is immensely protective of his brother and has adopted the role as sole, financial provider:

> *Ebs, the mandem don't play with TJ, he is a serious guy. Don't let his bright blue eyes fool you; he is on this road ting hard. Freddie is like his baby brother not his twin. They have a mad little bond; you think anyone can tell Freddie anyting, nah, not when TJ is about. TJ is all about the roads, that's all he knows. He looks bout Freddie, and makes sure that he doesn't go without. Some of us only have a little foot in there, but TJ's heart is on road, he'll probably die on road. (Cassius 23- extract taken focus group interview)*

The brothers, but particularly TJ are thoroughly immersed in the local drug economy and they live quite literally on road. The boys return to Georgia's home to eat or sleep, but the bulk of their time is spent on road, either making an illegitimate income or 'warring' with rivals on Brick Farm estate. Although TJ is, seemingly, self-assured, the mandem inform me that Freddie, who lives in his brother's shadow, is reluctant to engage in the violent side of life on road. However, due to TJ's street creditability Freddie is forced into violent confrontations to maintain his brother's reputation. Unlike TJ, who excels in both the drug game and protecting his honour amongst his peers,

Freddie has constructed a reputation that is considered weak on road (a subordinate road masculinity) - running away in the face of danger, and refusing to retaliate to minor infractions. As a result, Freddie is routinely victimised by TJ's rivals.

As with most of the mandem who are enmeshed in post-code rivalries, TJ and Freddie have pledged alliances to Northville, opting to 'rep their endz' (represent the neighbourhood in which they live) and gain status through neighbourhood rivalry stemming from as early as the 1990s. TJ attaches himself to the local boys in the area who give him a clear identity and sense of belonging. He is 'the man' on road and within his peer group, unlike his father, who TJ resents and considers a failure. Throughout fieldwork, TJ spoke proudly about 'repping his 'endz', and the sense of importance and power it provides. He has learnt that, to survive in the confines of the inner city, you must adopt the ethos of the roads- be tough, 'back your beef', and protect your manhood/reputation. TJ strives hard to uphold his identity and protect his twin brother. He is currently serving time for offences relating to firearms and kidnap. Freddie's battle on road continues.

Mohammed Bilal

Mohammed Bilal (birth name Nathanial) is an influential character in Northville. One of the reasons why he is well known is because his father is a well renowned reggae DJ, and his mother (who died in a car accident) was a prominent figure in the local community. Mohammed is also respected. In his younger years, he was described in the hood as a successful predatory trapper; accumulating hordes of money in the alternative economy. These days, he is admired not only because of his prestigious road status, but because he is a reformed road man. Mohammed told me during an interview that he has turned his back on his past life, characteristic of drug dealing and violent altercations, turning instead to Islam and the teachings of the Qu'ran. As he explains:

> *When I was on road I was confronted with a lot of bad things, I started to think deeply about my life. I had so much questions, so you obviously look to different aspects to kind of find out the answer. From the teachings of Islam I kinda*

*learnt, it helped me find my purpose in life (Mohammed, 28-
extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

Mohammed describes himself as a Muslim revert; a term used to describe the process of 'coming to faith' (Reddie, 2009). He reverted to Islam four years ago at the age of 24 - when his life was consumed with petty crime, violence and, uncertainty. The torture and murder of one of his closest friends, in conjunction with a prison sentence for money laundering, provoked deep reflective feelings in terms of the direction of his life. On release from prison, Mohammed distanced himself from the mandem, and drifted into the company of the local Muslim community where he took his declaration (Shahada) of faith. Much of his time is now spent in the mosque, delivering lectures and incorporating the four remaining pillars of Islam into his day-to-day activities. I have often observed Mohammed (who has grown a long beard and wears Islamic clothing) in the local youth where he shares his faith with interested youngsters. His appearance and attitude bears little resemblance to the young man I knew, who wore expensive designer clothes and found himself at the heart of many violent street brawls. He is humble and reserved, yet infused with enthusiasm about his fresh philosophy on his life.

Mohammed has thoroughly embraced the Islamic doctrine, but this decision has been frowned upon by his father and late mother, Helen. He was raised in a very strict Christian home where attendance at church every Sunday was a customary practice. Bailey, his father is a Rastafarian and often condemns Mohammed for betraying the key principles of the Rastafarian movement. Both his parents were reluctant to acknowledge his faith, and his father still is. Bailey noted during fieldwork that '*"Islam is an alien religion and that his son is lost".* This upsets Mohammed who argues that, since reversion, his father has only shown respect for the fact that he has excluded pork from his diet; a shared value between father and son. Nonetheless, he remains committed to his faith, choosing instead to move out of the family home and to have minimal contact with his father.

Mohammed is distinguished amongst the mandem as he is welcomed Islam into his life and turned his back on the cultural practices embedded in life on road. Since reversion, he has secured a job in construction and is planning his wedding to Erica. Today Mohammed is happy and secure; a far cry from the years of status challenges, victimisation, criminality and violence.

4.2 Chapter Summary

To recap, this chapter has identified the manner in which the mandem negotiate the spatial environment, focusing in particular on the key components of their activities on road. For many of the mandem who share histories and biographies of intense geographical disadvantage, the hood and the locations surrounding it form a crucial element in shaping their social lives, and especially, how they perceive, experience and negotiate socioeconomic exclusion. The central principle driving this chapter has been one of exploring geographical space, which determines pathways into life on road - with the local neighbourhood and social networks facilitating the adoption of particular practices, norms and, the mandem's way of being and seeing the world. Emphasis was thus placed on the significance of the physical and symbolic space in the construction of a distinct 'hood mentality', which have profound implications in terms of how the mandem manage transitions to adulthood. It was therefore argued that contemporary theorisations of street violence must broaden beyond the emphasis on gangs to include an understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural contexts that impact upon and, influences the life journeys of Black urban working-class men.

5.0 Findings II: It's All About the Queen's Heads

The previous chapter demonstrated that the symbolism embedded in the mandem's accounts of life on road – and in particular the promise of a better life – in conjunction with exposure to certain practices in the geographical space encouraged pathways into road culture. This section focuses on the way in which the mandem utilise the roads to their advantage, but often to their detriment, examining how life on road offers readily available yet short-term routes to resolving financial problems. As Lea and Young (1984) point out, crime can be understood as a response to feelings of relative deprivation, whereby individuals employ alternative ways of dealing with material disadvantage. For men who were excluded from school and not immersed in mainstream employment, and who endured the wrath of the criminal justice system, the prospect of financial stability was something to aspire to. In environments of chronic disadvantage, the notion of survival emerged strongly in the narratives of the participants. For Sykes and Matza (1957), adolescents involved in delinquency often find ways to neutralise feelings of guilt and shame in order to preserve self-identity. In a similar fashion, survival was the mantra adopted by the mandem to neutralise their marginalisation, perhaps employing a 'survival kit' (i.e. direct entry in the illegal drug economy) to resolve their economic predicament and futures of permanent socio-economic disadvantage. On road, therefore, becomes a central mechanism to counteract the hardship endured as a consequence of structural disparity, providing the space for social mobility in the illegal economy and the rich potential to earn criminal wealth. The following analysis considers the complexity of the mandem's working environment, placing specific emphasis on what they describe as 'trapping' in all its variant parts, whilst exploring the different roles and job opportunities available in the illegal drug economy.

5.1 Trapping: Caught in the 'Trap'

Much has been written about the drug trade and the social world of 'the hustler'. The hustler has been defined as an outsider, an individual who breaks moral rules and cannot sustain legitimate employment or rejects conventional work, preferring instead to utilise opportunities in the underworld economy (See Polsky, 1967; Pryce, 1986 and Venkatesh, 2013, for example). In fact, the hustler and his various money-making schemes has been depicted not only through academic literature, but through British television (most famously Del Boy[17]), cinematically in films such as Shaft, Boys in the Hood, New Jack City and Menace to Society, and also in music. The concept of the hustler has become culturally familiar in Western capitalism and particularly in American cinema. As such, the term 'hustler' is often used to denote some form of illicit wheeling and dealing of good and bad products. For example, Pryce (1986) conceptualised the hustler as African Caribbean men who rejected 'slave labour' in the formal economy and engaged instead in hedonistic criminal pursuits. For Pryce, structural conditions, discrimination and, 'shit work' led to these men having to make lifestyle orientations to get by. More recently, Pitts (2008) made reference to the 'shotter', a revised hustler term used to define young, black and mixed-race males who engage in drug dealing at street level. In Northville, however, the mandem spoke about 'trappers' and 'trapping', which denoted the combination of drug dealing, a problematic drug industry and more serious levels of offending, such as robbing fellow drug dealers. It would appear that different terminology is used to describe the same activity. For instance, like Pitt's cohort of young people who engaged in drug dealing and street robbery (youngers/soldiers for example) the mandem would also peddle drugs and rob. Trapping, however, not only described the physical activity of hustling drugs and generating money in the illegal drug economy, but also included being trapped in a dangerous lifestyle and identity. Cris, an elder, illustrates how trapping differs from hustling or from Pitt's shotter definition:

---

[17] Del Boy was a fictional wheeler and dealer in the popular British sitcom Only Fools and Horses.

I use to be a hustler, not only illegal things though. I use to be a good hustler; go to loads of auditions, music videos, with popular people, like Craig David, so I use to make money from that. Sometimes you get quite good money from it so I felt like I didn't need a job as I could buy the things I needed. Things changed though, stopped getting the opportunities, getting into trouble a lot when I was hustling good tings. I went prison, came out with nothing. I had to start trapping start over build myself up again. I hit the drug business hard, got myself even deeper involved in the 'trap'. When I was hustling, it was a different ting, I weren't worried about trappers robbing me, the violence, being targeted or all that other shit. Trapping is a different world man, once you're in its hard to get out, you get use to the money, but we still do it knowing the dangers and that we may never get out, but what choice do we have? (Cris, 33 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

For Cris, the hustler was associated with 'Del Boy' wheeling and dealing, a kind of playful legal hustle in which he made money from appearing in music videos. Trapping, on the other hand, is a more extensive orientation towards the drug market and dependence upon those who are immersed in the 'trap' (i.e. the illegal drug market). Importantly, the mandem caught up in the drug trap were commonly known as 'trappers' as opposed to hustlers and shotters. The trappers were essential to the trap (the local drug economy) as they were instrumental in catching people, or trapping individuals, in a cycle of drug dealing and addiction. The mandem acknowledged that the drug trade – the trap – was a dangerous enterprise which included elevated risks of imprisonment, victimisation, and premature death. But in their desperation, the lack of alternative legal employment opportunities and choice made them conscious victims of their circumstances. The mandem relied upon the trap to improve and alter their financial situation. In this sense, trapping differs from the more coercive shotting process undertaken by Pitts' (2008) 'reluctant gangsters' who were often forced to participate in the illegal drug economy. In the absence of what they believed to be a practical solution to living the dream (i.e. earning a decent salary and owning a house and car; and thus acquiring a positive sense of self) the trap was perceived as a practical means to an end, and the most realistic job choice. P. Dawg, an elder, illustrates the ways in which his limited skill set or lack of social capital

rendered him powerless to compete legitimately, forcing him to take his chances in the trap:

> *Life is hard, Ebs, well for me. Man is struggling to get by. Sometimes I feel trapped out here, no other place for me to go. Most of us trap, cos there is no other real way to make money. Some of us know that we ain't getting no job with good money, I didn't finish school, have never worked a normal job in my life – what experience do I have, eh? I'll tell you what goes through my mind. People can't work for £1000 out here and survive innit. Who do you expect to do that? They have to pay rent, they gotta feed themselves. Hold on, rent, feed yourself, travel expenses, electricity. Okay, after all of that what are they left with? What holiday do they go on? I know what you lot are gonna say. Ah, you should study and get a job that pays 60 grand a year. I ain't gonna get paid 60 bags a year with my qualifications (sighs). If it was that easy, everyone would be doing that. Ah, but they say, it's about the character, alright, go and practice how to change your character innit. So there is a lot of studying that has to go on in this, meanwhile you're hungry and you need a roof over your head. Listen man, I ain't gonna go and hurt no innocent people boy, but I ain't going to work for pennies in some shit job either. (P. Dawg, 31 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

The most striking theme to emerge from the above extract is what appears to be a negative perception of legitimate employment. Legal work was perceived as 'boring', low-paid and low-status, something the mandem equated to poverty and a life of hardship. There has been extensive debate concerning the changing nature of both the British and American economies and declining labour market opportunities for working-class families (see Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Ball et al 2000; and Robert, 2009). The effects of de-industrialisation, particularly the disappearance of the manufacturing industry that historically constituted the basis of employment for many working-class families, has had a profound impact on their labour market experiences. As Nayak and Kehily (2013: 54) point out, 'in the British post-period, manufacturing employment was seen to offer viable, if restricted opportunities for working-class males'. However, since the turn of the 21st century it would appear that there has been a steady decrease in stable or secure 'jobs for life' and growing insecurity in both employment and choice biographies (Giddens, 1991 and Beck, 1992). In the absence of stable well-paid jobs and linear paths from

dependence to independence, the legitimate economy has failed to provide the mandem with tangible routes for achieving economic prosperity. What has been left in the wake of a destabilised economy is a degree of hopelessness amongst the mandem, and a realisation that future job prospects are limited to low-paid, no-contract employment and minimal wage:what has been defined as 'shit work' (Pryce, 1986 and Standing, 2011). The mandem's perception of paid, formal work differed from the older Jamaican residents of Northville (discussed earlier), and from the attitudes of their parents/grandparents who were prepared to take what Pryce (1986) referred to as 'shit work'. Indeed, Jamaican migrants came to the UK in search of a better life in a climate that offered job opportunities. Since then, the economic situation has worsened, but rising aspirations concerning material success remain prominent amongst the mandem. Trapping an attractive alternative granted the mandem a realistic method to reach their desired economic objectives. The mandem knew what to expect from legitimate employment as they observed the struggles experienced by their parents in the home. They therefore rejected financial precariousness and made the decision to trap. Trapping was the viable alternative that outweighed dependence on a legitimate system that they regarded as not only unobtainable, but incompatible with their economic goals and both short and long-term aspirations. The following quotations demonstrate this further:

I grew up watching my mother struggle; she worked in a supermarket, better than the other kids on the estate though, cos their mothers were on benefits. I saw how hard life was for us without money. My mum has three kids to feed. Don't get me wrong, we had the basics, the very basics, food and a roof, but that wasn't giving me half of what I needed. Mummy tried though, but couldn't really afford my tastes. When I got older, saw the mandem getting this and that, and said to myself, I don't need to suffer, not when I could trap, make my own income, buy my own weed, live my own life. I was thinking, maybe I could even help Mummy out she deserved that, but knew she wouldn't want the money, not when she knew where it came from. I couldn't rely on getting a job, with that there are no real guarantees. At least when I'm on road, I know I'm getting some money coming in. When you get older things get a little more serious, when you're young on road, you be buying the garms, jewellery, clubbing it up and all that, your drive is to have fun. When

you turn into a man, you want a mortgage, houses, you wanna be able to do things, you wanna have a business, you want to be a independent man. How you gonna do this if you don't have the qualifications you should have got when you was too busy doing fuckery on the road? It's one or the other way, it's either you try and go study now and get those qualifications, or be to honest with you, you go on road and go hard. (Neil, 34 – extract taken from focus group interview with the elders)

I was kicked out of school, what choice did I have? I dunno, maybe I was greedy, maybe I wanted more innit. I couldn't see any other way of making money. I just knew I could make money quickly and easily. There is nuff temptation out there, a lot of us young ones see the temptation and go for it. (Ralphy, 19 – extract taken from focus group with youngers)

Money has to be made somehow. I was tired of seeing my mum suffer; I weren't going to live that kinda life, worrying about every penny or bill. The government don't care about us. I have qualifications, I finished school, but is there a place in society for someone like me? Nah Ebs, I don't think so. I can't get anywhere even with my qualifications, can't make the money I need to be satisfied. So boy, yeah, I done dirt. The roads are not easy, you think I am living on JSA and all that bullshit. (Julian, 22 – extract taken from focus group with youngers)

Money, or specifically the lack of it, was one of the central motivational factors for participation in the illegal drug economy. Similar to the young men in Sullivan's (1989: 20) study life on road did not 'develop in a vacuum but began at a point defined by resources of their families'. Many of the mandem lived in relative poverty. As children, they observed their mothers struggling to get by on minimum wage or state benefits. This was instrumental in determining their engagement with the trap. In the 1970s, Willis's (1977) ethnography illustrated how 'working-class kids get working-class jobs. The school environment was said to prepare working-class boys for life in the manufacturing industry. With the collapse of this industry and the increase in McDonalisation, the same cannot be said for the mandem. The mandem are therefore not directed into theworking-class, unskilled job market, as was the case, for example, in Willis's 'Learning to Labour'. Instead of learning to labour in school, they learn to labour on the streets.

What exist in the current climate are fewer working-class jobs, as conceptualised by Willis. Thus, youth transitions into the labour market have changed fundamentally. The mandem remained resistant to the prospect of entering a segmented labour market in which they acknowledged they were destined for secondary segments of low-paid, unskilled and short-term jobs (Standing, 2011). In such conditions where the mandem encountered material deprivation in their households and barriers to advancement, especially in terms of lacking formal qualifications and training, trapping held a particular position in their lives. Denied access to the types of social and cultural capital of their middle class counterparts, the mandem rejected the legitimate job market and the prospect of living on the breadline, and turned to trapping. In Mertonian terms, the mandem accepted the goal, but rejected the means, and instead innovated using unconventional means to achieve a culturally prescribed goal. Ironically, unskilled and low-paid jobs were the final destination for the mandem who failed to accomplish financial success in the drug economy. Still, throughout the interviews they referenced the unwillingness to work in what they described as dead-end, and an unattainable job market. Edwin, an elder, shares his thoughts on legitimate employment:

> *I prefer being my own boss, not taking orders. I wake up in my time, work around my time. I don't see the sense in working in some dead-end job for pennies, where you have to take orders, and not even come home with shit to show for yourself. I've never been one for taking orders anyway, had this issue all through school. I've realised even if I was working what they call the proper way, sticking to these set rules, I would still suffer financially. It's not like working is going to make me any better off. I am better off with these chances. Yeah, not having or not having enough is definitely the drive for every individual baby. Man don't come in this game for no reason, or cos they wanna be someone – leave that for the kiddies. It's money. It's always about the Queen's heads – that is what you should call your book. (Edwin, 31 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

Trapping was the resistive response that permeated scarce opportunities in the legitimate labour market, offering the mandem apractical option to make an income. This was a population of men with unstable biographies who were relatively powerless in terms of participating in the legal economy.

Trapping helped resolve structural inequalities and, in some instances, made up for all the deprivation, providing the only real opportunity to transform their subordinate position. In their desperate search to alter their low socio-economic status, many of the mandem self-excluded from conventional work. In this respect, their disillusionment at a legitimate system that they believed could not cater to their employment needs compelled them to create various career and job opportunities in the trap. For many, the structure of orthodox work was considered restrictive and did not allow the freedom to fast-track to self-employment. Trapping offered this opportunity. In the trap the mandem had autonomy, control and no limitations, and therefore took pride in exceeding the rules and regulations of more organised employment. This level of freedom granted a sense of empowerment, especially as it was possible to abandon convention, particularly formal dress, organisational procedures and, structured working hours –requirements that the mandem deemed disadvantageous. Danny, Natty and, Bradley, describe the perks of being their own boss on road:

> *When you're on road you are your own boss. Well for me, I don't like taking orders from no cunt, I don't know nothing about waking up early, I wake up when it suits me. The trap is fucked, but at least you can do your own ting. I'm not working in Tesco's for pennies like a cunt, when I can trap on road and make some real money. I couldn't see myself in those shit jobs, imagine me in a Tesco's or McDonalds outfit, Ebs, it's actually laughable. (Danny, 18 – extract taken from focus groups with youngers)*

> *I have never had a job in my life. I think I've done quite well for not having a proper job though. Upper class people strive for like, buying houses, clothes, having a business, their life is about all things nice (smiles). As I see it, I am only here once, why can't I aim for those things too. I think we all enter this drug economy to make money, money is what makes the world go round. I had to do some dark things to get it and made some mistakes in my life, but I just live every day as it comes.To be honest, that is quite a godly thing as well. Most road man have ambition. They want things in life, they have dreams, they want nice things. Sometimes you can see their dreams coming to life faster than a working guy. (Natty, 38 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

> *I weren't put here to be no waste man. I am making my own money and feel good that I can look bout myself. I don't think I am any different from the working man, he buys his stuff, the products that he is going to sell, he sells it, and takes out his money and knows the difference between his money and the profit. He is punctual and he has a steady income if he is doing well. The working man knows that if he puts in the work, he will see the reward, same as us, trap hard, get money – simple as that. I don't think our drive is that much different from that geezer in the pinstripe suit. We want money, and we'll do what it takes to get it. (Bradley, 25 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

As these quotations illustrate, conventional employment was regarded as 'cunts' work. This was work the mandem associated with McDonalds, zero-hour contract and precarious job prospects. Perhaps more significantly, they regarded people that engaged in such 'cunts'' work as unworthy. These were 'enlightened' men who knew the drill and were not prepared to play the game. They demanded independence and respectability, and one way of achieving this was to reject 'shit work' and engage with illegitimate work in the trap. In a similar vein to the street boys in Yogyakarta, the mandem's work 'was strongly connected to their social identity and feelings of self-confidence', but also their masculinity (Beazley, 2003: 186). It helped to establish or restore a sense of dignity, along with some control over their lives. Trapping played a pivotal role in showcasing to the world that they were worthy and helped to alleviate that deep inner feeling of personal failure. The mandem's attitudes to paid 'cunts' work' may be interpreted as oppositional (Anderson, 1999). However, just as capitalist order teaches the value of self- actualisation, money and greed, as opposed to moral virtue, the mandem conform to very conservative values and want to do everything that capitalist social and economic relations hold to be valuable. They, too, thrive on materialism, grandeur and self-sufficiency, a perfectly normal expectation in a modern society that works on the basis of acquisitive individualism. In fact, the mandem take great pride in making their own living, being autonomous neoliberal subjects and managing their own livelihoods. The following quotations demonstrate these points further:

> *Going on road – entering the trap –is what I wanted to do, I cannot blame anything other than my need for money and*

to get on in life. My mother is a very successful lady and I am proud of her. I've seen how she lives and I want that kinda life for myself. I've worked in the past, but I have never earned enough money working legitimately to match my lifestyle. I know working in a job like Tesco's will not give me the life I want. I will do whatever it takes to give myself a decent start in life. I make my own money; I don't rely on no one. It's our struggle, so yeah we have to bend the rules a bit. I can't see myself suffering on the dole, nah. I work some really long hours to bring in that money. I don't think we're much different to those working guys, Ebs. Our struggle is different. One world is positive, one is negative. One you get a bonus, the other you get a couple of years or a bullet in your head'. (Travis, 35 – extract taken from focus group with olders)

I have two kids, so I trap hard, Ebs, need to support my family. I have big dreams for my future, I regret not going to uni doe. I trap to survive, but would rather be doing something better with my life – only a fool will tell you that they wanna trap. I'm a musician, love making music, but it's hard to buss in music. In the beginning I had a clear exit plan, but life got in the way. My accident didn't help either, cos now I'm stuck with a disability, and can't trap as hard as I want, so don't make as much P nowadays. There is nothing glamorous about what we do, we do it to survive, to feed ourselves and to put clothes on our kids' back. (Ash, 23 – extract taken from focus group with youngers)

As the extracts from my data illustrate, the mandem cannot be classified as a class of people who remain dependent upon government handouts as the underclass theory proposes (Murray, 1990). Such discourse serves as a powerful ideological tool that is suggestive of a class of people who are unable to take responsibility for their lives. This cannot be applied to the mandem and their approach to improve their situations, particularly as it is quite evident that they act out what is expected in rational society; except their work is crime. Similar to the work rhetoric of the capitalist workforce, the mandem are ambitiously motivated, pursuing careers in which they believe will enable some level of autonomy and economic stability. In this way, they emulate city bankers and hedge fund managers, particularly in terms of some key principles (McCullough and Blake, 2010). The mandem are prepared to, and do, work hard. They work long hours, take risks and innovate because of the restrictions inherent in legitimate work imposed by

the structure. They would do anything to achieve success. In addition, they hold very traditional notions of masculinity, wanting to be considered people of honour, remaining committed to providing for their children and families, and sometimes, pursuing leadership roles in their own work sector.

Unlike the wealthy businessmen, however, who convene in their extravagant glass buildings and lead financially satisfying lives, the mandem struggle as the 'precariat' of society. They live without an 'anchor of stability' (Standing, 2011: 1) whilst battling to find viable routes into respectable lifestyles. This was evident in the fact that, like the dealers in Levitt and Dubner's (2007) account of the drug business in America, the mandem also struggled to make ends meet with many still living at home with their mothers or, in the case of my study, 'babymothers'. The mandem operated predominately within their neighbourhoods. Similar to the findings of Cloward and Ohlin (1960), who drew on Edwin Sutherland's theory of differential association to argue that that the social structure determines criminality and criminal subculture, the hood defined the types of accessible illegitimate opportunities. In turn, these shaped the types of groups that manifested in the trap. In contrast to the city workers, the mandem grow up in impoverished environments surrounded by the drug economy, and are, exposed to certain behaviour and people that introduce them to the prospect of making illegitimate money. While the mandem were excluded or self-excluded from legitimate employment, it confirmed their place in a volatile working setting. In the following section I demonstrate that while in the trap, the mandem encountered a multitude of characters (trappers) in their working world, all with very different financial agendas. Just as conventional work is bounded by accomplishment and failure, success and failure in the trap was measured by a host of variables and occupational hazards. These tensions will be discussed below.

5.1.1 Division of labour and occupational hazards

There has been much debate in recent years concerning gang structures. Two broad theories on gang activity have emerged as a consequence. As noted in the literature review, contemporary UK gang research falls into two

opposing arguments. The first set of academics (referred to as the 'believers') posit that street-based groups are hierarchal, with a corporate structure; business enterprises that tend to engage in systematic criminal/drug activity (for example Pitts, 2008 and Harding, 2014). In contrast, the second band of academics (the 'sceptics') propose that street-based groups form spontaneously, and are loose entities or 'messy networks'. This perspective regards group criminality as disorganised in nature, casual and opportunistic (Aldridge and Medina, 2008 and Hallsworth and Young, 2005).

Although examining such groups as sophisticated criminal organisations with designated roles and responsibilities may seem far-fetched, in Northville there was some trace of hierarchal division of labour as proposed by Pitts in his Waltham Forest study. For example, what existed was the kind of market economy indicated by Hobbs and Pearson (2001), illustrative of 'small and flexible networks' and essentially built around a web of self-employed contractors. Therefore, and as one would expect in the middle-market drug economy, there were wholesalers and drug runners/retailers, but little evidence of any identifiable leader or boss issuing orders or controlling the supply of drugs. Instead, the trap reflected more of what the 'sceptics' noted to be a disorganised and opportunistic work model, whereby the mandem attempt to 'individually' benefit from crime. When asked about the organisation of the trap, Cassius provided the following response:

Ebony: Cassius, could you tell me about the trap?

Cassius: The roads are messy, everyone is just trying to find different ways of making P. That's what it's about man, money, finding different avenues.

E. Literature and academic research on gangs/youth crime suggests that there is some kind of structure on road.

C. What do you mean?

E. For example, a gang structure, i.e. a boss, foot soldiers etc.

C. Nah nah, Ebs, it's not organised like that. I wouldn't say I have a boss or anything like that, just people that I can

make money with, doesn't even have to be friends, some of us are associates, with different ideas about making money. I suppose everyone has a role if you wanna look at it like that. The drug dealer gets his drugs from somewhere, and the person he brought the drugs from has a supplier, but there aint no leader. I suppose the olders are the suppliers, the youngers go to them more time to get their tings, but don't get it twisted, the youngers want a bring in, they want to make that money. Everyone out for themselves, doing their own ting. (Cassius, 23 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

Cassius speaks here about the olders and the ease of getting his hands on the goods-drugs. The olders were cited as the principle wholesalers who supported the elders and youngers in their criminal careers. For example, the olders supplied drugs to the elders and youngers, both of whom had access to the wholesaler. What was evident in the trap was that there were no middle-level managers. Instead, it operated on an open access market where anyone could buy, irrespective of the status they occupied. Money therefore equalled access. The local drug economy reflected, then, a kind of salesman model. The olders supplied the goods to the elders and youngers, who could be perceived in this situation as independent retailers. They were the equivalent of door-to-door salesmen. Hence, much of the drug sales was a lone activity whereby the mandem trapped independently, only ever relying on the friendship group or team work when required (i.e. group activity). This dynamic did not reflect the exploitive or coercive relationship argued by Pitts (2008), perhaps due to the fact that criminality tends to be a product of the location. In Walham Forest, Pitts identified a criminal structure more exploitative than Northville's local drug economy.TJ, a younger, explains this collaborative relationship between the mandem and how he found work in the trap:

The olders bring us in, they have been there, done it, so know the trap. I was bruk, and needed some money, so just went to one of the olders and asked for a bring in. I just want to make money, and the olders help to make it happen. To be honest, Ebs, I'm all about making P, living good. When you know a man that can help you, bring you in, it makes trapping easier. (TJ, 19 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

In Northville, the trap appeared to operate on financially supportive affiliation, in which the mandem would approach the olders for what they described as a 'bring in'; a foot onto the drug-dealing career ladder. Furthermore, on entering the trap, the youngers were not expected to perform rituals or a recruitment process as suggested in much of American gang literature. The majority of mandem were willing participants, working collaboratively with each other rather than in coercive networks. As TJ notes, the mandem are principally about business and making P (money), as opposed to pledging allegiance to a specific gang. The drug market in Northville, then, was based on a relatively small number of friendship groups, who were associated with more experienced olders who facilitated the supply of drugs at street level. As TJ continues:

> *We buy the drugs from the olders, he is known in the hood, and has been doing this ting for a long time. I guess without the wholesalers, we wouldn't eat, so we need him. But when we trap, we sell drugs alone. Some man work with their friends, normally when they are plotting to rob man, but I would say that every man experience is different on road. (TJ, 19 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

The olders played an influential role in the local drug economy, carving out financial opportunities for those immersed in the trap. While TJ places emphasis on the relationship between the wholesalers and retailers, and the position they occupied in the trap, the mandem also cited that within their messy friendship networks were different divisions of labour that did not equate to the same level of organisation. The job opportunities available in the trap were noted as fluid, and dependent upon the social context. What I identified in Northville was a trapper typology that represented the different ways that the mandem generate an illegitimate income. The trappers were not a homogenous group, but rather, comprised individuals who were known to 'innovate' to deal with their difficult lives. Aron, a younger and a 'humble trapper', provided some insight into the different trappers on road:

> *There are different mandem, different levels of desperation. Man have different morals. We ain't all the same, we trap for different reasons. Some man are sleeping on next man's floor. Someone like that is gonna trap hard, he will rob*

women or do some other fuckery; he's greedy. Then you have man that have heard their own mother on the phone crying because next man has kidnapped her because of some fuckery that he did – robbing next man. He is on road angry, willing to kill, do whatever. Some man are humble, just wanna make money and keep a low profile, some humble man may even have a job – you have some man that work and still trap. It varies, Ebs, it's messy out there. (Aron, 22 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

Gang talk tends to simplify the experiences of 'gang members', often narrowing down their behaviour to highly organised group activity (See Pitts, 2008, for example). As Aron notes, in Northville, the trapper categories stand in contrast to popular gang imageries and have emerged from the chaotic social worlds they inhabit. It must be emphasised that the trapper typology describes the distinctive identities on road. What existed in Northville were three trapper types distinguished from each other in terms of criminal activity engaged in, levels of violence, types of masculinities performed and differing cultural norms and values. These varying characteristics are represented in Figure 6 below.

Glutton trapper HIGH	Predatory trapper MEDIUM	Humble trapper LOW
• Youngers and elders	• Elders	• Youngers, elders and olders (most common trapper type)
• Cafeteria-style offending (usually lone robbery, of property, the general public and on occasions fellow man dem)	• Orchestrated robbery of drug dealers	• Principally drug dealing, but known to also move between the illegitimate and legitimate economy
• High risk to the public	• High risk to fellow trappers	• Low risk to public and trappers
• High levels of violence	• High levels of violence	• Socially trapped
• Socially trapped	• Considered the most financially viable in the overall division of labour	• Psychologically trapped
• Economically trapped	• Socially trapped	
• Psychologically trapped	• Economically trapped	
	• Psychologically trapped	

Figure 6: Trapper typology (characteristics of the three trapper types on road)

As demonstrated in Figure 6, the trappers on road have been divided into three categories: 1) the glutton trapper, 2) the predatory trapper and 3) the humble trapper. While there are variations in terms of age and the types of criminality engaged in on road, there are also differences in the level of risk each trapper type presents to other trappers whilst immersed in the trap.

Because of the danger and complexity of the trappers' working worlds, coupled with the different financial objectives and morals amongst the mandem, it is common for them to move between trapper types. In this way, the mandem's status is never fixed; rather it is dependent upon their circumstances and varying levels of danger that they endure in the trap over time. As all trappers are entangled in a volatile supply and demand chain, and related to one another in terms of the drugs sold, there is the possibility that they will become potential victims of the other at some point during their time in the trap. Further to this, what was interesting was that the mandem experienced different gradations of 'trappedness'. More specifically, there were trappers who were homeless and poor, others who were seen as greedy and unchivalrous, others motivated by anger, others who treated the trap like a regular job and, indeed others who worked in and out of the alternative and legitimate economy. The reminder of the section will develop the trapper typology and focus on the three different trappers on road, the nature of how they generate an income, and the different levels of violence, masculinities and, cultural norms. In addition, I consider the different gradations of 'trappedness' to gain a better understanding of why the mandem are on road.

5.1.2 The glutton trapper

A glutton is someone who consistently overindulges in, for example, feeding, until they are ultimately killed by excesses. Furthermore, gluttony often refers to extravagance, or indeed over-consumption. In essence, I have characterised this trapper type as the glutton trapper, as these men are relentless trappers who perform multiple roles in the trap due to their hunger for money and material consumption. For the glutton trapper, his approach to 'doing the job', usually involved what Quinton and Adam described as high-risk crime, or what Jankowski (1991: 132) termed 'crude economic activity'. As such, the glutton trapper type are men that fellow trappers would refer to as the 'snakes' of the drug industry, as they cannot be trusted. I have situated the glutton trapper at the top of the trapper typology, because for those mandem who fall into this particular category, present the highest occupational hazards and, as a consequence, the greatest risk and harm to the wider

population. Adam and Quinton, both glutton trappers, provide insight into this first trapper type on road:

> *Ebs, I'll do anything to get that P. I don't have no morals, I will rob anyone- women, kid's mobiles, just to get that P. I'm high risk, Ebs, risk to the public, risk to next man, and a risk to myself. I don't have no boundaries, I'll be the first to admit that. Some man don't deal with me. I'm seen as reckless, a liability – can't be trusted. (Adam, 27 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

> *It's hard out here, Ebs. I have done some shady things in my life that I'm not proud of. People can judge, they do. My mum doesn't even wanna know me anymore because I robbed her friend's son's a few years ago. I was young and reckless, prepared to do anything to make money. My mum didn't have much so I hit the roads hard. Robbed, beefed with man over money or what I done to next man for money. At one stage it was all about the trap, I was trying to hit the big time and I didn't give a shit who got in the way. (Quinton, 30 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

Of the 29 men that comprise the mandem, five fall under the category of glutton trapper. For all trapper types (excluding the predatory trapper), drug dealing tends to be the most consistent source of income. However, the glutton trapper undertakes what Klein (1984) described as 'cafeteria style' offending, engaging in not only drug dealing, but low-level street crimes and high-risk, often violent delinquent behaviour. Julian explains:

> *Some of the mandem think I'm a mad man, cos I rob any and anyone and don't really care about my freedom. If you speak to the other mandem about me, they will tell you that man like me are always looking for the next money making scheme- it's all about the money. I think they think I'm a danger to everyone in the trap, because I don't have no morals. I'm unpredictable and sneaky, I will run up in man's yard and rob when man's children are there. Mandem are surprised that I ain't dead yet. (Julian, 22– extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

From Julian's standpoint, glutton trappers are the most dangerous of all trapper types, distinguished from other trappers not only in terms of the nature of their crimes, but also in their lack of principles and morals. What exists in Northville is a street moral order, or a moral structure, that guides the mandem's criminality. For example, the robbery of women, children and,

family is acceptable to the glutton trapper but deemed transgressive to the predatory and humble trapper type. What will become apparent is that, unlike his fellow trappers, who are beholden to street codes (i.e. not robbing vulnerable people) and tend to consider the kinds of crimes they engage in and weigh up the cost and benefits, the glutton trapper is remorseless in terms of his criminal endeavours. The glutton trapper type consists of both youngers and elders in which violence is integral to his identity; used both to protect himself – usually from revenge robberies, or retaliation from someone he his victimised in the trap – and to control the smooth running of business ventures. Dee explains the dangerous social world, which he occupies:

> *I only go on road if it benefits me financially. I can't really move around like that, man is after me, so I have to be careful who I chill with. To be honest, I don't really get close to the mandem. Have one bredrin Blake, but he's on what I'm on. It's all about making P, but some man are slowing my progress, can't move around like that. I've robbed man, done man tings, so have to time my moves. It's a violent world but you have to use violence to get things done, that's how I look at it. This is all I have so I need to go into it with a full heart. I've done too much dirt to get out, so have to do what I can to survive, it is as simple as that. (Dee, 16 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

Dee's social world is fraught with danger, and unlike the humble trapper whose financial objective is to one day exit the trap and ultimately life on road, as a glutton trapper he constructs his vision of the world in the here and now. This vision and dangerous status have trapped the glutton trapper in a challenging lifestyle and a cycle of violence, making migration out of the trap an unrealistic option. The glutton trapper's status frustration (Cohen, 1955) is formed on the basis of his marginal position in wider society, but also through acknowledging that he is likely to remain imprisoned by his risky behaviour. As the above quotation demonstrates, this trapper type therefore comes to accept that he may never get out. The glutton trapper differs from some of the other trapper types who 'drift' (Matza, 1964) between conventional and delinquent activity, and lives wholeheartedly for the trap. Typically, the glutton trapper will be trapped socially in masculine rituals centred on 'acting bad' (discussed in the following chapter) and remaining economically trapped. This occurs specifically in relation to the fact that

success for the glutton trapper is measured by how long he can escape imprisonment, or early death; both inevitable outcomes for this particular trapper type. As with the predatory trapper, success is never guaranteed, but determined instead by the ability, or in most cases inability, to navigate through a volatile illegal drug economy. Given that crime and criminal behaviour is intrinsic to the glutton trapper identity, it is common for this type to remain psychologically trapped on road. This often promotes and reinforces criminal behaviour.

5.1.3 The predatory trapper

The second trapper on road was identified as the predatory trapper. Nine of the 29 sample mandem can be classified as belonging to this trapper type. Smithy, a predatory trapper, explains the nature of his criminal behaviour:

> *I'm not into low-level drug dealing, I'll leave that for the youts. I've been there and done that can't make no money selling drugs on the block. We all come into this for the money. I don't see the sense in selling crack, that's just like a normal 9-5, doesn't make you real money, still gonna suffer. You know how much man I know who trap, but don't have anything to show for it. Standing on the block, trapping to crackheads, robbing people on the street, some low-level shit, and they ain't even getting paid. I know what I'm doing, (robbing man) has its downfalls but I am gonna trap hard, make that P, and one day put it into something legit. Right now I'm living well. I can do what I want, go on holiday, look after my kids, mums and myself. (Smithy, 34 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

From Smithy's perspective, selling drugs or engaging in street robbery was a low-level crime, which he regarded as beneath him. His attitude was typical of men in the trap who engaged in the collective robbery of other drug dealers. Unlike the glutton trapper, who presents a significant risk to the wider population, victims of the predatory trapper are those immersed in the trap. Predatory trappers are known to kidnap and rob drug dealers, and this trapper type is produced essentially through their approach to work, which involves seeking the illegitimate gain of others. Edwin, a predatory trapper, explains:

I'm an opportunist, I plan carefully how I'm going to make my money. It's not about being on the block all day, waiting for the crackheads, they can't help me build the life I want. You have to be smart about how you're making your money, more time you have to work as a team. It's all about maximising profit. I ain't doing too badly, neither are my mandem. People may say we're calculated, what we're doing is dangerous, but I'm in this to make big money, so yeah, I'll take the risk. Not all mandem can do what I do, or want to do it, but as I see it, you're taking a risk being on the road, might as well take it as far as you can. I have standards though, I ain't robbing women or anything like that, rob the drug dealers, they are the ones making the P. (Edwin, 31 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

Edwin describes a parasitic relationship in which predating on fellow trappers is key to his survival on road. Hence, for predatory trappers, robbery was cited as the principle mechanism employed to maximise income. For example, a number of predatory trappers spoke about drug dealing being a secondary job in the trap, whereas robbing drug dealers was thought of as a profitable career. In this way, what was evident in Northville's employment model was that work on road functioned on a very clear distinction between job and career. A career on road, most notably the predatory trapper's style to getting the job done, was considered financially lucrative and demanded particular qualifications. This led to greater financial reward. In contrast, an on road job was illustrative of hard work – for example, drug dealing for long hours for low pay – or as Edwin noted, selling drugs to 'crackheads' for little financial reward or incentive. Edwin expands on why he opted for a career as a predatory trapper as opposed to a job he associated principally with drug dealing:

For you, it may sound mad, but this is my main career. I've worked my way up through my connections, working as a team and with my knowledge of the industry, really. As I said, Ebs, not everyone is prepared to do what I do. Not everyone has the know - how or the balls, to be fair. It takes a particular kinda man to rob other mandem and make profit from his crimes. I use to do the whole drug dealing ting, but woke up one day and thought, what the fuck am I doing, man ain't making money out here so had to change it up. I think I'm successful in the trap because I ain't just doing the standard drug dealing for shit pay like next man. To trap, to rob man, you have to have some level of intelligence, wit

about you. You're dealing with some really shady people, I'm putting myself and safety on the line, so have to be smart about it. (Edwin, 31 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

According to Edwin, trapping is about not about not solely drug dealing, but also robbing drug dealers. As he illustrates, he used his knowledge of the illegal drug economy and his network of predatory trappers to maximise his income. Thus, teamwork and working closely with fellow predatory trappers were a pervasive form of support, determining the ability and inability to make money. The advancement in the illegal drug economy was dependent upon distinct capabilities that were needed to not only negotiate hostile relations with colleagues, but also dangerous working conditions. Not all mandem were able to enter the trap and construct themselves as successful and respected predatory trappers. Success and failure was measured by specific forms of road competency or 'street capital' (Harding, 2014). In order to be successful in the trap, the mandem require a specific set of skills and attributes to seek to seek out particular job opportunities. Mikey's statement illustrates this:

Any trapper would tell ya, Ebs, no matter how they are making their money on road, that you have to be known out here, have some knowledge of the trap, or who's doing what. You have to be able to network, talk to people, know yourself, know how to dodge the boy dem, and know when mandem are trying to set you up. You need to know what this business is about, so in some way, you have to have a thick skin. You have to show the other mandem that you ain't having it. You have to learn how to do the job well; that's what it's about. That's where the success and respects come in. When you know you are doing well and man can see that you are doing well, see that you are benefiting, making that P. (Mikey, 29 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

As Mikey describes, trappers had to learn 'the tricks of the trade' and thus demonstrate a specific set of skills to survive in the industry. Success in the trap was therefore reliant upon not only the mandem's ability to make money, but perhaps more significantly, their capacity to build reputation or accumulate what Bourdieu (1984) termed 'cultural capital'. In this way, seeking new job opportunities and generating an income on road moved

beyond survival, but it also embodied symbolic messages centred on respect, status, and masculinity. For Mikey in particular, it was important that he established street respectability through his trade as a prolific robber. This was usually realised in the hood through demonstrations of masculine bravado, but also through visual displays of their earning power. Not only did predatory trappers like Mikey engage in specific presentation of self-based on wearing expensive designer clothes; the need to perform a tough or aggressive male persona was constant. Such masculine traits are characteristic features of studies examining youth crime and delinquency. Anderson (1999), for example, observed this kind of hyper-masculinity as a dominant form of manliness in his analysis of the 'code on the street'. For the predatory trapper type, emphasising masculine traits of aggressiveness served as a means to perform their job role effectively, but also contributed to them being respected and feared by others in the trap. In the following fieldwork example, Mikey flaunts his wealth to demonstrate financial evidence of achievement, while showing how his predatory trapper identity is distinguished by fear:

> *Today, Mikey pulls up on the block in his expensive new car. The mandem are in ore as he steps out of his vehicle dressed in the latest designer wear. The 'youngers' quiz Mikey about his car, and Rolex watch, and take turns in walking around the car in admiration of his 18-inch alloy wheels. Mikey is smiling, seemingly loving the attention. He pulls out some cash from his pocket, and hurries TJ to the shop to buy some alcohol. Mikey is chatting away with the mandem, expressing the importance of making money and doing well in the trap. Clive, an elder, rushes past the group. He nods at the youngers and avoids eye contact with Mikey. The youngers laugh, 'what, did you, rob Clive, Mikey? Why ain't man stopping to say boo?', TJ asks. 'You man know how it is', Mikey smirks. I notice that three other elders hurry past on the other side of the road, avoiding direct contact with Mikey. (On the block – extract from field notes – July 2012)*

In this incident, and as discussed in chapter one, the mandem demonstrate wealth through conspicuous material consumption. By doing this, they shore up identity (Scott, 2004). But it would also appear that, in the context of the trap, being feared acts as a resource to assert and accomplish masculinity. Messerschmidt (1993) argued that when traditional routes to establish

masculinity are denied, alternative forms of manhood are more likely to be employed. In Northville, predatory trappers like Mikey have reasserted their subordinate masculinity (Connell, 1995) through fear and occupational achievement, understood as a key form of road capital in urban milieus that are characterised by limited social and economic capital. Mikey has therefore established a local reputation for being a 'money man' because he can provide economically. Of course, predatory trappers perform what is regarded on road as idealised male breadwinner roles, are considered financially viable within the overall division of labour, and are often praised by the male peer group for the ability to secure financial stability. Respectability among the mandem is measured by acting out specific trapper identities, with the mandem's earning power utilised as a 'masculine-validating resource' (Messserschmidt, 1993: 83).The trapper identity is drawn upon from the awareness of the mandem's marginal position in mainstream society and a desperate yearning for respect and recognition in the context of the local urban milieu. For the glutton and predatory trapper type, there is a strong emphasis on conspicuous material consumption, with masculinity consolidated through owning and displaying material goods. Like the glutton trapper, the predatory trapper is trapped by the powerful social categories and boundaries attached to life on road. However, unlike the humble trapper, who moves in and out of the illegitimate economy, the predatory trapper remains economically trapped in the illegal drug economy making the most of his illegitimate opportunities.

5.1.4 The humble trapper

It's fucked out there, Ebs. People have too much to prove in the hood. Man are robbing man and then stunting in the hood – it's crazy. Mandem are growing up poor so when you do make P, you wanna show it off. That comes with a price though. Yeah, you are respected, but mandem are putting a price on their head because of how they are making the P. I'm not into all that. I'm not on all that – those things bring attention to you. I am just a man that wants to live an easy life. So I keep low, keep humble, I don't draw attention to myself, from the boy dem (police) or the mandem. I ain't in this for the glamour and fame or to be respected. I just wanna get out of this hood. I don't trap and

give it my all. I don't want to put my heart and soul into like next man. Once you do that, there ain't turning back. You just get caught in madness with man, violence, all sorts of fuckery. (Natty, 38 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

What existed in the trap were men like Natty who prefer to undertake their work role as inconspicuously as possible. Natty represents the third and final trapper on road, the humble trapper. The trapper type is the most common found on road in Northville, and includes all age groups of mandem. Fourteen of the 29 mandem could be classified as humble trappers. Within this category are two categories; men whose main economic activity is selling drugs, and men who work in the legitimate economy but also sell drugs. What distinguishes the humble trapper from the other trapper types is his approach to work. He tends to be lone ranger; an independent trader (Hobbs and Pearson, 2001) whose financial objective is to one day exit the trap. Thus, he frames his approach to trapping on a clear exit plan. This includes selecting carefully where he socialises and who, he associates with. He also purposely avoids road customs; for example, conspicuous material consumption and, violence, which as Alex argues, draws attention to his colleagues:

Some man are baits, they wanna have boy dem on their back. They wanna stunt so the hood can see, and still stand on the block, that's a madness. I know if I was robbing man – getting tings done, I wouldn't be on the block stunting – I wouldn't even be seen. All that is long, some man are on the roads to be seen, heard. I'm trying to live as unnoticed as I can, but sometimes you get drawn in. (Neil, 34 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

As Neil, illustrates, his approach to trapping differs from his fellow trappers. Humble trappers are men who represent a low occupational hazard to their colleagues. However, their attributes affirm their vulnerability in a drug industry in which they are often targets for violent robbery. Whereas violence is a core value in terms of the predatory and glutton trapper's methods of income generation, the humble trapper attempts to position himself outside the volatile drug economy. In the context of the trap, violence plays a purely instrumental function. It is often employed by the higher-risk occupations (the

glutton and predatory trappers) as a way to 'get things done'. Because the humble trapper is a drug dealer by trade (peddling a range of drugs, including cannabis, ecstasy, heroin and, cocaine to name a few) and not a robber, violence is not integral to this work role/identity. Unlike the predatory trappers who have established profitable careers in the trap, the humble trapper/s have obtained menial jobs (drug dealing) and have thus been allocated what the mandem describe as 'hard work' in the overall division of labour. Since humble trappers pride themselves on financial and social mobility, with many working in legitimate employment, it is common for a relatively small proportion of them to progress to wholesalers in the local drug economy, as discussed earlier, and live quite financially satisfying lives. Yardie explains:

> *I've been doing this ting for a long time. I worked hard–it's hard work man, working some really long hours in some fucked up environments. I am lucky that I am here to give this interview – I've seen some real dark shit, even though I've tried to keep away from all the hype. You can't really make money out there– some man and robbing man, and making that P, but for the average road guy, you ain't really making money like that. I put my head down, I don't sell drugs on the block anymore, but had to work hard for my P though. I have something to show for it. It's hard out there, nothing is guaranteed. (Yardie, 40 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

As Yardie explains, it is common for humble trappers like himself to work long hours in dire conditions for little financial reward. The trap was representative of a precarious business that was built on a fractured and unstable economy and demanded 'hard work' from its employees. The work model represented a kind of contractual industry, whereby some trappers, most notably the predatory trappers, were able to secure lucrative contracts via robbery of drug dealers. However, for the majority of humble trappers, their financial situation was insecure and dependent upon part-time and temporary positions, and their salary equivalent to the basic minimum wage. For this reason, many cited that, in spite of their reservations, they often positioned themselves in a volatile and dangerous work economy where it was common to progress to higher-risk trapper styles in order to sustain a

more stable and lucrative income. Yet, for the fortunate minority (those who manage to avoid violence or victimisation), moving away from the trap and entering low-paid and unskilled legitimate job market was common within this category of mandem. It was typical for some humble trappers to have one foot in the legal economy and supplement what they described as 'cunts' work' with their drug dealing. The humble trapper is therefore not economically trapped, since although his choices are limited or he experiences status frustration, he is not alienated to the same degree as the glutton and predatory trapper types. The humble trapper, however, remains socially and psychologically trapped in road custom and norms, particularly building road reputation centred on violence and 'acting bad'. Similarly, to other trapper types, he is also known to move into Islam to rescue or redeem his former 'badman' identity. It is to these discussions that I next turn.

5.2 Chapter Summary

You will have seen that this chapter has discussed the economic benefits attached to life on road, noting parallel aspects of road culture and capitalist ideology, and the degree to which being on road fosters involvement in a criminal and risky working environment. It highlights the significance of the notion of 'trapping', in the context of the local drug economy, focusing on the illegal and legal work practices on road, which, in my opinion, are looser than that of gangs. To this end, this analysis of Northville's drug economy demonstrates the complex and multifaceted masculinities that prevail in a street context, examining the three identity options available to them when taking on their work roles. This analysis of the mandem's day-to-day activities also demonstrates their demands for a stake in a capitalist society, with many choosing to live on road as a means of constructing an identity and generating an income. Despite the dangers, competition and attacks to their integral sense of self, you will have seen that the mandem committed themselves to the trap, finding that life on road was far more painful than imagined. The mandem became trapped as they searched desperately for self-worth and a way out of their internal and external struggles. This idea of becoming trapped in life on road will be revised in Chapter 7, because (1) it

has proven to be a prominent theme in the mandem's narratives; and (2) a broader examination of the psychological strain they experience as they move through their transitions to adulthood in Northville is crucial. It is to these discussions that I turn next.

6.0 Findings III: Trapped in 'Self': Identity, Violence and Faith 'On Road'

Chapter Five discussed how the alternative (drug) economy, referred to as the trap, replaced low-skilled and undesirable employment with one of the few ways in which the mandem could earn a steady income, establish respectability and gain some control over their marginal position in the socio-economic structure. Ironically, while the alternative economy provided the mandem with a resource for short-term financial gain, their activities led them to becoming socially, morally, structurally and psychologically trapped. This set them up for lives of severe self-destruction and failure. In the following section I demonstrate that – in the same way that work on road functioned as a mechanism for the mandem to build identity – violence, and what was described as 'acting bad', was cited as a key vehicle for building, maintaining and managing identity. There is a need to be perceived on road as tough or bad, and a yearning to retaliate when masculinity comes under attack. Furthermore, to survive on road requires a certain kind of mastery: defend your manhood or become a victim. The following sections analyse this particular cultural orientation, probing further into the violence that underpins life on road, while also exploring the basis for conversion to Islam.

6.1 'Repping Endz' and 'Getting Stripes'

Northville has a long history of territorial violence that has claimed the lives of many local young men. Place rivalry is far from being a new trend; past generations of mandem established a clear foundation for ongoing territorial conflict (often referred to in the hood as postcode war) between neighbouring estates. It is important to note that the original protagonists for postcode warfare are said to be well-known elders, now either dead or in prison, who fought primarily over loyalties to friends and notions of respect/disrespect. These concepts will be discussed later. However, the cycle of violence and revenge consuming much of the mandem's relationships no longer involves the elders. Instead, it affects the youngers for whom violence becomes the standard tool for resolving conflict. In the following street brawl, the younger

generation of mandem unite through collective loyalty to the geographical location and the friends who live there:

> *It's Sunday, and an especially tense afternoon. The mandem are standing on the block very nervous. Freddie informs me that he received a phone call alerting him to the possibility that the Brick Farm youngers were planning a counter-attack for the 'bitch slapping' of one of their mandem. The mandem are on guard; this is observable through the heavily surveillance of established street corners and a change in the mandem's personas. Tensions have been building over the years between the mandem in Northville and Brick Farm – a rival neighbouring estate. Thus, before embarking on 'official' fieldwork and subsequently positioning myself as a researcher, I often observed the Brick Farm mandem circulating the estate in search of a target. However, the year I embarked on fieldwork was a particularly busy period for rival attacks and reprisal shootings. TJ, Freddie, Ash and Cassius are discussing the altercation between TJ and one of the Brick farm mandem. The mandem believed that TJ was a little heavy-handed and questioned the rationale for the attack. 'It's mad, Ebs, I know we have our problems with Brick Farm, but TJ, you didn't need to bad up John John, it was uncalled for – you don't have nothing to prove anymore man', Ash explained. As we stood on the block, three men pulled up in a car and approached the group. 'What you on', a young boy (from Brick Farm estate) with what seem to be a blunt object in his hand shouted. 'What are you on Shay?' TJ replied calmly with his fist clenched as he stood in front of me in a protective stance. Once these words were exchanged the sequence of events that erupted proved difficult to contain. TJ and Freddie were the first to attack; TJ headbutted Shay, while Freddie stamped on his head as he fell to the floor. I held onto Wayne (a Brick Farm rival – known to me as I attended secondary school with his older sister) to prevent him from striking Cassius with a metal pole. 'Ebs, let me go man, I have been through too much with these fools, I can't take no more, my head is going to explode', Wayne barked. 'I am not letting you go Wayne, please stop this, someone is going to get seriously hurt', I screamed. The mandem continued to fight while I restrained Wayne; Cassius and Freddie now covered in blood from what seemed to be a head and nose wound. (On the block – extract taken from fieldwork – August, 2012)*

During this particular incident, a number of dynamics caught my attention. Firstly, postcode warfare is characteristic of the younger (youngers) category

of mandem, typically between the ages of 16 and 24. These young men make claims to not only an imagined place, but also some sense of imagined loyalty to their elders; this despite having little or no knowledge of the history surrounding the brutal deaths of their peers. Secondly, the past climate was illustrative of some level of travelling in and around neighbouring estates. What exist within the current landscape are very clear space boundaries; the youngers have pledged alliances to their place of residence with the aim to honour, defend and protect their territory from outsiders – most notably rival areas. The street brawl, then, was representative of a matrix of 'repping' (representing) the 'endz' (neighbourhood), and collective loyalty to the geographical location and the friends who live there. In this way, John John's 'bitch slapping' was perceived as a direct 'diss' (insult) to the Brick farm mandem who felt a sense of collective shame that Northville mandem could enter their area and 'bad up' (victimise) one of their own. The revenge attack was a demonstration; a method used to show Northville mandem that they were more than capable of 'repping their endz', while the aggressive and hostile reaction of Northville mandem signalled not only a desire to be perceived as 'backing' (defending) their territory, but also to ensure that they avoided humiliation as a group representing their area, or as individuals representing themselves. Thirdly, and perhaps more significantly, once the words 'what you on' (a phrase used on road to challenge status and incite violence) were put forward by the Brick Farm rival, this triggered an emotive response in TJ, who was then unable to back away from the situation gracefully. Unlike the kind of instrumental violence utilised by some of the mandem in the illegal drug economy (discussed in chapter two) to 'get things done', this was expressive violence amongst old friends who have now become enemies because of postcode rivalry. Stuart and Stuart (2008: 231) define expressive violence as 'hostile, impulsive, and reactive aggression' that is often triggered by hurt feelings or fear. In the case of postcode rivalries, tormentor and the tormented share personal experiences that are both good and bad. This familiarity is often played out through passionate and intimate violence. Moreover, hostile relationships with rivals and the constant fear of violent reprisals are transformed into reactive anger. Fourthly, postcode conflict coincides with the everyday frustration of being confined to

limited space, high levels of stress, feelings of hurt related to past victimisation and perceived threats to collective and self-identity. Finally, in order to understand postcode warfare, we must understand it as a vehicle employed to build and perform identity. Among the younger age category of mandem a key aspect of life on road is 'repping the endz', 'getting stripes' and subsequently building reputation. Following the violent events of August 2012, TJ offers the following version of events and provides a rationale for his involvement:

> *E: How are you, TJ? How you feeling?*
>
> *TJ: I'm cool you know, Ebs, just been in hibernation since the fight. By the way, I'm sorry you had to see that, feeling a little embarrassed that you saw me like that.*
>
> *E: It was a frightening day, TJ; I'm still trying to come to terms with what I saw and how angry you all were. Can you talk me through your version of events?*
>
> *TJ: You know there has always been tension with Northville and Brick Farm estate. Since what's-his-face got his head back licked off, things got serious. At one stage you had man running up in here, shooting mandem that weren't even involved. Things have calmed a little, but the postcode shit is here to stay, man don't like those man period. Yeah, it's about where they live, but it's also about them thinking they can run up in here and victimise man – most of our mandem are in jail now, so they are coming in here and getting away with all types of shit. I'm not having it, Ebs, they ain't making me their target, or trying to get stripes from me?*
>
> *E: What are stripes?*
>
> *TJ: Just ways of building your reputation, Ebs. Things we do to get recognised really, violent actions. You see, John John felt shame when he got bad up, went crying to his mandem (laughing out loud) sent Wayne and them man to try bad man up. I ain't having it, most of us ain't taking the 'bad up', or losing our stripes. (Interview with TJ, 19, a week after the street brawl)*

TJ's narrative highlights not only how status challenges (for example, the 'bitch slapping' of John John) are perceived by the mandem as shaming and humiliating, subsequently leading to violent reprisals, but also how these

incidents are internalised as direct attacks to manhood. This creates the desire to redeem oneself, prove one's status and retain one's honour on road. In this way, many of the mandem – including TJ – emphasised that one of the most important methods employed to survive in the confines of the inner city, particularly in terms of negotiating hostile peer interactions, was to establish a creditable road reputation. The mandem fight quite literally to construct reputation. One way this is achieved is through the formal and well-codified system of competing for 'stripes'. With most competitive sports, rules that regulate the game; spectators (outsider) oversee the match, and players are granted an equal opportunity to compete and to win, and a fair chance of redeeming themselves in the face of a loss. On road, however, the mandem devise the rules and dictate the outcomes, with the stakes being much higher. Harding (2014) identified a similar system of building reputation in his study on street culture. He argued that actors (incumbents and challengers) compete in a social arena for status, where young people battle to acquire and retain what he described as 'chips', or street capital. Similarly, the mandem on road strive for distinction in which the rules of engagement are simple; win stripes and you establish a strong reputation and minimise attacks to manhood, but lose stripes and increase the probability of victimisation and endure an endless struggle to re-establish standing, pride and dignity. TJ puts the strategy of winning and losing stripes into context:

> *It's simple, Ebs, the mandem work hard to get stripes, because when you build reputation, you are recognised on road as someone that won't take a bad up. It's easier when you have stripes and a reputation for violence; you're recognised as a badman making it easier for you to go about your day to day-to-day life. Yeah, you are challenged still, but not as much as someone who doesn't retaliate. No one wants to lose stripes, you put yourself in a vulnerable position, and you get taken for a pussy on road. (TJ, 19 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

As TJ explains, status anxiety is a motivational factor for violent reprisals and is thus at the core of the postcode rivalry consuming the youngers' day-to-day lives. As he illustrates, the competitive system of stripes work in two ways, but always in favour of the winners – the mandem who gain enough stripes to be assigned the status of badman; individuals who place

themselves in a position of dominance on road. Firstly, to win stripes and achieve this rank, you must be prepared and willing to engage in violence; you must demonstrate publicly and/or within the peer group that you can stand up for yourself, defend your reputation and honour amongst rivals who are equally competing to win stripes. You must never, in any circumstances, succumb to a bad up. Secondly, to lose stripes –a far riskier position to occupy on road – you must demonstrate weakness; an inability to engage in violence or indeed retaliate when manhood is questioned. Men who were observed in the hood as an easy target for victimisation, or bad men who failed to protect their honour, were often described by the mandem as 'pussies'. The term 'pussy' in the context of urban milieus is linked to the female genitals, illustrative of femininity and a road status that the mandem desperately attempted to avoid. That said, being labelled a pussy meant you were considered soft, weak, vulnerable and undeserving of stripes. Cassius explains why he would rather be classified as a badman than a pussy, and illustrates why such a position placed many of the mandem in subordinate roles to the badman, creating a proving ground for manliness:

> *You know how it is, Ebs, it's not easy out here. Man challenge you regular, you have to be tough and be able to handle yourself or man will take set on you. No one wants to be a pussy, that's the worst position to be in – you'll forever be a target until you stand up for yourself. It really is about survival out here, man ain't prepared to be taken for a pussy. I have to stand up for myself, sometimes I have to do things I don't like, but that's just the way it is. I'm a man, I have to take care of myself. More time, I'm trying to mind my business, but these pricks are forever testing me, drawing me out, so I have to back it, protect my reputation and not be victimise. (Cassius, 23 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

In discussing the system of stripes, many of the mandem described how two opposing road statuses, the badman and the pussy, created a social arena for the construction of manliness, placing some mandem in roles that were subordinate to others. As Cassius noted, in social environments in which status challenges and victimisation are routine features of everyday life, the mandem learn from early on in their street socialisation that a strong reputation is everything, and equates to a viable male identity. The search for

reputation is bounded in gender practices embodied by a presentation of self that moves beyond conspicuous material consumption (discussed in chapter one) and instead involves a different kind of exhibition; acting the part or indeed performing gender, often through westernised versions of masculinity. For example, much of the qualities embedded in what the mandem described as the 'badman' embodied hegemonic ideals (Connell, 1995) such as toughness, which was evident in the way the mandem projected aggression; violence, which was often employed to negotiate peer relation and status challenges; and finally success, which manifested itself in the stripe system of winning reputation and consequently minimising victimisation. In mainstream society, 'hegemonic masculinity is the publicly avowed, preferred model of manliness' (Hatty, 2000: 177). Similarly, in the road context, the construction of the badman was considered the dominant version of manhood, and the desired road status. In his study on road culture, Gunter (2010: 117) suggested that what existed on road was a small minority of rude boys (i.e. bad men) 'who operate by perpetuating badness'. In contrast, in Northville, the badman was a superior form of masculinity that represented a legitimately strong male positioned at the top of the hierarchy of power on road. Acquiring such a position allowed the mandem to situate themselves in spaces of dominance, but more importantly, granted authority over alternative forms of masculinity that existed in Northville. As Connell (1995) points out, within hegemonic gender ideals what sit in opposition are alternative or subordinate masculinities. In terms of hegemonic road masculinity, what coexisted was the pussy; recognised by the mandem to be a differing masculinity. Here Freddie, a younger and humble trapper, illustrates why he is continually targeted by his brother TJ's rivals and explains why he finds his road status as a pussy emasculating:

> *E. I have heard the mandem refer to this notion of the pussy every time I stand out here with you guys on the block. I've worked out that there are different ways that the mandem perform gender.*
>
> *Freddie: What do you mean, Ebs?*

E. I mean, amongst the mandem I have been told that there are bad men and pussies, and they both are said to have different experiences in the hood. How would you explain it?

F: Do you know what, Ebs, what man is gonna tell you that they are a pussy. Who wants to be a pussy in the hood, man won't survive – but I've been called a pussy, because I don't wanna defend myself sometimes. My brother is inna a lot of fuckery, and I'm always a target. The Brick Farm mandem call me a pussy all the time – it makes me feel a way, I get angry, and then just try and prove I'm not the pussy they think. Man are called pussies when they don't defend it. (Freddie, 19 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

The pussy represents a vital category of subordinate masculinity, particularly when examining the two conflicting forms of masculinity and the violence consuming the mandem's social environments. The mandem cited the pussy as vulnerable men who were considered weak and failed to meet the expectations of road masculinity. In this way, the badman's interpretation of hegemonic masculinity is inspired by the repulsion of the pussy and the rejection of femininity, but more significantly by the fear of being stripped of their stripes and therefore being placed in a position of helplessness. Returning to the street brawl for a moment, notice how the 'bitch slapping' of John John provided the catalyst for a violent showdown between the mandem and young men from a neighbouring area. The altercation was perceived as a direct attack to manhood. TJ feminised John John (by slapping him like a 'bitch', or woman) and in doing so John John was shamed and humiliated, and his manhood was put into question.

Incidents like the street brawl are regular occurrences in Northville, and men like John John, who was demoted to a pussy, work endlessly to re-establish reputation and manhood, as noted by Freddie. Violence then becomes the standard tool for the mandem to express masculinity. As Messerschmidt notes (1993: 83), 'specific forms of masculinity are constructed in specific situations, and practices within social settings, produce, reproduce, and alter types of masculinity'. The mandem perform gender in social settings that are a) socially and economically disadvantaged, and b) competitive in nature; they fight for dominance on road due to the limited power they possess in the

rest of their lives. Hence, the mandem construct masculinity in the context of poverty and limited access to social and economic capital, and react to situations of frustration at their marginal position in wider society. Unlike their middle-class counterparts, who by and large acquire power through access to wealth and prestige, the mandem are frustrated by their socio-economic position. They often find expression through badman identity, constructed essentially through a distinct set of practices based on notions of respect and disrespect. The following entry from my fieldwork diary emphasises how the mandem's behaviour is guided by formal codes of conduct that greatly influence how they see themselves and the way in which they relate to others:

It is Friday night, myself and some of the mandem, including Aron, Cassius, TJ and Anthony and a few others, have travelled to the south of the river to attend Shalo's (Anthony's cousin) birthday party. This is a rare occurrence as the mandem are usually locked in Northville. However, it's Shalo's birthday, so the mandem have made the extra effort to attend. The mandem inform me that they've heard that the 'shit shack'– the venue – is always buzzing on a Friday night, so we are guaranteed to have a good night. Tonight, I have my sociologically hat firmly on my head, I have not tagged along to have fun per se, although I plan to shake a leg, if I hear a favourite track. Rather I am here to observe how the mandem interact outside Northville – in a different social setting. We arrive just after midnight, as expected the 'shit shack' (described by the mandem in such a manner because of the decor and the calibre of individuals who attend) is booming with people, music is playing loudly from the sound system as the DJ makes a special request to Anthony as we walk through the crowd. It is apparent that Anthony is a well-known figure in South London; we receive a warm welcome from the South London mandem. Anthony makes the introductions, ensuring that the south mandem are aware that the Northville mandem are his special guests. This instantly puts Aron, Cassius and TJ at ease. It is 3am, the party is in full swing; Cassius is 'bussing a skank' in the middle with the south mandem, TJ is conversing with the girls and myself and Aron are in the back section of the shit shack. Aron is smoking a cigarette while he 'reasons' with a south elder, who seems to have had far too much to drink. Aron informs me that the party is 'shit' and he is planning to leave. The south older interrupts and shouts, 'where are you man going, the party won't be the same if you leave'. Aron

doesn't have a chance to respond; Dustin, Anthony's friends intervenes 'what you on about, mind your business, why you asking my man (Aron) questions, he barks to the south elder. 'Who you talking to, what, you want me to get my tings (gun)', the south elder yells in response. The men exchange verbal insults for a couple of minutes. I attempt to pacify the situation, grabbing Aron and ordering him to move away from the altercation. As I pull Aron away, Cassius, TJ, Anthony and six of Anthony's bredrins rush over. 'What's this, what, is man trying to gwan with tings', Cassius shouts as he approaches the south elder. The party erupts, the mandem are pushing and shoving; I am in a state of panic, but I manage to round up Cassius and Aron, and direct them outside the venue. I shout at them to remain outside, while I head back inside to fetch the remaining members of our group. As I re-enter the venue, I am mortified that the chaos in still unfolding. The lights are now on and the music has stopped, I can hear a few of the Yardie women screaming in horror, but what is far more distressing is that the south elder has been summoned to a chair while TJ, Anthony and his south friends surround him. Each time the south elder speaks or attempts to get out of the chair he is smacked back down by Neville, Anthony's friend. I can hear Anthony shouting, 'who are you, who do you think you are?' I head over to the crowd, now completely outraged by the chain of events and shout as loud as I can, 'Who are you Anthony, how can you be asking the man who he is, who the hell are you? Just get yourself together and let's go'. My words silence the entire party (someone later described my voice in the same context as a gun going off). Anthony looks at me embarrassedly and hurries to find the others. His friends release the south elder and he is prompted to apologise for 'disrespecting' the mandem. We leave instantly; I shout and curse all the way home as the mandem sit in the car in complete silence, head in their hands, embarrassed just like a couple of school children who had been told off by their mother. (Extract taken from observation in the shit shack – September, 2012)

This incident proves significant in a number of ways. Firstly, both the mandem and I grow up in neighbourhoods where it is customary to be seen as defending yourself, whether that is through the ability to stand up for yourself verbally or physically. For the mandem in particular, the way in which they navigate their way through the hood is often guided by what Anderson (1999) termed the 'code on the street' or indeed what I referred to earlier as the hood mentality. As noted in Chapter Four, the hood mentality

holds a particular philosophy about life, but is also governed by informal rules centred on notions of respect and disrespect; both of which influence peer relations and also dictate violent retaliation. Therefore, being on road is an important source for pride and self-esteem, providing the mandem with masculine capital that they would not otherwise find in other social settings. The mandem emphasised the importance of being respected on road, where the notion of disrespect was often brought to the fore when a) their reputation was placed into question amongst the friendship group, and b) when they believed their manhood was being attacked. For example, while relaying the shit shack incident during a discussion, Anthony repeatedly illustrated that the 'south elder' was a pussy who made him look small in front of the mandem, but more centrally in front of me. Anthony had already established a road reputation based on past violent accomplishments (i.e. obtaining stripes in his youth through his engagement in postcode rivalries) and also through past violent actions; namely dishing out retribution when he believed his manhood was attacked. As a legitimately strong male (badman), he took offence that someone who was considered as having minimal credibility on road would challenge him in front of his friendship group. In Anthony's interpretation of the incident, the south elder openly showcased disrespect when he made the comment, '*I will go and get my tings*'. This was perceived as a major road violation that resulted in the south elder being summoned to a chair like a child; humiliated and stripped of his pride and masculinity. What I observed was maintenance of status; a ritualised display of defending reputation and reclaiming masculinity; something, which Anthony and his friends believed they lost that night.

Secondly, the notion of disrespect becomes pivotal when analysing the mandem's reaction to the south elder, but also the violence that claims many casualties on road. For elders like Anthony, who have acquired the badman status, or indeed for those (youngers) mandem who are striving to construct and maintain such a rank, any infraction, big or small, is treated as a direct insult to self-identity but also compromises the image that they project to others. What exists on road, then, is an external struggle based on the idea that the hood, or more specifically the friendship group, is watching, so it is

paramount to publicly defend your manhood. What becomes evident is that the mandem are also trapped in an internal battle whereby their fractured egos (brought on by status frustration, lack of real power and negative childhood experiences) force them to desperately search for admiration and respect, but within impoverished environments in which the mandem have limited socio-economic resources at their disposal. In this way, there is structure and logic to the violence consuming life on road. The mandem are conscious of their marginal position in wider society, and they thus create alternative ways, principally through badness, to achieve a viable sense of self-identity. Identity has to be managed, and the mandem often employ violence in these scenarios to redeem themselves, retaliating against those who attempt to threaten their sense of self. Aron, a younger and a humble trapper, attempts to sum up the general feeling amongst the mandem after the shit shack incident:

> *Ebs, most of the mandem were mad because you were there and they couldn't deal with the south man how they wanted. I know some of them were angry for weeks. What you have to understand is that some of the mandem are lost, didn't you see how they was acting. The south man was outnumbered, but they were still hyping. It was all fake to me man, just a bunch of man trying to act bad. It's mad because most of them actually think they are, they are trapped, Ebs. Didn't you see me, Ebs, I just stood there, I didn't wanna take part in the circus – it's dumb to me. (Aron, 22 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

As Aron noted, many of the mandem expressed a deep feeling of unrest when the south elder questioned who they believed they were. They felt humiliated, enraged and insulted that he refused to grant them the respect they felt they deserved. In fact, when I questioned the mandem, they demonstrated little remorse. Rather, the incident was perceived even by those who were not directly involved as a slight worthy of violence. Importantly, for some mandem, including Aron, performing masculine rituals centred on 'acting bad' was described as 'fake', 'hype' and 'dumb'. Aron, for example, spoke about the negative impact of acquiring a 'badman' reputation, such as having to constantly wear a mask. Others identified feelings of being trapped in a particular identity in which there is the pressure to conform to

hegemonic badman ideals, because incidents such as the shit shack (being stripped of masculinity) and/or being victimised proves shaming and frightening. This has a lasting impact on the mandem self-concept. As Aron noted, '*everyone is trying to act bad*' – thus even those men who are unable to meet the demands of hegemonic road masculinity find some level of self-assurance in identifying with badness. The badman provides a model for how to act in various circumstances and social interactions, and even for those men (subordinate masculinities) who do not necessarily feel bad or tough are forced to perform badman rituals; seeking badness as a source of self-identity. Notice that even when the mandem were taken out of Northville, they enacted badman ideals in order to prove that they could handle themselves. In urban milieus in which individuals share similar backgrounds and cultural experiences, what has emerged is an aggressive and tough male identity that has been constructed to aid the mandem's survival. Life on road is, then, an identity-based process, with road masculinity playing an important role in shaping how the mandem perceive themselves and others. It has provided an alternative forum for pride and self-esteem when other avenues are in fact denied. But, as the following extract demonstrates, adhering to rules of honour and codes of respect carried with it heavy penalties for those directly involved:

> *Once you get yourself involved in this way of life, Ebs, it is hard to get out. They say you are the choices you make. I wanna get out, but my past has fucked me up. It isn't as easy to say, yeah, today I'm gonna get a job. The roads don't work like that. Even if you wanna change, people won't let you. When I realised that I wanted to get out, it was like I had been sleeping for years, and I finally woke up. It's like you have to learn new ways to behave, because you get trapped in a small way of thinking for so many years, going legit is a tricky task. I am still fighting myself, learning to trust, not to be aggressive, and just trying to work through all those demons I have because of being on the roads. It a tough life, Ebs, but I don't wanna be that badman, where has he got me so far. (Aron, 22 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

As Aron, notes, being on road and upholding road values was not purely about the ability to just do violence. Rather, it was about being trapped in

distinct codes of conduct which the mandem felt they had to uphold, i.e. publicly displaying manhood and demonstrating an ability to retaliate when masculinity was under attack. Road masculinity consisted of a formation of self that commanded respect, the emphasis being on a character that would not be disrespected. While the mandem did not engage in violence continually, violence was employed more frequently when settling attacks to manhood, trapping many in interpersonal conflict and subsequently risky existences. Even though road masculinity provided a 'magical solution' (Brake, 1980) to the dilemmas they faced in terms of their position on the socio-economic margins, past violent acts or indeed subscribing to notions of badness proved to have a lasting impact on their sense of self. As the following subsection explores, the stresses and strains associated with adhering to masculine ideals have left many of the mandem with psychological damage, and no real hope of resolving the actual material reality of being positioned at the bottom end of the social strata. In their search for some meaning in their contradictory social worlds, many looked for answers, a sense of belonging, structure and discipline through the Islamic doctrine.

6.2 The Formation of Islamic 'Road' Identity

Life on road isn't all it's cracked up to be. It's just one big trap that sells you dreams and then spits you out. You're just lost on road. Islam is the truth; it's a beautiful religion that helped me see things in the grand scale of things. I use to take my life's problems out on the roads, bad up man and just move reckless. I didn't have any direction, no guide, didn't know what I was doing from one day to the next. When I found Islam, everything just made sense, I became calm, at peace with myself, I wasn't stressed out or in pain, you get me. All I now worry about is the five pillars and the creator. I have submitted to the will of the creator. (Mohammed, 28 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

I first met Mohammed a few years ago while undertaking research on gun violence for my MA dissertation. At the time, he was immersed in life on road, but principally postcode warfare and violence. He was heavily invested in badman ideals and had built an infamous road reputation from his predatory trapper identity, his loyalty to his peer group and his ability to back collective

'beef'[18]. When I met Mohammed for his second interview, I was amazed to learn that he had distanced himself from life on road and his friendship group and turned his attention instead to Islamic ideology. In fact, Islamic conversion was especially common amongst the mandem, who often described themselves as 'being lost' in their lives on road. The majority of mandem echoed Mohammed's sentiment that life on road is '*one big trap that sells you dreams and then spits you out'*. This seemed to be the case for those men on road who found themselves entangled in the drug economy and immersed in interpersonal violence, witnessing violent-related deaths (usually of close friends and family) and becoming involved in postcode rivalries and masculine rituals centred on acting bad. All of this created the framework through which the mandem interpreted their social worlds. Some, including Mohammed, attributed their experiences on road as something close to a crisis situation which they found difficult to cope with. As Mohammed noted, pain and stress featured as part of their lives on road, and provided the base through which they questioned their status on road and the futility of continuing as bad men. Mohammed explains why his life on road as a badman caused him and some of his friends to see the precariousness of their life, and why this awareness led to reflections on issues of existence; especially life and death:

> *I have always been a spiritual kinda guy, questioning life and that. It wasn't until my friend was gunned down that I really started to question all this road shit – all this badman shit. When man have been through the pain on road, when you've seen some real crazy shit, you want a change, you want something different than the roads. On road you're lost, don't have no direction, you don't realise this until you're older though. I just knew the badman ting weren't getting me nowhere, so I had to change it up. (Mohammed, 28 – extract taken from focus group with elders)*

It was through the formative stages of Mohammed's life on road and the uncertainty surrounding his future that he began a reflexive process; a re-evaluation of his existing (badman) road identity. In their endless battle to

---

[18] Beef is a slang term used to describe a grudge or repulsion. The mandem often engage in interpersonal or collective violence with other men/peer groups on road against whom they 'hold a grudge'.

navigate the hood, hostile peers and violence, some mandem sought to reinvent themselves, constructing an alternative (religious) identity. The following interview illustrates Mohammed's journey from badman to devoted Islamic convert:

> *E: Mohammed, could you talk me through the reasons why you converted to Islam?*
>
> *Mohammed: Yeah, sure, Ebs. When I was on road I was confronted with a lot of bad things, I was selling drugs, getting in trouble with other mandem and the police. My life was nearly taken a couple of times, seen that white light flash in front of me. My life was just one big hot mess, I just felt hopeless. You know, Ebs, life on road is one big lie that you tell yourself; you pretend that you're all good, but many of the mandem are desperate for a change. That was the stage I was at, I didn't wanna live another day of my life with no purpose.*
>
> *E: Okay, so your life lacked purpose, could you explain?*
>
> *M: Yeah, most definitely because when I was doing things I weren't really doing them for no reason. I didn't have any purpose in my actions. I was living my life for people, for the roads. I was doing bad things, getting stripes, thinking the mandem would rate me, but thinking about it now, it was stupid. Those times I really didn't know what I was doing.*
>
> *E: When was the critical moment in which you decided to convert?*
>
> *M: I saw a lot of my brothers doing it, but I wasn't really interested, I was just about the roads when I was younger, not that I am old now (laughing out loud). I just had enough, Ebs, of living on the edge, getting into trouble, not having any direction. Living on road makes you think, I started to think innit, I use to wake up and think, why am I here, ask myself questions about why am I living, so I kinda looked to other aspects to find the answer. In a way that is why I turned to Islam, because I was asking questions. Since taking my shahada, I haven't looked back. (Mohammed, 28 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

Interestingly, and as mentioned in his biography, Mohammed was raised in a strict Christian homeby his father, a practicing Rastafarian. Unlike his father, who in the 1970s, like many black men from lower-class backgrounds,

embraced Rastafarianism to, as Price (2009: ix) notes, 'fashion a positive black identity in the face of discrimination or interpret racism', Mohammed dismissed his childhood religion. Instead, he found spiritual fulfilment and guidance in Islam. Islam filled that religious space that once was occupied by the Rasta movement. As Mohammed demonstrates, it provided a purposeful framework in which he could explain his personal experiences, but also the crisis centred on his self-identity:

> *My dad is a Rasta, peace and love they preach, and not war. Dad always use to tell me to become a Rasta, your life will change, the mandem won't trouble you. I just didn't really relate to his religion, for me, it didn't provide me with the answers I needed. Even when I use to go church, I use to ask questions, but they could never give me a clear answer. But with Islam, when you go and ask a brother, he will tell you the answer, clear and simple. Christians are confused man, they don't have proof. For me the Islamic story makes more sense, and there is truth in the teachings. I started to read the Qur'an deeply and realised I had a purpose, or my life always had purpose. I was always a Muslim, I just didn't find the truth until I started to read and gain knowledge. It is a beautiful religion. From the teachings I kinda learnt, it shows you the purpose of life in a basic form, straightforwardly. (Mohammed, 28 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

As Mohammed noted, his childhood religion did not resonate with his experiences on road. This was partly because it failed to afford him the tools he needed to make sense of his complex existence, but also because it did not grant him answers to what he described as the 'purpose of life'. For men like Mohammed, understanding the purpose of life is particularly important, especially when status anxiety and normative violence are everyday aspects of life on road. Road converts often cited that Islam was a beautiful religion, a clean existence that spiritually, at the very least, offered an escape from the trappings of their former lives. In addition, many of the mandem I spoke to described the practical aspects of worship – prayer, charity, and fasting – spiritually rewarding, particularly as they acknowledge that being on road was consumed with what Mohammed described as 'selfish' desires to accumulate material possessions, or committing immoral acts. Mohammed explains:

When you are on road you're not thinking about the creator, or the purpose of your life. You have no acknowledgement of God and the sacrifices that he made for you. It's all about giving into your desires on road, getting the P, hurting people in the process of doing it. It's a selfish way to live – the roads didn't make me happy. I'm happy and at peace with my close relationship to God and abiding by his teachings. I just think for me, Islam showed me a different way; it accepted me, even with my flaws. You're not judged. (Mohammed, 28 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)

For Mohammed, Islam provided the religious space in which he could move away from what he felt was an unfulfilling existence on road towards a more spiritual, physical and psychological connection with God and the self. Significantly, Mohammed described Islam through the lens of acceptance, noting that the teachings of Islam offered understanding of his past life and circumstances. For urban men who are often stigmatised as pathological gang members, Islam's philosophy, based on the idea that there are no differences between individuals on the grounds of race or class (Abdurahman, 2002) is welcoming. In this way, Mohammed's testimony attributed his reversion experience; a term used to describe the 'process of coming to faith' (Reddie, 2009) to the extreme strain associated with his life on road, but also to engaging in a private reading of the Qur'an and discovering what he acknowledged to be the ultimate truth. The same was the case for some of his friends. For practising Muslims, the truth is consistent with the idea that Islam is the fundamental belief system of mankind (Sarwar, 2008). Thus, Mohammed cited that he was born Muslim and believed that the religion was dormant in his body before finding Islam and thus coming to faith. It is important to note that the process of coming to faith is not an unusual practice. In fact, for centuries, individuals have found religion in the most unlikely of settings. For example, there has been much debate concerning conversion in the context of the prison (see Marunaet al 2006; Hamm, 2009 and Phillips, 2012). For men like Mohammed, Islamic reversion did not occur when freedom had been taken away, but rather in a particular social milieu – the hood – and during a specific life stage. In this sense, being trapped on road is synonymous with freedom being taken away, while the hood provided

the social context for Mohammed to explore the negative conditions impinging on his life. It was once Mohammed had undergone the transition on road (i.e. making money in the alternative economy, postcode feuds, gaining stripes and, subsequently badman status) that his former identity was placed in question and he endeavoured to change the organisation of his day-to-day activities. In the case of Mohammed, his criminality and marginalised situation forced him to question who he was, while the Islamic doctrine was described as opening new ways of perceiving his social world and his place within it:

> *When you in the hood, on road, you ain't a free man, you're trapped in all the madness that makes up the roads. I just wanted to be free, I just wanted to be at peace with myself. I done all it all on road, beefing with man, made some money, built a reputation, but all that didn't make me happy. I thought is this all there is to life, there must be something more, I needed more. When you're in such a dark place, I was anyway, you gonna search for something, for me that was Islam. I don't have time for violence and worrying about what people think of me anymore, but funny enough I am still respected in the hood, (smiling) I was what you call a badman, but none of that matters to me anymore. Some of my friends didn't think I would stay committed, but I know they admire me for my dedication and commitment to Allah. (Mohammed, 28 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

For Mohammed, Islam functioned as a space to exit life on road, creating an alternative identity to that of his former years. What was striking about Mohammed's narrative was that in spite of departing from life on road, he remained a respected figure in Northville. As the above quotation illustrated, this was partly because his past identity as badman bestowed upon him respect amongst his peers, but also because he gained admiration in his peer group for his ability to commit to religious life. Unlike his peers, who found it difficult to construct a viable religious identity outside road masculinity, Mohammed was able to negotiate badman ideals, adopting new modes of behaviour that rejected toughness and acting bad. Mohammed represents an alternative narrative to those men who remained trapped in life on road. His narrative proves significant as it demonstrates the way in which religion was part of his transition on road, something he drew upon to free

himself from the flawed road identity that it produced. Mohammed's relatively pain-free removal from road culture was a rare experience amongst the mandem. What I found was that some of the mandem were in fact trapped in thinking that they could not leave life on road; there was a myth about leaving. While Mohammed scorned badman identity, building instead a legitimate male identity, his fellow road reverts struggled to depart entirely from engrained road customs. For some mandem, conversion to Islam offered some kind of continuation of the badman status that they achieved on road. The remainder of the section focuses primarily on Anthony, Aron, Cassius and TJ whose reversion narratives differed hugely from Mohammed's religious experience. TJ, a younger, a glutton trapper and a new revert, illustrates the ways in which his Islamic identity coincided with his life on road:

> *Nuff of the mandem have turned to Islam, but nuff of them have turned away from it, including me. Nuff of the mandem aren't on it like Mohammed, a lot of them couldn't explain to you why they became Muslim. They might have heard someone say something good about it, but they don't really understand why they became Muslim. Man are rolling around saying they are an 'ackee', but don't even go mosque. Most don't eat pork, but still drink and smoke weed. The mandem are weak, they are not approaching Islam wholeheartedly. I wanna be a better Muslim, it's a beautiful religion – I'm just not ready, not with all the fuckery that I am dealing with. (TJ, 19 – extract taken from focus group interview with youngers)*

Here TJ draws attention to Northville's localised version of Islam: a kind of syncretism where there is a blend of local cultural norms and religious symbolism. This 'punk' version of Islam conflicted with the dominant ideology in terms of some key principles and underlying differences in religious practice. As TJ noted, Mohammed was recognised as a dedicated pilgrim and reformed road man, whereas he described himself and peers as alternating between badman (dominant forms of road masculinity) and demonstrations of some aspects of Islamic tradition. For new reverts like TJ, their religious identity was an extension of pre-existing badman identities, rather than the alternative or contrasting form demonstrated in Mohammed's conversion narrative. What was evident in the testimonies of some of the new reverts was a sort of pick-and-mix version, a kind of cultural blending, of

Islam, whereby the mandem incorporated particular aspects of Islamic customs into their lives. For example, some men cited that it proved difficult to adhere to the five pillars of Islam[19], which are mandatory rituals for most practicing Muslims, but upheld Islamic traditions such as reading the Qur'an, growing a beard, wearing Islamic prayer beads and, excluding pork from their diet. In contrast to Mohammed, who wholly eliminated customary road practices, men like Aron, Anthony, Cassius and TJ blended Islamic identity with their road masculinity, while continuing to perform road rituals centred on criminality and violence. In this way, they battled to formulate conventional Islamic manhood consistent with hard work and sacrifice, within fixed aspects of road masculinity. Anthony, an elder and predatory trapper, articulates further why newer reverts found the rigid Islamic ideology a contrast to their life on road:

> *The mandem haven't taken enough time to understand Islam, Ebs. When you think about it, it is a structured religion, gives you a guide on how to be an honest man. When you are on road, you don't know what structure and discipline is about, you don't even know who you are. This throws a lot of us off, because as with anything if you don't put the time in, you ain't going to reap the benefits. Islam is completely different to my life on road, it's a beautiful religion that gives man something other than the roads. I feel good to call myself a Muslim. I just see Islam and the roads as good over evil. It's hard to practice or focus on the dean because of the temptation in the hood. Mohammed was able to leave, that's why he's on it. I still feel the pressure, the roads have me up. I just think I haven't put enough time into Islam as I have with my lifestyle. (Anthony, 33 – extract taken from focus group interview)*

What is evident from the extract is that some men found living according to the guidelines of Islam challenging, particularly when still residing in what Anthony described as a social milieu filled with criminal temptation. Mohammed was fortunate in that he was able to physically escape his place of residence and nurture his new-found identity, whereas men like Anthony attempted to welcome Islam into their lives, but failed because of the

---

[19] The five Pillars of Islam are the religious foundation that forms the basis of Islamic life. They are spiritual duties (obligatory for all practicing Muslims) which include profession of faith, prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca.

pressure apparent in the hood to perform facets of their badman persona. Fixed aspects of road masculinity were described as difficult to reform in neighbourhoods in which the badman took on master status (Becker, 1963: 32). As noted earlier, the geographical location, the hood, was key in influencing the mandem's coming to faith, principally because it was within this environment that self-identity was put into question. There was a desire to resolve problems associated with badman masculinity, which was recognised as a problematic identity, and a need to move away from the stress and anxiety associated with this particular articulation of self. Mohammed (representative of reformed road masculinity) and Aron, Anthony, Cassius and TJ (illustrative of localised Islamic practice) continuously expressed that Islam provided a tool to formulate a new or even better version of themselves. The idea that the mandem could create a new and respectable male identity through conversion to Islam formed one of three distinct functions for religion conversion. Here TJ explains why he would rather be labelled a Muslim than a badman:

> *I'm a Muslim, not a 'badman'. Hate when people call me that; I've changed. Yeah, I'm still on road, have to survive somehow, but ain't keeping up half the fuckery I was doing before becoming Muslim. I'm a respectable man, Islam has helped me do that; I'm a new man. The mandem are doing their own ting, let them run around on this gangster shit, that ain't me anymore, I'm respected differently. Shot Gun, (kisses his teeth) that name didn't help me; didn't get me anywhere fast, don't wanna be that kinda guy anymore. I'm getting there, ain't no such thing as a perfect Muslim, but in time I'll get there. (TJ, 19 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

One of the first sentiments TJ expressed during his interview was that he was 'Abdul Mohammed', not Shot Gun, his designated road name. He took great pride in declaring that he was a Muslim and not a badman and, as he noted, came to despise what he considered to be his old identity. What became evident is that once TJ had achieved the ultimate badman status, as with his fellow converts, he grew dissatisfied with his existing identity. As he explained, the badman label was recognised as a stained identity; one that shut down opportunities to integrate into mainstream society and something

in which he believed could no longer provide him with the admiration he craved when on road. For TJ, who quite literally exists on the margins of society, being a Muslim created the space that fostered inclusion into what was perceived to be a respectable and a well-established community. In this way, Islam was appealing because it was linked to iconic role models (such as Malcolm X and Mohammed Ali), and for TJ in particular, membership in such a community bestowed him with a different kind of status from what he was able to facilitate on road. He no longer perceived himself as 'just another road man', but rather positioned himself in a space of religious superiority, distinguishing himself as distinct from his peers. What I found interesting about TJ was the contradictory nature of his narrative. He regarded himself as distinct from, or superior to, his peers and even mocked road masculinity, but what was evident in his testimony was his own difficulty in abstaining from facets of his former badman identity. TJ's Islamic identity provided a mechanism which allowed him to express some form of authority over non-believers, giving him a sense of power and influence in situations in which he felt powerless. Through reversion, TJ created a new social identity irrespective of his badman persona, and marvelled in the belief that he was now clean, pure and cured of his former identity. He continues:

> *I ain't a badman, I'm no longer that man; I ain't robbing innocent people, selling my soul. My heart is clean. Islam helped me start again, cleanse my sins. It's mad on road, I'm battling every day to not sin. I've done my dirt, done some real terrible shit, I was reckless, robbing people, man, sticking man up, I didn't give a shit who I hurt. That's not how I wanna live. Some days I couldn't even sleep, because my soul couldn't rest, I didn't feel at peace with myself. I kinda feel okay now, I pray to Allah and ask his forgiveness, hoping he will forgive my demons. Without Islam I'm not sure how I could move forward with my life, not after everything that I have done. (TJ, 19 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

Here TJ draws attention to the second function of reversion; Islam as a form of redemption. On road, the mandem surrender their lives to all sorts of negative things; violence, drug dealing and, for some, murder. They often described their lives and identity through metaphors such as 'stained', 'tainted', 'impure' and 'evil'. As TJ noted, the badman identity was characteristic of sin

and psychological turmoil. A fundamental concern for some men on road who had recognised the fragile nature of their former identities was how to build a more positive and worthy sense of self. The emphasis here was on redemption and being rescued from badman ideals. Amongst the mandem there was a desperate need to be forgiven for past wrong-doings and a desire to start a clean slate. Some of the mandem gravitated towards Islam because of the belief system that centred on the idea that there is no perfect Muslim, but that one can save oneself in the commitment to God and thus surrender in another way. This encouraged men like TJ, who battled with inner demons, to find hope and salvation in Islam. Reversion acted as a process whereby the mandem regained some level of internal peace, and escaped spiritually, at the very least, from the pressures inherent in their external environment and the crisis centred on self. As the following testimony illustrates, for somemen on road, their deepest urge was to escape the trap and to find a pathway towards a different existence:

> *There comes a time, Ebs, when you don't wanna be on the roads any more, you wanna live decent like normal folk, but it's hard finding normal life when all you know is how to get by on the roads. I realised that the roads don't have much to offer, but by the time you realise this it's too late, you're already involved in violence, madness with man, selling drugs, just trying to get by. Before you know it, you're trapped, with nowhere else to go. Islam was my only hope, the only way I could find a way out, but it's hard to change completely when you still have the roads around you. It's just a battle man, and I'm still trying to get out. Islam only helped me to a certain degree, the roads is all I know, all I know how to do. (Aron, 22 – extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

The above testimony from Aron highlights the third and final function of reversion; how the mandem sought Islam to free themselves from the trap of inner-city life. Amongst the mandem, what was shared was an overwhelming desire to exit life on road and to integrate into mainstream society. As Aron noted, he was in search of not only a viable sense of self, but a decent way of life. He sought meaning and purpose in a disillusioned situation and aspired to turn his back on his former life. As with some men on road, there was the recognition that the trap failed to deliver and did not live up to its

many promises. This created a longing in early adulthood to find pathways out of what was considered a crisis situation (this is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven). The mandem routinely expressed that they found Islam's simple guide on how to live a purposeful life provided a clear framework through which they could attach meaning to their traumatic biographies, and offered some level of hope for urban men neglected during their early life. It afforded the mandem a clear perspective on how to understand the struggles inherent in their social worlds. What was apparent was a collective experience of feeling drained, suffocated and frustrated by inner-city life. The mandem were therefore far more receptive to Islam because, at a superficial level, it provided some relief from a meaningless existence. However, on a deeper level, and as Aron expressed, the principle stimulus for reversion was a crisis centred on the self – a desire to find oneself away from the powerful social and cultural boundaries inherent in life on road – and a desperate yearning to disconnect from badman ideals. The mandem described finding Islam when they sought something other than life on road, or when they felt lost and had nowhere else to go.

Islam became the religious alternative for those who battled within strained criminal environments, circumstances of socio-economic disadvantage and also within wider structural disparities. It is important to note that while the mandem could have come to faith in any religious doctrine, such as Rastafarianism as in the previous Northville generation, Islam was the most prominent and practised religion. Islam was not religiously linked to life on road, but it was one way to escape in limited situations. For Mohammed, Islam was the final transition, a way to move into a life of a devoted pilgrim, providing the exit strategy when mechanisms (such as moving away from the immediate social milieu) were unavailable. For others who did not have this option available to them, Islam was unable to offer a realistic route out of life on road. The mandem moved from one complex identity to another, appropriating aspects of Islamic ideology into their existing identities, but not appropriately finding a route out of their pre-existing badman identity.

6.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has drawn attention to the formation of hegemonic badman identity and the controlling nature of road practices and norms, paying specific attention to the way in which participants in Northville experience their transitions from childhood to adulthood when immersed in road culture, and it described the mechanisms employed to manage this ambiguous process. This analysis highlighted that while the badman identity was used by the mandem as a means to negate marginalisation and to establish masculinity, it also created negative reputation and other forms of spoilt identity, which works to entrap them in the social field of road. It has been suggested that there is an inevitable cross over between identification with badman identity and reversion to Islam. For example, Islamic identity was drawn upon in recognition of the flawed (badman) identity life on road produced, and was therefore one way in which the mandem attempted to resolve the crisis and challenges underpinning their way of life. Complimenting discussions on hegemonic badman identity, an examination of the rationale for religious conversion was also provided, where an insight was offered into the 'localised version' of Islam practiced by some members of the community in which this ethnography is based. Again, this analysis helps to conceptualise the complexity of the mandem's lived realities, but more specifically, draws attention to the ways in which life on road creates insecurity and psychological damage within the mandem themselves. In the discussion that follows, I will explore and develop these key findings in the context of the mandem's lives and rites of passage on road.

7.0 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Chapter Four presented an analysis of the data from my ethnography of what I claim is a distinct way of life and practices of a group of young and adult men in Northville. Concentrating on the on road lives of the mandem, I have attempted to correct misunderstandings of black men in urban space and their relationships to 'gangs'. I argue that, when examining the lived experiences of urban men, the concept of the gang is flawed and unhelpful. Contrastingly, I have sought a counter-narrative to assumptions of gang membership that not only acknowledges the fluidity of urban life, but conceptualises urban men's lived experiences in the context of key crises that shape, and often block, linear pathways into adulthood. I argued in previous chapters that these crises framed a specific narrative of being trapped at particular intersections in life and included three very distinct types of 'trappedness', all of which illustrated a physical, social and cognitive state of being. Underpinning the trapped narrative is a self-identity that had developed in response to urban men's desperate battles to negotiate painful and dangerous journeys growing up in the 'hood'. For my participants, life on road functions as a complex existence where young men find ways of stabilising the disruption caused by their marginal position in the social structure. In their pathways into adulthood, these young men get trapped in the powerful social categories and boundaries attached to life on road. That is, being on road (and, by extension, road culture) becomes the vehicle by which a credible sense of self can be formulated. Paradoxically, though, it traps urban men in potentially problematic lifeworlds and identities. The ideas of 'onroadness' and 'trappedness' powerfully shape all aspects of life but, in complex ways it stunt possibilities for economic growth. Immersion in road culture can lead to a loss of self and freedom, and can result in lasting psychological wounds that haunt some urban men for the rest of their lives.

My research extends Gunter's (2008) examination of road culture and Hallsworth and Young's (2011) work on life on road, exploring not one definitive road

culture, but the multiple road cultures that emerge in an urban context; and specifically Northville. While Gunter looks at a small proportion of young men involved in 'badness', and Hallsworth and Young present a one dimensional exploration of the lives of men on road, this study analyses the various gradations of onroadness (which are almost identities in themselves), and the multiple ways urban men perform gender identities. The study thereby hopes to contribute to an understanding of the psychological aspects of this complex social condition. The discussion that follows explores and theorises my findings relating to contemporary academic scholarship on youth, crime, class, race, gender identity and religion. It draws on a blended theoretical approach that locates road culture as a gendered, classed and generational social phenomenon whilst recognising the interplay between structure and agency as a catalyst for its development. In concentrating principally on the 'mandem', a generic term for men on road, I examine how masculinities are performed in social environments characterised by chronic disadvantage. I offer a gendered perspective that situates the mandem's norms and daily practices in the context of poverty, early-embedded negative childhood experiences and discontinuity between cultural goals and the legitimate means available for reaching them (Merton, 1938). In considering life on road in this way, I conceptualise it as a liminal state, where they are physically, socially and psychologically embedded in a subculture which entraps them in an in between space for a sustained period of time on road. By analysing road culture in this way, I am also conceptualising the mandem's lives in terms of a series of acute and drawn-out crises linked to three distinct, but mutually interconnected, versions of 'trappedness' that are constitutive of a problematic self.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section, 'Life 'On Road' as a Liminal State', outlines the contribution of the thesis, theorising life on road as a liminal space. The second section 'Trapped' in the 'Hood': Post-code Rivalries and Social Immobility' explores the role and importance of space and place in the development of road culture. The third section, 'Trapped' in the Illegal Drug Economy': Road as Hard Work and Economic Survival, analyses the way in which life on road functions as a form of 'work', detailing

the various ways men on road generate an illegitimate income. The final section, 'Trapped' in 'Self': Realisation and the Search for New Identity, discusses life on road and Islam, looking in particular at the rationale for Islamic conversion.
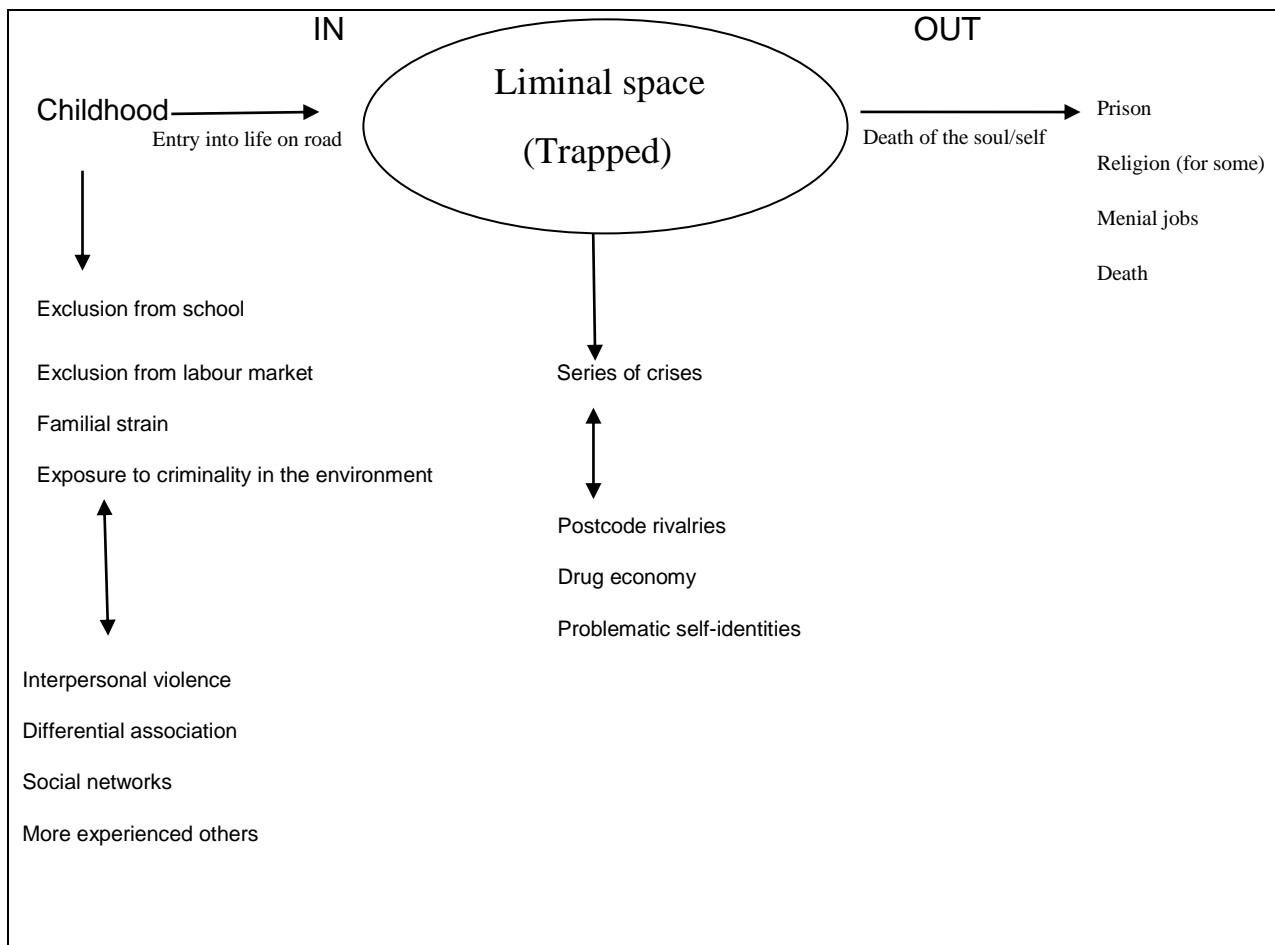
7.2 Life 'On Road' as a Liminal State

Social scientists concerned with black men and their engagement in collective violence tend to present their experiences in urban space through the stereotypical gang lens. This, for example, is particularly apparent in the work of Pitts (2008) and Harding (2012) who privilege the idea of urban men as gang members. With the exclusion of Hallsworth and Young (2005; 2011), Aldridge and Medina (2008) Gunter (2008) Fraser (2013) and, more recently, Ilan (2015) who offer alternative explanations in understanding street violence, contemporary debates on group offending suggest a particular motivation towards explaining this complex and multifaceted problem through simplistic gang terminology. Within the context of this study, life on road extends far beyond crude and generic conceptualisations of the gang found in some academic and political literature to involve 'individuals' that are not reducible to groups called gangs. What emerged from this piece of work is the idea of 'onroadness' and 'trappedness', my preferred term for expressing the precariousness of this social condition. While I identified a 'hood mentality' (Hallsworth and Young, 2011) and aspects of 'badness' in the way that Gunter (2008) would recognise, the idea of 'trappedness' moves beyond the focus on pathology and deviance, to encompass psychosocial spheres aswell. That is, the life experiences of urban men growing up in inner-city neighbourhoods like Northville are far more complicated than 'gang talkers' or even the 'sceptics' suggest. The work of these scholars is limited in that their explanations fail to consider life on road as a 'liminal state' (Turner, 1967); a transitional process, a transformation of self. In my view, the concept 'liminality' illuminates the mandem's lives on road. It is a useful premise for understanding the trapped nature of the mandem, the difficulties they face, their self-narrative and their fragile and fragmented passage into adulthood.

The concept 'liminal' was referenced by Arnold Van Gennep (1960) in his seminal work 'Rites of Passage', where he described traditional rites of passage as having three main functions: separation, transition (liminal period) and incorporation. It was Turner (1967), however, who popularised the notion 'liminal' and 'liminality', extending Van Gennep's earlier work to focus solely on the middle stage of rites of passage, which he termed the liminal stage. For Turner (1967: 95), liminality is characterised by a stage of seclusion from society in which, the 'liminal persona' (transitional being) 'is structurally, if not physically invisible'. That is, the liminal person is in essence 'nothing', existing as a vulnerable being without a clear or fixed identity. While anthropologists Van Gennep and Turner applied the concept liminal or liminality to tribal societies, it can be seen from my findings that the Northville mandem have a similar trajectory, in that they become stuck in the liminal space between childhood and adulthood. In the following example, Aron expresses his life on road in this way:

> *Sometimes I feel lost, Ebs, like I don't really know myself. I don't have no job, not in education, don't feel like I'm part of it, part of society, but don't feel comfortable on road either. When you get caught up in the trap you don't know who you are or even how you got here, all you know is it's something that you just have to go through. Like you have to go through the fuckery on road to get to the other side, but some man don't even make it out, Ebs. (Aron, 22)*

Aron likened life on road to being lost, isolated, and being invisible. What Aron described here is mirrored by other mandem, who ascribed this sense of being lost to their exclusion in mainstream society, but also to negative experiences in childhood and the urban environment. There was a conscious recognition that life on road involved a process of becoming trapped, where they become temporary or permanently disconnected from mainstream society, and trapped in life on road (liminal period) on their way to independent adulthood (see Figure 7)

IN   **OUT**

Childhood ——→ Entry into life on road

Liminal space (Trapped)

Death of the soul/self ——→ Prison

Religion (for some)

Menial jobs

Death

Exclusion from school

Exclusion from labour market

Familial strain

Exposure to criminality in the environment

Interpersonal violence

Differential association

Social networks

More experienced others

Series of crises

Postcode rivalries

Drug economy

Problematic self-identities

Figure 7: symbolic rites of passage on road

The disconnector as Van Gennep (1960) defines as separation began for the mandem in early childhood and within the hood, where they spend their formative years. The hood, historically and culturally characterised by systematic failures, marginalisation and, resource inequality, is a place where the mandem, excluded from school and with few opportunities to obtain legitimate employment, socialise for long hours. They form intimate connections with the local urban milieu and other members of their friendship group, which comprise young men sharing the same struggle. It is on the streets of Northville, and in the company of their friends, where they engage in and discover criminality and its value, and where they are separated – or remove themselves – from the social structure that has controlled their life thus far. They cross over into unfamiliar territory, entering the threshold (liminal) stage that is life on road. Here it is common for the mandem to denounce their former family (birth) names, and take on 'new' identities (i.e. a 'road' name) and roles, which creates a particular liminal vulnerability.

176

Sidney, talks about his 'new' identity and the beginning of 'trappedness', which he describes, as accentuating the instability of his life on road:

> *No one calls me by my government name. All the mandem have road names, it's just how it is. Man have to live up to their names, but this involves all kinds of fuckery, acting bad, violence and for the youngers this post-code madness. Man get trapped on the roads, trapped in the bullshit that goes with it (Sidney, 26)*

As Sidney illustrates, once new identity is created this begins the process of liminality. During this threshold stage, the mandem are subjected to a series of key crises. These may include postcode rivalries, criminal activity in the illegal drug economy and interpersonal violence, all of which are conspired to keep them trapped physically, socially and psychologically. During this transitional period, they undergo a series of intense tests to manhood and exhausting masculine rituals. They place themselves and others in danger, making the transition over the threshold of life on road very challenging. In the following example, Smithy is discussing why he feels trapped and unable to move out of his life on road:

> *Once you're in, that's you, Ebs. I can't get out. Been involved in too much madness, seen too much fuckery to live normal now. Even if I could get out, where am I going anyway, I don't have no education, job, nothing. I'm in madness with man, they won't let me walk away either. The roads have me, Ebs. They got me up. (Smithy, 34)*
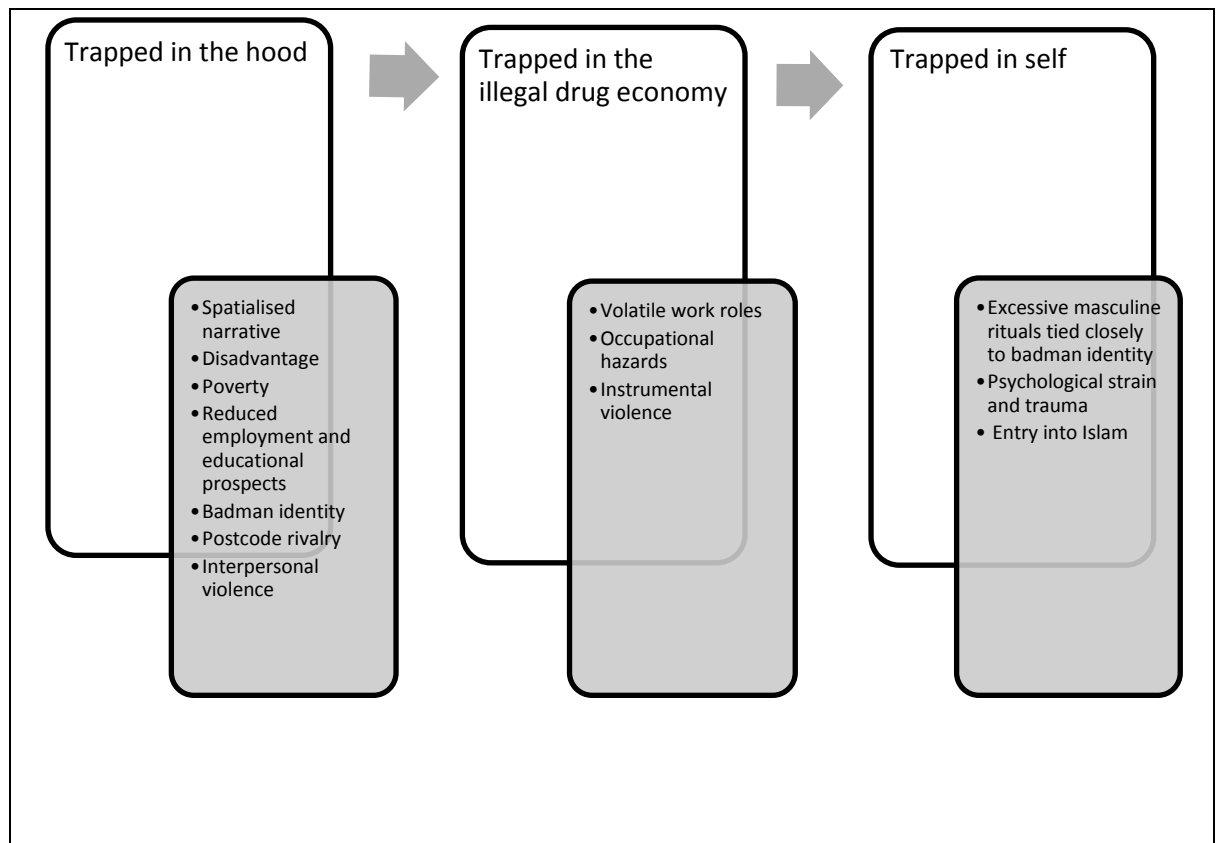
This example expresses Smithy's liminal condition, which he described as being amplified not only by his perilous transition on road, but also by the ambiguity of his road identity. Thus, in the way that Turner's analysis already illustrates, it is this liminal condition on road that transforms the mandem into 'liminal personas' who are 'neither one thing or another; or may be both; or neither here or there; or may even be nowhere' (Turner, 1967: 97). In this sense, they are 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1967); they have departed from childhood, but have not quite transitioned to respectable adulthood, or what the mandem described as having 'decent' lives (this was a life they associated with legal living, social respectability and financial legitimacy). A typical example of this can be found in the fact that most, if not all, of the

mandem I spoke to relied on the resources of their mothers or girlfriends. Kenzo, who lives at home with his mother, describes how she provides sustenance in the form of shelter, food and, money: "*I am a man, but don't have shit to show for myself. I feel like a kid, still living with mumsey. I feel trapped man" (Kenzo, 27).* In relation to this point, it was not uncommon for women to act as a 'safe haven' for the mandem, helping with financial and emotional difficulties and, more generally, their precarious lifestyle.

From the data gathered in the field, it would appear that the mandems'rites of passage from youth to adulthood – like the young people in Furlong and Cartmel's (2004) study – was shaped by increasing delays in achieving adult independence. What was evident was instead of making what Thrasher (1927) identified when studying playgroups, normative transition into everyday life, I found that the mandems' youth transitions were extended and extensive, with many failing to make these changes successfully. For this reason, rather than transitioning into the labour market to enable independent living, the mandem got stuck quite literally in the location (because of their engagement in post-code rivalries) and the drug economy, a precarious, high risk low gain work environment, which entraps them in risky trapper identities. These circumstances have implications on the mandem's futures, especially because the on road identity compounds liminality by stripping individual identity.

In relation to this, during the final stage of the mandem's transition on road, or the 'incorporation' period (Van Gennep, 1960), often those who pass through the threshold of postcode rivalries, the drug economy, and badman rituals describe a desire to depart and integrate back into mainstream society. This is because exposure to stigma, status anxiety, normative violence, and criminality – all of which formed the basis of the crisis so common to their narratives – meant some mandem experienced psychological deterioration. In this situation, some sought transformation, perhaps by moving out of life on road and into a new religious identity, or took the 'shit jobs' they desperately attempted to avoid.

As well as conceptualising the mandem's lives on road as an 'interstructural situation' (Turner, 1967: 93) in which they exist within society without a fixed social status, their transition is a series of key crises best understood in the context of three modes of 'trappedness': 'trapped in the hood', 'trapped in the illegal drug economy' and 'trapped in self'. (See, Figure 8).

Trapped in the hood

- Spatialised narrative
- Disadvantage
- Poverty
- Reduced employment and educational prospects
- Badman identity
- Postcode rivalry
- Interpersonal violence

Trapped in the illegal drug economy

- Volatile work roles
- Occupational hazards
- Instrumental violence

Trapped in self

- Excessive masculine rituals tied closely to badman identity
- Psychological strain and trauma
- Entry into Islam

Figure 8: Typology of 'trappedness'

There are different modes of 'trappedness'on road. These are not homogenous, but characterised by different layers and gradations. For example, 'trapped in the hood' relates to a spatialised narrative of being imprisoned in the physical space, where the hood was cited as a dangerous social field that had to be negotiated by, in particular, the younger members of the mandem. Crucially, there is linear movement between 'trapped in the hood' and 'trapped in the illegal economy' and 'trapped in self', as outlined in Figure 8 above. 'Trapped in the illegal economy' was characteristic of being stuck in the drug market in which the mandem became trapped in a search to alter their socio-economic positions. Finally, 'trapped in self' was consistent with

a specific narrative of being locked in a particular mentality and cultural identity. These key themes illustrate a physical, social and cognitive state of being that represents a complex socio-psychological condition that must be understood within the context of class, gender and the mandem's lived experiences. I will structure the remainder of the chapter by explaining the relationship and movement between these sets of crises, looking specifically at the social setting, volatile work economy and, (badman) masculine identity that underpin the trapped narrative.

7.3 'Trapped' in the 'Hood': Post-code Rivalries and Social Immobility.

The passage into life on road and the crisis engulfing many young and adult men trapped in problematic lifeworlds occurs in a sequence of stages. It begins in a physically structured social space – the hood. Historically, the Chicago School has long recognised that criminality and violence emerge under conditions of deprivation and social exclusion (Thrasher, 1927; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960 and Shaw and Mckay, 1942). The Chicago School scholars have suggested that 'place matters'– that is, residential location and ecological characteristics of urban areas are instrumental in shaping pathways into illegal activity. In a similar vein, geography played an important role in the development of life on road. The mandem's lives on road were bound up with marginalisation and exclusion, a direct consequence of the environmental conditions in which they lived. The hood was experienced negatively by most mandem, often described through phrases such as 'shithole', 'dump', 'harsh' and 'rough'. For them, living in the hood constituted a daily struggle to survive in a working-class community characterised by a long history of socio-economic disadvantage, systematic failures, fraught with risk and danger where criminality, violence and, victimisation were routine features of life. From the accounts I heard, 'trappedness' develops on the street corners of Northville, out of the mandem's desperate attempt to negotiate on one hand, the extreme of socio-economic disadvantage and, on the other, interpersonal and territorial violence. The geographical location

was thus influential in determining routes into life on road/road culture. The following comments, made by Cris, corroborate these claims:

> *The hood is where it all begins, Ebs. Look around, look how we're living, in a shithole with no prospects. This is where man get trapped, trapped in a hood way of thinking, trapped in madness with other man, it's just a vicious cycle, man are stuck, can't do nothing. Living in the hood is just a daily grind, a day-to-day struggle. (Cris, 33)*

As Cris notes, adopting what he termed the 'hood mentality', or what other theorists identified from a review of the literature as 'street habitus' (Fraser, 2010), was central in life on road. This stemmed from a struggle to survive in social environments of deindustrialisation, unemployment and, economic decline. Much has been written about 'street habitus', or indeed 'street capital' (see Harding, 2014 and Fraser, 2010), and the way it is articulated through 'street culture' (see also Anderson, 1999 and Bourgois, 1995). The most striking feature of 'street habitus' is that it is said to emerge in environments of socio-economic disadvantage, but perhaps more significantly, and as Sandberg (2008: 158) notes, it 'structurally binds certain groups to street culture'. In a similar way, the hood mentality culturally unites the mandem, who conform to structurally bound 'road culture'. Road culture draws parallels with Bourgois's (1995: 8) conceptualisation of street culture in so far, as it can be understood as 'a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society'. In much the same way, road culture as a subculture has arisen for the mandem as a direct response to the lived experiences of exclusion, and embodies particular culture capital, road customs, interactions and, gendered performances. Fundamentally, the hood mentality, expressed through and termed 'road culture', is distinguished by a set of engrained 'durable dispositions' influencing a distinct outlook on life. As argued in Chapter Four, these learned, embedded beliefs and values move beyond what Hallsworth and Young (2011: 61) identified as a 'fatalistic attitude to life that held no dreams, no ambition, no drive, no nothing'. Instead, the hood mentality comprises what Jankowski (1991) identified in his 'defiant individualist' characters as attitudes of survival and competition.

The hood mentality, then, was consistent with a survivalist attitude to life, but also grounded in reliance on oneself or friends, a commitment to getting what one can on road – often through illegal activity – and an orientation towards stabilising the adversity that many of the mandem experienced in their lives.

Here, emphasis is placed on a 'survival kit', which the mandem employed to navigate transitions from childhood to adulthood in Northville. The survival kit (a set of informal strategies), tied closely to permeating the space of exclusion, was drawn upon in the absence of legitimate social and economic capital, and used by the mandem as a key resource. One strategy consisted of entry into the alternative drug economy. However, adopting the hood mentality and ideas of survival also united those on road with vital knowledge on how to make money, and, acquire status, granting the mandem a space to belong and to establish respectability; something that proved difficult via more conventional pathways. In this respect, the hood mentality and, by extension, life on road, play an instrumental and symbolic role, acting as resource for survival, but also connecting those who are socially and, economically excluded to a viable cultural identity and, in some ways, a new reality. Alex explains:

> *Life on road is all we have, the only place I feel like someone. When you grow up poor, with nothing. Look around you, Ebs, I didn't have a chance living in this shithole, I had no other choice but to go on the roads and try make something of myself, no one else is helping me out here. (Alex, 33)*

For the men like Alex, trapped by their lived experiences, class and raced identities, life on road opened up a new world or imagined opportunities to reshape/change the material conditions of their lives. Entry into life on road was essentially motivated by a desperate desire to belong, to create meaningful identity and, obtain financial autonomy; and ultimately forge a different path from that which has already been carved out. While some gang talkers perceive urban males as pathological and solely criminal (Pitts, 2008 and Harding, 2012), I recognise men on road as individuals making conscious attempts to overcome the many barriers and difficulties brought to disadvantaged working-class communities by capitalist social and economic

relations. The mandem's stories demonstrated that membership of road culture had little to do with the moral weaknesses; for example, selfish desires or a thirst for violence and criminality. These are misleading gang narratives that function to blame the alleged 'gang member' for his own problems. Contrary to 'gang talk', life on road was a default position, having remedial appeal for men like Julian who believed they had nowhere else to go:

> *Society doesn't want me. It's all about the roads, where else am I going to go? I'm trapped, Ebs, can't get ahead, don't have nothing, no education, no job, no nothing, so yeah, I'll commit to the roads, survive in this shit, and try and get ahead this way, make a life for myself. (Julian, 22)*

Julian, talks here about the bleakness of this life, and not being able to see beyond his immediate situation. Julian, and others, who are trapped often spoke openly about having nothing else, but their lives on road and no real prospect of 'making it' or changing their trajectory. With regards to this, there is sense of fatalism inherent in the mandem's narratives, where they react to their exclusion by learning to survive in various ways. Julian's idea of 'trappedness' can be interpreted as a state of 'anomie'; a concept derived from Durkheim's (1952) study on suicide and developed by Merton (1938) in his seminal strain theory. For Merton, 'anomie' referred to a state of frustration born from how individuals internalised the disjunction between culturally accepted goals and the means by which they could obtain these desired aspirations. The focus was on the American dream (bounded in an ethos of self-sufficiency, upward mobility, materialism and success) and the lack of feasible (legitimate) routes for disadvantaged social groups in reaching these societal expectations. Although Merton based his key work on American society, contemporary capitalism in the UK also reflects these key factors. Essentially, it functions on neo-liberal ideology centred on individualism and free market logic – which is itself a repacking of the American dream. While free market ideology seduces some individuals into believing they can be masters of their own destiny, and that success can be achieved through unyielding individualism and hard work, opportunities for upward mobility are limited, particularly for the mandem, who are denied the

capital needed to access conventional pathways. Free market ideology fails to mention that accumulating material possessions, being an active consumer and achieving status based on employment is not equally accessible for those existing in deprived urban milieus suffering from 'permanent recession' (Hall at el 2008), or for those blighted by histories of obstinate disadvantage. The Neo-liberal capitalist arrangement succeeds on one hand by raising young people's aspirations, but fails on the other by not providing real opportunity for all to achieve and for ambitions to be realised. Not being able to achieve financial independence and thus fit into a demanding consumerist society has major implications for those on road who, desire everything that capitalism holds as valuable. For this reason, to understand the norms and practices of some men on road in urban contexts is to depart from gang assumptions based on purely criminal intent. Instead, one must move towards analysing their way of life as a complex existence whereby they are trapped in routine poverty, excluded from formal institutions and, shut off from the acquisition of traditional forms of capital. Consequently, the mandem attempt to make the most of their limited situation, using the resources available in the context of their social networks on road, 'innovating' in a Mertonian sense in response to their relative deprivation (Lea and Young, 1984)

In analysing the mandem's lived realities in this way, is not to suggest that they lack agency. Rather, it is important to consider how structural conditions and agentic decision-making merge to shape particular road identities and behaviour. An important debate in sociology has been between structure and agency. Giddens (1984), for example, argued in his structuration theory that social life represents the interplay between the 'macro' and 'micro', where structure and agent should be understood as relational to each other. More recently, UK gang researchers have drawn on Bourdieu's key concept of habitus to understand the link between the lifeworlds of urban men and the wider social structure (Fraser, 2010). Fraser focuses upon the relationship between the structure of the post-industrial city and young working-class men's limited spatial freedom in explaining the development of gangs, but pays little attention to agency. The mandem's narratives would suggest that

they are certainly positioned by structural forces, and consequently disadvantaged because of socio-economic circumstances, class, gender and, race identities. Through phrases like, '*I have limited choices*', '*I don't have the same opportunities as those posh people*', and '*We're at the bottom of the food chain*', translates a sense of 'trappedness', but within this the mandem do not conceive of themselves as structurally repressed or as absolute victims without agency. It is significant to mention that they made active decisions such as engaging in the illegal drug economy in order to obtain financial autonomy and neutralise economic disadvantage.

The point, then, is that the mandem's restricted circumstances – being geographically limited bound by territorial disputes, educational underachievement, which inevitably affected job opportunities and their limited social, economic, and cultural capital shaped their choosing. It was within the confines of this structure that they exercised agency, by finding partial solutions to the problems they faced and, responded to their powerlessness by constructing road identities. Paradoxically, these choices compounded their sense of 'trappedness' and alienation in mainstream identity. It is within the micro- and meso-level conditions that the mandem made decisions regarding violence, and where they got trapped in post-code rivalries and interpersonal violence, which impinged on transitions to adult life. In the following fieldnote, I observe exactly how the mandem's trapped narrative plays out:

> *I am with Freddie, who is quite shaken up. He has just been chased by the Brick Farm mandem on a routine visit to the local barber shop. His coat is ripped and his face is covered in scratches, because he had to exit the barber shop through the back door and jump over a barbed wire fence to escape youths from a rival estate. Freddietells me that he was caught slipping, and should have known better than to venture out of the local milieu and into what he describes as dangerous territory. (Extract taken from observation on the block– Feb, 2013)*

One of the most pronounced features of the 'trapped in the hood' narrative was the issue of safety and danger, especially in the context of territorial violence based on who can go where, and who belongs where. The above

fieldnote shows the potential consequences of crossing the boundary between Northville and Brickfarm, demonstrating the absolute insecurity of Freddie's life. In his words, he was 'caught slipping' (entering rival territory) and feared if he did not run away, he would face a violent confrontation with rivals from the 'Brick Farm' estate. In this situation, the geographical location becomes a dangerous space, whereby young men who inhabit the same area lay claim to territory, and control what they deem as their turf. The interviews and observations suggests that, the mandem – the youngers in particular – often had to negotiate the fine line between 'reppingendz' and protecting themselves from violent counteracts of rivals from neighbouring areas. To 'rep endz' was a term used by the youngers to convey a deep-seated loyalty and connection to the local area and the male peer group, and has its roots in the historical territorial conflict between elders from Northville and the Brick Farm estate, who are now either dead or in prison. To 'rep endz' means to defend the reputation of Northville and to protect it from intrusion, as Ralphy told me:

> *This is my area innit, this my endz, this is who I am, have to defend the endz, but myself too. We can't let man run up in here and disrespect our shit, man have to defend it. This is mans' endz, mans' life (Ralphy, 19)*

As Ralphy notes, his involvement in post-code rivalries was motivated by a desire to protect his neighbourhood, but also compounded by a desire to 'represent' and, 'defend' himself. What was evident in Ralphy's account was that his identity was closely associated with Northville. He spoke about Northville being his 'endz', his 'life', identifying who is in relation to where he lives. These were common phrases used by the youngers to describe, and/or identify themselves. My conversations with Ralphy and his friends suggested a shared experience, a common identity, where they described uniting to defend what they considered to be their 'endz', and essentially the 'shit' that they are stuck in. This territoriality was in the blood, and therefore deeply embedded in the culture of life on road. In her study of a disadvantaged community in Nottingham, Mckenzie (2015) argued that the community did not simply live in 'St Ann's', they were 'St Ann's'. In other words, the men and women were existentially and, symbolically connected to the local urban

milieu. Similarly, the mandem exhibited strong place identities, with the neighbourhood - Northville forming an important part of how they and others, understood their identities. Perhaps, the most important point in relation to post-code rivalries concerns how this identification with the local urban milieu, places limits on freedom, trapping some of the mandem in the confines of the estate, while strengthening their attachment to the geographical location. Here, TJ explains why his involvement in post-code rivalries prohibited his movement outside of Northville:

> *It's fucked up man Ebs, wish man didn't get involved in all this post-code bullshit, man can't even move, how man wants. It's draining though man, all the shit that come with it, man have to get stripes, get rep, prove themselves, not take a bad up, be a badman, it's just long man, because mans' freedom is taken away, like man is marked for life (TJ, 19)*

TJ explains here, that belonging to Northville or being Northville, places significant constraints and, boundaries on his life. The data suggested that because the youngers come to symbolise Northville through their engagement in post-code rivalries, they carry with them their place identities, making them identifiable to rivals, and consequently vulnerable to violent confrontations. More significantly, identification with Northville was embodied through masculine performances centred on 'acting bad', which worked to trap some of the mandem in a web of localised hyper-masculine practices and beliefs, where violence is perceived as a customary method to achieve and sustain manliness. As it was suggested in Chapter Six, these exhibitions of masculinity, which involved competing for stripes, with the aim of building reputation locally, increases the risk of violent assault, consequently creating fear amongst the mandem of violence beyond the estate. This inevitably created apprehension or an unwillingness to venture outside Northville, which compounds liminality and their sense of 'trappedness'.

Interestingly, my findings illustrated that although the mandem perform gender through excessively aggressive performances, such masculine rituals were defined by a desperate need to be respected rather than disrespected. Such gender performances were also a consequence of the structure of the

urban environment in conjunction with everyday peer group interaction. For Messerschmidt (1993: 83), particular 'forms of masculinities are constructed in specific situations', arguing that these 'practices within social settings, produce, reproduce, and alter types of masculinity'. In addition, West and Zimmerman (1987) focused on gender as a verb. Thus, performing gender is, again, rooted in social interaction. This becomes significant when examining the ways in which the mandem perform masculinity. In Northville, as noted earlier in the chapter, the mandem grow up in the context of poverty and with limited access to social and economic capital. Prolonged routes to independence have left many young and adult men there recognising only one form of 'successful' masculinity. With minimal resources to accomplish westernised versions of masculinity, the mandem express their own version of machismo. What was observable in Northville was a reproduction of hegemonic masculinity, principally expressed through what was described as the badman. One of my participants, Aron, articulates how the badman identity functions in Northville:

> *Man ain't gonna respect you if you don't retaliate when man disrespects you. You have to be bad, can't be weak. You just get tired of man trying to test you, so you have to be violent, be bad. On road, you see violence all the time man, so you just become violent to protect yourself. (Aron, 22)*

Aron's account suggests that sustained levels of violence coupled with a fear of being victimised and subsequently labelled a 'pussy', helped to formulate a violent self and a particular mentality, which is internalised and manifests itself by way of performing dominant badman (road) identity. This identity is expressed and, affirmed by a commitment to defending one's manhood and the area, and embodies westernised versions of manliness, characterised by, toughness, violence, competitiveness and success (Connell, 1995). Considered the dominant version of manhood and the desired male identity, he illustrates Connell's articulation of hegemonic masculinity as the version most valued in this specific context. Indeed, these notions of badness and toughness take precedence when examining the literature of street culture. For example, in his study of road culture, Gunter (2008) focuses on a small minority of 'rude boys' whose lifestyles centred on what he defined as 'badness'. For Gunter,

'badness' was consistent with particular attitudes to survival and money making, but was also about being tough; building 'rude boy' reputations through bullying or victimisation. In his work on 'the ways of a badass', Jack Katz (1988) suggested that to adopt the pose of the badass, one had to display an 'alien style' which was also based on appearing tough. More significantly, the badass had to command situations and not back down. Bourgois (1995) argued that the marginalised youth in Harlem often incorporated toughness into their survival manual in search for respect. Similar to the above studies, acting bad and projecting badman characteristics involved the physical display of toughness but was based on not backing down in the face of attacks on masculinity. This was revealed in a discussion with TJ, in which he provides further insight into his badman identity:

> *You can't survive out here if you ain't prepared to back your ting, stand up for yourself. Man ain't having it, man ain't taking me for a pussy, I will do what I have to do to protect my reputation. If you don't the badman ting, show you're bad out here you won't last very long. Sad thing though, is that acting bad, don't get man nowhere, just traps man in the estate, and man don't get to live normal (TJ, 19)*

TJ suggests that constructing a badman identity functioned as a key resource to survive in environments in which status challenges and victimisation are a normative part of the mandem's their transitions to adulthood. With few resources at their disposal, the mandem utilised hegemonic badman (road) masculinity to rescue their stigmatised identities, prove their manhood, establish reputation and retain honour on road. The paradox, however, is that these strategies fatally undermine such an achievement. The findings revealed that while adhering to badman practices enabled the mandem to establish respectability and social status, it also worked to close down other opportunities. Similar to the working-class women in Skeggs' (1997) ethnography, who found it difficult to translate their cultural capital (glamour and care) beyond the social milieu, badman identity is limited in its transferable capital. Put simply, the assimilation of such identity works to entrap the mandem in the social field of road. This is

because these men physically embody the area and culture and the engrained habits they acquire (e.g. posturing, language, reacting to threat and disrespect, and resorting to violence when the group is threatened). Such behaviours are not easy to shake off, and cannot be transferred into power, respect and, social status outside the immediate environment. Because of their habitus and the dangers associated with badman identity, the mandem find safety and familiarity in Northville, perceiving the outside threatening. This embodiment of the local area and performance of badman identity therefore creates further alienation from their aspirations and the 'decent' lives they desperately crave.

In essence, the culture in which the mandem find themselves in is one where respect is paramount to survival and must be managed. In Northville, this tends be managed principally through engaging in territorial violence to establish respect amongst peers, violent retaliation to ensure one retains reputation on road, and also through revenge attacks to minimise damage and shame to established badman identities. The construction of badman identity plays a significant part of the mandem's transition on road, whereby a high value is placed on proving masculinity. However, what the findings also revealed is that constructing a legitimate male identity is not solely about performing and enacting badman identity, but also acquiring economic capital to enhance one's reputation. In this sense, the mandem learn that in order to survive on road, one must find one's place in the social field and accumulate cultural and economic capital. Success on road was determined by making money, being financially viable, and 'flossing', all of which required innovation, being able to spot opportunities to make P's. The market place was populated by men entrenched in the drug economy, competing with one another to establish and maintain a financially autonomous male identity. In the next section, I discuss how the mandem get trapped and trap others in the illegal drug economy.

7.4 'Trapped' in the Illegal Drug Economy: 'Road' as Hard Work and Economic Survival

I outlined in Chapter Four that life on road and, by extension, road culture becomes a central mechanism to counteract the hardship endured as a consequence of structural disadvantage, and a possible future of permanent socio-economic exclusion. The mandem adopted what I termed a 'survival kit', which principally constituted informal coping strategies to negotiate strained transitions to adulthood. A key feature of this survival kit was entry into the drug trade, which provided the potential for social mobility and wealth. For the men involved in this study, Northville's local drug economy played an important role in their lives on road. It was a space where they readily seized opportunities and searched for ways to make an income. Ralphy, provides insight into his experience in the drug economy:

> *It's a madness, man, Ebs. It's standard to open your front door and see the mandem making money, driving round in flash cars, diamond out, just making P. You enter the trap, think yeah, blam, dip my feet in, make some P, but it's not that simple, can't make no real money out there. It's a lie, fantasy, that doesn't show you that you end up trapping yourself in something that you don't wanna be in. (Ralphy, 19– extract taken from semi-structured interview)*

For men like Ralphy, who lack formal education and job training, selling drugs presents an opportunity to make real money. As Ralphy notes, he saw quite literally, money being made outside his front door. The predominant image of the drug dealer in Northville, also expressed in popular culture, attracted his attention, and, offered him an apparent way out of the disadvantageous position he is in. It is, however, an illusion for many, and as Ralphy and many of his peers note, a 'trap' that bestows a fantasy of a promised reality that could not withstand the context of real, lived experiences on road. It becomes evident that the reality is more complex, and reliant on many variables. What my findings illustrate is that some mandem get caught up in a process they termed 'trapping'. As Bradley describes:

> *It's a trap, Ebs. You trap yourself, because you don't have anything else to do with your life. You then trap others because you're selling and dealing death. All of us are trapped in the trap, us, because we are 'trapped' by the P and the crackheads because they need a fix. It's just one big cycle of drugs, money and death. (Bradley, 25)*

As conveyed by Bradley, the metaphor 'trapping' was used to describe the process of catching or trapping people in a social system. It involved a circular process of ensnaring others into the illegal drug economy. For some mandem, the process usually started with trapping a dependent customer (*'crackhead'*) by supplying drugs. It then followed onto capturing and robbing drug dealers, which in turn led to feelings of being caged as individuals or being caught up in risky trapper identities. Literature on 'street culture' cites drug dealing as the main source of income for those surviving on the margins of society (see Bourgois, 1995; Pryce, 1986, and Jankowski, 1991). What was significant in terms of my findings was that although drug dealing was the principal mode of income, what distinguishes the mandem's approach to making money (which is not the focus of the studies mentioned above) is how Bradley, and others described trapping. Trapping shares features of what Pryce (1986) termed 'hustling' and Pitts (2008) coined 'shotting', particularly as it also describes the individual endeavour of drug dealing. Part of the process of trapping however is being able to work with others to rob fellow drug dealers. As noted earlier, the mandem respond to structural disadvantage with agency, for example by entering life on road and subsequently the trap (illegal drug economy) to improve relative deprivation and limited available life chances. As Bradley identifies, trapping is a process that traps the mandem in life on road, thereby reducing both their agency, and that of other people. Put simply, trapping is a paradox. It appears to offer opportunities (and thus 'choice'), but also entangles the mandem further in the trap, therefore diminishing opportunity and engagement with wider mainstream society. Cris describes his decision to sell drugs as opposed to engaging with conventional employment, and explains why he knowingly trapped himself in a dangerous job role and a risky trapper identity:

> *I didn't feel I had a real choice you know, Ebs. I don't have nothing, no education, nothing, who'sgonna give me work?*

So man have to enter the trap and sell drugs, it's the only way man can get ahead and take control of man's life. It's fucked out there, man are trapped, but fuck it, man have to survive. (Cris, 33)

Cris lacked the education, skills and training necessary to pursue legitimate routes to success. In this sense, his marginal position in mainstream society is of key importance, since engaging in Northville's drug economy and consequently becoming trapped is guided by not only material gain, but also, an attempt to better survive their position in society. The findings revealed that the local drug economy was populated by individuals excluded from formal institutions (i.e. paid work or formal education) and constrained by impoverished urban milieus, and who thus believed that legitimate success was out of their reach. In essence, this state of being trapped is perhaps to be understood as the 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1989) of late capitalism. That is, the mandem are reacting to their low status or, in the case of my findings, feel trapped by/in their diminished cultural capital, lived experiences and class and race/ethnic identities. They find it difficult to translate their experiences into straightforward, validated neo-liberal success.

As noted in Chapter Four, youth transitions into the labour market have changed fundamentally. Working-class young people are not channelled into working-class jobs, as was the case in Paul Willis's (1977) 'learning to labour'. Rather, entry points into the labour market for working-class men such as the mandem, who notably lack education and work experience, are often in unskilled, low-paid and unstable employment. This was work that the mandem associated with a life of poverty, struggle, and indecency, jobs they were not prepared to take. However, the road, as they saw it, offered the opportunity to make proper money and retain a modicum of street respectability. Mikey explained that this promised reality offered men like him, who were positioned at the bottom of the social strata, practical alternatives to gain a steady income: *'on road, I can make my own money, be my own boss, and not be some cunt in one of those cunt jobs'* (*field notes*, August 2012).

Mikey understood the drug economy as a space to become an entrepreneur, as opposed to 'a cunt', a social status that the mandem desperately fought to avoid. Being your own 'boss', is important in understanding why some men on road rejected what was perceived as cunts' work (feminised, unskilled and low-paid work), preferring instead to 'sell death' as Bradley described earlier. It was suggested by some of the mandem that 'real men' trap whilst 'cunts' conform and take up legitimate jobs. The cunt was therefore considered a failed man or someone who opted for those inevitable 'slave labour' jobs that offered no real financial reward, whereas the trapper was seen as financially competent and able to get ahead. This promise of financial reward – recognised by many, but achieved by very few – propelled many of the mandem to spurn menial labour, instead, opting to take their chances in the ill-fated drug economy. In relation to this point, as discussed in Chapter Five, through their activities in the illegal drug economy the mandem were able to construct themselves as trappers, what they considered to be 'real men' as opposed to 'cunts'– failed men.

A significant research finding here is that gang talk stresses the distinct, or rather alternative, value system of those involved in street-based violence. However, when the mandem spoke about their lives, what was described was not reflective of an 'oppositional' ideology to that of mainstream society (Anderson, 1999). Specifically, my findings were not indicative of a subculture, defined by Hall and Jefferson (1976) as having distinct values and norms. Rather, entry into life on road and, successively, road culture, functioned by drawing on particularly conservative/capitalist aspirations. For example, through the mandem's activities on road and in the trap, they resisted a life they associated with financial hardship and job insecurity, adopting the values of neo-liberal subjects, consistent with entrepreneurial freedom and working for oneself. This is a narrative that gang talk often ignores. For instance, this group of men did not rely upon government handouts as depicted through underclass discourse (Murray, 1990). Instead, the mandem appeared to imagine themselves as active consumers – despite the material reality of their lives – where the acquisition of consumer goods formed an important canvas though which to perform their on road identity.

Entry into the illegal drug economy, as with most conventional jobs, therefore played a number of important roles.

Drug dealing imagined as a short-term fix to immediate financial problems, provided the means to engage with a number of job opportunities in the illegal drug economy. It made sense as a method to neutralise disadvantage, offering the opportunity to transform the mandem's peripheral position in society that did not offer such incentives. As with Beazley's (2003: 186) research on street children, the mandem's work 'was also strongly connected to their social identity and feelings of self-worth and self-confidence'. As with most men working in conventional industries, they took pride in earning their own living, worked hard in their own work sector, and were sometimes the principal breadwinners within their families – especially the mandem on road who had children or who looked after their mothers. Similar to the drug dealers in Bourgois's (1995) study who sold drugs to gain respect, the mandem also sought to gain credibility through their trade and their engagement in the trap. The various tasks performed in the trap granted some level of respect, but importantly, creditability was consolidated by investment in a particular type of trapper identity (discussed in Chapter Five) and the amount of income one could generate in the illegal drug economy.

In Northville, I found different ways of securing an income and achieving an identity. What exists in contemporary gang discourse is the dominant assumption that gangs operate through an identifiable older leader who coerces younger members into criminal activity (see Pitts, 2008). For example, a central tenet of Pitt's argument is what he termed 'reluctant gangsters', young boys who have been forcibly recruited or groomed by older gang members into a kind of corporate gang structure, therein, young men are forced to perform tasks. While Pitts provides a useful analysis of the drug economy in Waltham Forest, this thesis does not translate well in Northville. There are important differences between his reluctant gangster thesis and the mandem's lived realities on road. First, I did not find any 'elder' gang members who defined and controlled the day-to-day operation of the drug economy. Rather, it would appear that Northville's drug economy was made up of 'loose, messy and interlinked networks', (Aldridge and Medina,

2008: 4) where the mandem worked as individual dealers, only working in collaboration where necessary. In the following group discussion, Andy, Danny and, Freddie highlights how the drug economy in Northville works:

> *Andy (18): It's every man for himself out here. Man have to work some long hours for shit pay, but the P is never a guarantee, you know dem ones.*

> *Danny (18): Yeah, I hear that man have to work in some dangerous conditions you get me, and still can't make any real P, only sometimes, when man is really on his grind or when man robs other man, that's when you see that P*

> *Freedie (19): I ain't robbing man, so I have to work hard man to see that P, man don't even get no time off, but it has to be done.*

Initially what existed amongst the mandem was the illusion that the drug economy was a place where they could make plenty of money. In reality however, they found that it was an unreliable business, built upon a fractured and, unstable economy that demands hard work from its employees, '*working long hours, for shit pay'* in dangerous conditions where every now and again there was the potential to see a windfall of cash. In this case, parallel to the precarious labour market, the trap offered no holiday pay, no time off, no pension and no insurance benefits should death on the job occur. Instead, this was a contractless industry offering some lucrative opportunities via the robbery of dealers, but was essentially a minimum wage. This was very similar to the zero-hour contract common in the capitalist workforce where people get paid for work they do, and no more. Some men in this study recognised that the drug industry was insecure, part-time, temporary positions, and many found they were easily disposable by capitalists/entrepreneurs within this structure. For instance, many successful trappers took advantage of people's willingness to work under these conditions, recognising their structural powerlessness and would thus routinely employ the youngers on a short-term and temporary basis. In some way without explicitly recognising it, some of the mandem were in fact engaging in 'cunts' work. In any case, many youngers became reliant upon the elders, with the two often found working in collaborative relationships.

In Northville there was little trace of the hierarchal 'supergang' as described in Chapter Two, or the coercive relationship stressed by Pitts (2008). Instead, what existed on road was a trapper typology, defined by different levels of immersion and practice in the local drug economy. The trap can be perceived as having some kind of hierarchal arrangement, in that engagement with a specific trapper type produced distinctions between the mandem in terms of job roles (for example, on road job and on road career). What was clear, however, in relation to Northville's drug economy, was that criminal activity in the trap was far more disorganised, casual and opportunistic (see Decker and Curry, 1999; Hagadorn, 1994 and Hallsworth and Young, 2005) amongst the mandem who attempted to benefit economically from their crimes. For example, the trap was far more hybridised, temporary and fragmented in organisational terms, whereby the trappers that manifested in the illegal drug trade were conscripted from the messy social worlds inhabited by the mandem. This was partly shaped by the disjointed labour markets of neo-liberal capitalism, and particularly by neo-liberal ideology centred on individualism, which was reflected principally in the mandem's approach to making money. In the trap *it was all about business – making that P',* taking care of one-self and, where necessary, working in collaborative rather than coercive networks in order to ensure profit for the *individual.* The structure of the drug market was therefore similar to what Hobbs and Pearson (2001: vi) described as 'small and flexible networks', built around a web of self-employed operatives. Hence, the mandem embraced the neo-liberal values of enterprise and entrepreneurship in creating their own opportunities in a context where they felt there were few legitimate opportunities other than 'shit work'. The local drug economy operated on a 'salesman' model, in which the mandem performed the equivalent of door-to-door sales. Initially, the elders supplied the goods to the youngers as a start up, they paid off their loan and eventually became independent retailers. In this way, much selling was a lone activity whereby the mandem trapped independently, only ever relying on the friendship group or teamwork when robbing fellow drug dealers.

In their elevated roles in the trap, the mandem chased the promise for a better life and sought to make a lucrative income, mobilising their cultural capital and knowledge of the local drug economy to create illegitimate opportunities. By adopting the role of trapper, the mandem acquire street respectability, through visual displays of wealth and establishing a viable road identity. Crucially, this all comes at a price, one that cannot be seen at the beginning of their transition on road. Through a commitment to trapping, the mandem successfully ensnared themselves in a dangerous business enterprise, an industry fuelled by normative violence and hostile relations with 'colleagues'. The activities that they engage with in the trap compound their liminality, creating further distance between them and the decent life they craved. The following section discusses how the mandem become over time disillusioned by the trap, hindered by their identities on road and the particular forms of cultural capital they accrued. They realise they have become trapped not only in the hood or in the illegal drug economy, but also psychologically inside themselves, and seek to transform their lifestyles. I will now describe what I identify as the final version of 'trappedness': 'trapped in self'.

7.5 'Trapped' in 'Self': Realisation and Search for New Identity.

What was evident from the findings was that the social boundaries and categories on road powerfully influence the ways in which the mandem negotiate their social worlds. The mandem expressed (in adulthood) a desperate desire to move away from road culture, but cited difficulties in departing from the hood mentality and engrained road customs and norms. They often spoke about feeling caged as individuals and being stripped of their freedom. As well as common narratives based on being trapped in the social space and the illegal drug economy (work roles), there was a conscious acknowledgement among many of the mandem that they were also trapped in a particular (road) identity that compounds their crisis situation. What the mandem articulated through their narratives was what they described as stained or tarnished selves, and what Goffman (1963)

referred to as a 'discredited identity' that spoiled self- identity and blighted life chances. TJ explains:

> *When you get caught up in all the violence and fuckery with man, you can't live a normal life, man can't even travel without fretting bout whose coming to get man. It's just a vicious cycle, where man get trapped in a persona that marks man for life (TJ, 19)*

Here, TJ draws attention to the brutalising affects of life on road and, how the self becomes trapped by the consistent experience of violence that occur in both the hood and the illegal drug economy. In relation to this point, as discussed earlier, this had a significant impact on how the men in this study understood their identities. With few resources at their disposal, many of the mandem utilised this hegemonic badman identity to prove manhood and establish reputation. However, in the same way that trapping is a paradox – in that this form of attempted agency constituted in a field of limited opportunities stunts freedom or choice – adhering to badman practices functioned as a means to establish street credibility, but also worked to constrain and trap them, having a devaluing affect outside the hood. For example, common amongst some of the mandem's stories was an acknowledgement that their identities, especially the badman persona, was a spoiled status that in reality did not offer a socially accepted route into the dignified lives they crave. For this reason, as some of the mandem came of age, they realised that their cultural capital was poorly recognised beyond their class and geographical environs, and that their habitus constrained and trapped them. In his way, many of the mandem questioned the stigma attached to being bad and the futility of continuing as a badman, and sought alternative, viable, credible and socially accepted alternatives. Islam emerged as the vehicle by which the mandem sought to rescue stigmatise identities and reinvent themselves; constructing their own version of appropriated Islamic practice. A significant research finding here is that the mandem did not remain committed to one single version of masculinity in their transitions to adulthood. For some, one way into adult masculinity was engagement with Islam as a life-changing catalyst.

In the UK there is an absence of literature that explores the relationship between life on road and Islam. Following 9/11 and the brutal killing of Lee Rigby, media and Government have become concerned with and fearful of Islam; and in particular the extremist aspects of the religion. As Alexander (2000: 240) notes, 'it is hardly coincidental that Muslim identities have become synonymous with gang activity and with associations of marginality, alienation and threat'. Recently, criminologist Simon Cottee (2015) noted that Western gang members who are in search of redemption have been seduced by the violence and excitement associated with Jihad. It is significant to note that my findings illustrate the significance of redemption through faith. However, the mandem did not appear to be seduced by Jihadism, violence or terror, but rather they were attracted to the religiousity and spirituality. In addition, the mandem's accounts suggested a positive relationship with Islam, whereby Islam was the means by which some of the men on road moved out of the liminal space (trapped discourse) and into what was described as a well-established and positive religious identity. Islamic identity represents the third and final road persona and is very useful in describing and understanding life on road as transitional process, or a transformation of self, where the mandem attempt to escape from an identity crisis into what they believe to be a new religious identity. Moreover, the Islamic doctrine plays a significant role in some of the mandem's lives and appears particularly influential in transforming existing road identities, while offering a kind of continuity with the bad man status that is achieved on road since it is Other to the secular West.

The ethnography revealed two contrasting Islamic identities. Firstly, the Islamic revert (men such as Mohammed) adhered to the precepts of Islam and moved away from 'road' customs and norms. Secondly, the localised version comprised a kind of syncretism where there was a blend of local cultural norms and religious symbolism. Crucially, conversion to Islam offered some mandem like Mohammed what he experienced as a spiritual space to transform his social status from badman to 'devoted pilgrim' through a religious commitment to Allah. He explains:

> *I got tired of acting bad Ebs, saw so much fuckery on road; went through it all, the post-code bullshit, robbing man, selling drugs, in madness with man. I thought this can't be all there is to life man, there must be something else. I was lost in the badman identity, didn't know who I was (Mohammed, 28)*

Lifton (1961) notes that individuals tend to engage with religious practice during times when self-identity is in crisis. In the case of Mohammed, he found religion at a particular period while on road but, significantly, when he questioned the futility of continuing in a badman identity. Conversion, occurred at the end of his transition - when he had undergone, for example, entry into the alternative drug economy, gaining 'stripes', reputation, respect, or badman status. He expressed a yearning to turn his back on road rituals based on particular exhibitions of self, for example, projecting aggressive forms of masculinity. Mohammed articulated a very different experience of street/gang culture from gang talkers, who assume young people thrive on criminal identities and violent gang rituals (Pitts, 2008). In contrast, such masculine (road) customs was perceived by Mohammed as psychologically draining because he was forced to conceal his vulnerabilities and lost his identity in the process. Mohammed who spent a large amount of time proving his masculinity through distinct road rituals desired rescue from the pretentious trappings of his former life, with the aim of transforming his existing badman identities and start anew. Religious conversion is a common narrative utilised to save, redeem and exit criminal identities (Maruna, et.al, 2006). Interestingly, Mohammed spurned the religious identity attached to his parents in favour of the five pillars of Islam; a religious framework that had the advantage of being associated with influential strong male role models, but also the humility of the precepts held particular appeal for Mohammed who existed in a contradictory social world. For Mohammed who desperately sought meaning in a life world that functioned on the pervasive influence of crime, drugs and violence, Islam's straightforward guide on how to live a purposeful, humble and clean life presented an alternative way of being and seeing the world. As Mohammed says:

Islam saved me, took me away from all the madness on the roads. It a just a beautiful religion, it helped me to live clean, took move away from the madness on the roads. Being on road is a joke Ebs, being a bad man gets man nowhere. Man don't realise when they are caught up in it, but it messes up your life, can't get ahead. When you're involved in all this bad stuff, you see some real negative things, have to do some really dark things to survive, this messes man up. My heart felt heavy, had all this remorse, felt bad for the things I was doing in my life. I just wanted forgiveness (Mohammed, 28)

From the Mohammed's point of view, the badman identity was a flawed persona that closed down opportunities to integrate into mainstream society, but also exposed him to a host of negative experiences on road. Mohammed along with the rest of the mandem often spoke about dishing out or receiving violence, or losing close friends or family members to violent crime; most notably murder. The need for redemption, to be forgiven for past wrong-doings, was particularly important for the Mohammed who wanted to be cleansed. In much the same way as evangelical Christianity offers opportunities for salvation and redemption, Islam for Mohammed provided the framework to wipe the slate clean through a commitment to Allah. The Islamic ideology based on the idea that there is 'no perfect Muslim' provided a strong foundation of forgiveness that resonated with his lifeworld, more than the precepts of any other faith. Islam, offered a programme; it is associated with reflexivity about ones badness, it has material expression (beards, beads and clothes) and discipline, so facilitated, for Mohammed the space for transformation. It is important to note that while Mohammed's alternative religious identity allowed him to move away from engrained road practices, his friends alternated between badman rituals and demonstrations of some aspects of Islamic tradition that had little to do with the dominant theology. In a conversation with Cassius in which we discussed Islam and life on road, he provided the following insight into his Islamic identity:

I try to stay on my dean, when you still live in the area, and see the same fuckery. The drug economy and the mandem ain't going nowhere regardless if you are an ackee. It's hard man putting Islam first with all the fuckery that goes on

> *the roads. I'm Amir- Muslim name, but man still know me*
> *asBucky- road name (Cassius, 23).*

For Cassius, who was unable to leave the area to engage with his new found faith being a Muslim was more an extension of his pre-existing badman identity than an alternative and contrasting form. In Northville, it was not uncommon for some of the mandem to declare that they were Muslims as opposed to a badman, while blending rich religious symbolism with their existing road customs. For example, it was customary practice for new reverts to grow beards, wear Islamic beads and engage in prayer, while still performing masculine (road) rituals which were, most notably, centred on acting bad. In contrast to Mohammed, who was able to rescue his stigmatised identity with a commitment to the discipline in the Islamic precepts, his friends, for example, Cassius, found it difficult to abstain from facets of their badman personas:

> *Mohammed cusses man all the time, he's always preaching*
> *to man that we should stay on our dean, but man can't*
> *really commit to his dean when man is trapped in the*
> *fuckery that comes with the roads. Man move to Islam for*
> *the same reasons though (Cassius, 23)*

Interestingly, despite identifying two very contrasting versions of Islamic practice in Northville, both Mohammed and his fellow Islamic converts articulated the basis for conversion in relation to three interrelated themes: the formation of identity, a need for redemption and an escape from the trappings of inner-city life. As Turner (1967) argued, the liminal phase is a period of transformation, explicitly characterised by reflection and changes in preferences. The mandem often spoke about life on road in terms of losing its appeal once they came to the end of the transition on road. They described a yearning to integrate into mainstream society and to depart from stigma, status anxiety, normative violence, and familial stress, all of which formed the basis of the crisis situation shared across many of the mandem's narratives. Islam was then associated with an opportunity to change, to save oneself and ultimately depart from past lives. Islamic conversion can be

interpreted as an adaptive mechanism drawn upon to redeem stigmatised identities by replacing them with a new, sometimes quasi-religious persona.

Irrespective of the Islamic identity performed in Northville, examining how and why the mandem convert to Islam becomes significant to understanding the trauma, instability and stress all so common to their personal biographies, but especially the disorientation born from their marginal position in society. While Islam was central to some of the mandem's narratives, I would argue that it was not religiously linked to life on road, but rather was employed as a blueprint to help resolve issues centred on self and the crisis confronting many young and adult men living in the confines of Northville. What the mandem's conversion narratives reveal is a desperate need for a framework through which to interpret the uncertainties intrinsic to their biographies, but also the psychological distress characteristic of their lives on road. The five pillars of Islam was the religious ideology drawn upon to help make sense of their negative experiences on road, offering a platform for personal reflection on who one really is, or indeed where one is going. The questioning of self-identity occurred once the mandem had endured the transition on road – i.e. experienced the negative aspect of road culture. The mandem came to Islam during a stage when they were receptive to change and open to new ways of being, hoping to transform former identities, redeem sins, and to exit bleak and dangerous social environments and criminal identities. One can therefore understand why so many young and adult men in Northville searched for an alternative worldview and found it in the Islamic doctrine, particularly when their existing perceptions of their lives were illustrative of being trapped in their transitions to adulthood. For some of the mandem, Islam was the answer they had been searching for. In theory, conversion offered vision and hope to rescue stigmatised identities, yet, in practice, the majority of mandem remain trapped in problematic identities. For Mohammed, Islam acted as a life-changing catalyst in adulthood. For his friends, however, opportunities for transformation remain limited while they still resided in Northville, trapped in the liminal space, exposed to the illegal drug economy, normative violence, and where acting bad is the mantra for survival.

7.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has drawn on Turner's (1967) concept of liminality to analyse the way in which the mandem experience their transitions from childhood to adulthood in Northville an inner-city area of London between 2012 and 2015. In conceptualising their pathways to adulthood through the narrative of being or feeling trapped, I have attempted to place their lived experiences in relation to wider structural and institutional inequalities, but also at the micro level: the individual. Road culture is, therefore, best understood as a direct response to the mandem's crisis situation and, lived experiences of social exclusion and economic hardship. This has, in turn, produced distinct survivalist attitudes to life enacted through various on road practices which have compounded the mandem's sense of 'trappedness'. Overall, life on road (and by extension the 'trap') constitutes a liminal space in the mandem's transitions from youth to adulthood, and is characterised by economic instability, insecurity, and damage to the psyche. It can be read as a rites of passage, a transitional process in which the mandem attempt to rescue stigmatised identities through the creation of alternative career paths visual markers of masculinity or by engaging in aspects of Islamic practice. Life on road expresses a search for a credible sense of self in limiting social structures that deny disadvantaged urban men full citizenship. Adhering to road customs and norms becomes the most realistic means available to them to generate respect, status and, self-worth in the context of their local environment.

8.0 Conclusion

At the beginning of my PhD journey I set out to make sense of life on road, give the *mandem* a voice and narrate their experiences through their lens. From the outset I argued that as an insider, I could provide a coherent portrait of the mandem's lived experiences. What I came to understand, however, is that being a sociologist entails much more than this. This research process made me become less of an insider, and with that came the need to accept that my research and personal stance had changed. For instance, I no longer had a polarised view – an 'us' (the mandem and me) vs 'them' (gang talkers) standpoint. Instead, by the end of my investigation I had ended up somewhere in the middle – a semi-insider – emphasising with the mandem's subjective lives, but now positioned differently as an objective outsider. I also recognised that I could only make partial sense of life on road. Indeed, now the research has come to an end, I am still perplexed by aspects of the culture. Nonetheless, the final thesis has brought more than I envisioned. Not only is it rich in data, open and personal, but the pages of the study have also silently captured my own rites of passage. As I reflect on the five years spent carrying out research in my community, I realise that the thesis is the outcome of my own transition from my earlier self, *Ebony the girl from the hood, to Ebony the academic.* The last five years have been an emotional and life-changing journey. My research helped me to distance myself from what I have come to see as the trap of urban life/culture and, simultaneously, I have grown into an identity as a professional academic. In this way, mentally I have been able to step away from the pain and trauma that some people experience growing up in the hood. However, as I currently live in the research setting, it is painful to walk past the street corner that is the focus of my study and observe the mandem – who I have come to understand now as trapped in their hood, the illegal drug economy and, problematic self-identities.

It has finally dawned on me that the notion of being and feeling trapped not only encapsulates a distinct narrative of being on road, but also captures the true essence of the crisis confronting those young men who grow up in

disadvantaged urban areas; poor, and lacking in educational development, employment prospects and self-belief. I have attempted to weave this notion of 'trappedness' through my arguments and discussions, which has helped bring to the fore the wider structural limits that blight life chances. It also shines some light on the depressing and unforgiving social environments which the mandem fight endlessly to negotiate. What the thesis contributes, then, is a portrait at ground level of not only the hardship, pain and often personal tragedy of a particular group of young men, but an illustration of their desperate attempts to survive in bleak social worlds. I have been fortunate in being granted the experience of researching people I care about deeply. Through their narratives, what I hope to have achieved is insight into a realm that is complex and multi-layered and, not very well represented in UK gang research.

8.1 Summary of the Thesis

The objective of this ethnographic study was to understand the lived experiences of the mandem, who are a group of men growing up in Northville, an urban area of London characterised by chronic social and economic disadvantage. Utilising my partial insiderness as a resident on the estate, the thesis attempts to offer a nuanced understanding at a street-based level of the ambiguous and often problematic transitions from childhood to adulthood for those marginalised young men who are immersed in road culture. Life on road, and by extension road culture, was central to the analysis, as it offered a contrasting narrative to that of 'gang talk' by situating the mandem's lived realities in the context of socio-psychological and cultural dynamics. This ethnography sought to challenge gang stereotypes centred purely on the criminal and pathological nature of the gang-involved young person, towards an understanding of youth violence as merely one aspect of the difficulty often inherent in growing up in urban areas. I argued at the outset for a need to move away from a narrow focus on the gang, a narrative that often damages our interpretation of the situation confronting men in urban milieus, in order to better understand the complexity of the mandem's lived experiences.

The life that exists outside the lens of the gang is one that is often overshadowed by gang talkers' preoccupation with criminality and offending behaviour (Pitts, 2008 and Harding, 2012). By delving deeply into the mandem's lifeworlds, this study has attempted to give a voice to those who are routinely stigmatised by gang discourse, thereby granting greater insight into the community context, to better conceptualise their lives in the local environment. The latter proves crucial as, in their theorisations of the gang, gang talkers often neglect the relationship between individual history, social milieu and wider structures in the formation of particular cultural capital or versions of reality (Mills, 1959; Bourdieu, 1984). Moreover, my time in the field with the mandem presents further and essential insight into why some young and adult men become immersed in violent street worlds. At the same time, the study moves beyond traditional studies of youth violence through an exploration of what the mandem described as life on road/road culture. The thesis draws attention to a group of young and adult men who spoke about their lives through the imagery of being trapped, documenting that their pathways into adulthood were often complex and unpredictable. This particular road narrative of being trapped at different intersections in transitions to adulthood was not characteristic of all young men in Northville. It would appear that there were multiple ways of achieving masculinity on the estate. Whereas road culture lifestyle may have predominated, some young men (those with Afros) had found a way to avoid becoming trapped. By devoting particular attention, however, to the way in which the mandem narrate their lived experiences through life on road, but especially this notion of being trapped (which was representative of three distinct forms of 'trappedness'), the study allows for a portrait of the everyday challenges, organisation, social and cultural traditions entailed in growing up in the confines of the inner city.

This chapter began with a recap of the central research questions, drawing attention to the key findings outlined in the thesis. It ties together my central arguments and discussions, and highlights the study's contribution to academic knowledge. This will entail reinforcing the dominant themes that emerged from the mandem's narrative, which, as argued earlier, challenges

existing research on gang-involved young people. This chapter will also propose suggestions for further research in this field.

8.2 Recap of Research Questions and Key Findings

The research commenced with the aim of understanding the conduct and practices of a group of young and adult men who referred to themselves as the mandem. When I embarked on my research, I knew something existed in Northville that interested me, but I was unable to say much about it. This prompted a particular line of enquiry where the following specific questions were devised:

1) What is road culture, and how has it influenced the lives of the community?

Once I had spent time amongst my participants, gaining insight into the multifaceted nature of their experiences, I soon came to realise that this initial research question was far too vague. This question did not accurately reflect my research objective, which was to explore the experiences of young men on road with a view to determining how they understand and manage their social worlds. As noted in Chapter One, life on road/road culture emerged as an object of study. This was supported by a review of the literature. I therefore revised my research question. The decision was based on the fact that the original line of enquiry failed to outline specifically that the thesis examines the way in which a group of marginalised men manage transitions from childhood to adulthood. The following research questions provided a more defined focus:

1) What are the core beliefs, ideologies and styles of communication embedded in road culture?

2) How might young men's local conduct and practices be regarded as a culture?

3) How does the culture influence the nature and quality of life of those in Northville?

4) What is the meaning and significance of the culture and how is it perceived by those involved and wider society?

5) What are the social and economic implications of being on road?

The research questions helped to establish a framework through which to explore the mandem's lived experiences on road and/or in the community, and enabled me to illustrate the complexity of their lives on road. Over the course of my study, I attempted to answer these questions through observation over an extended period of time. What I discovered is summarised below.

Firstly, life on road/road culture has arisen as a response to collective experiences of marginalisation and exclusion that have produced a particular set of beliefs, values and, behaviours. Underpinning life on road are issues with social, economic and cultural exclusion whereby marginalised men engage in various practices in an attempt to compensate for or overcome disadvantage. Life on road has become a means to cope with structural invisibility, binding together young and adult men with collective problems, while creating powerful social categories and boundaries that trap urban men in difficult lives. In this way, the mandem are conscious of and explicit in naming inequality, where their lives on road become a matter of 'survival' tied to counteracting the adversity they experience in mainstream society. For the mandem, the need to formulate a strong, respected, and, financially autonomous masculine identity emerges strongly, which forms part of their conduct and is key to understanding motives towards criminality and violence.

Secondly, life on road suggests a strong orientation towards subcultural values in that what existed was a form of resistance to the status quo (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). Like traditional subcultures, being on road is a cultural adaptation for dealing with issues of disaffection. Using Merton's idea of innovation, I suggest that the mandem innovated through engagement with the illegal drug economy (which shared many parallels to a capitalist work model) in an attempt to resolve structural problems. This was therefore a cultural manifestation of ways of being in which urban men are united in their search for a legitimate status.

Thirdly, the social boundaries and categories at play on road are incredibly powerful and have severely influenced these men's quality of life. What the findings revealed was a common narrative of being trapped in the social space, the drug economy, but also certain, problematic self-identities. In Northville, this notion of 'trappedness' played a central role in the mandem's transitions from childhood to adulthood and, is central to understanding their way of life. The trapped narrative has been fundamental in establishing negative reputation and other forms of spoilt identity. This has had a profound impact on the mandem's experiences in and outside life on road.

Fourthly, urban males who participate in street violence are often perceived as in some way functioning outside conventional society. While gang talk narrows down black youth's behaviour to violence and criminality, the findings illustrated that life on road shared parallel ideology to capitalist society, with the mandem's behaviour and practices mirroring hegemonic values. This was especially evident in terms of Northville's local drug economy, where young males embrace neo-liberal ideology of self-reliance and work hard to escape a life of economic precariousness. References to 'surviving' and 'respect' were therefore mutually intertwined and linked to a search for a living (i.e. economic survival) and a viable sense of self (psychological survival). Further to this, life on road creates avenues to build respect, earn a steady incomeand, increase self-worth, something that the mandem are denied in mainstream society.

Finally, and perhaps interrelatedly, with the points made above, life on road can be perceived as a set of practices that are allowing the building and maintaining of a viable male identity. This involved formulating and maintaining tough identities, projected through masculine rituals centred on acting bad. By constructing a 'badman' persona and financially viable trapper identities, the mandem demonstrate to those immersed in the culture that they are credible and are seen as in charge of their destinies. In this way, there are important social and economic benefits attached to road culture. Through their practices the mandem are given a platform to deal with socio-economic disadvantage and, in doing so, gain some level of value and worth.

As argued in Chapter Two in the review of the literature, there is a relative absence of UK-based ethnographies that explore contemporary inner city London life without drawing on gang discourse. The literature review characterised two opposing strands of UK gang research: the 'sceptics' (Alexander, 2008; Aldridge et al 2008; Hallsworth and Young, 2008; and Fraser, 2010; 2013) and the 'believers' (see Pitts, 2008; Centre for Social Justice, 2009 and Harding, 2012). I chose to lean towards the 'sceptics' from the outset, particularly the work of Hallsworth and Young (2005; 2011), who escew from one-dimensional gang discourse to recognising the complexity of everyday life in urban communities; most notably, personally difficult biographies of abuse and neglect. In essence, the research questions that underpin this thesis, as with the work of the 'sceptics', sought to move beyond the focus on the gang to focus instead on understanding the broader issues and social processes that have a profound impact on the individual mandem's lives.

Chapter Three outlined the research methodology employed to answer the chosen research question/s. Since the central aim of this ethnography was to employ 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) to capture rich understandings of the mandem's lifeworlds, participant observation in conjunction with semi-structured interviews were the methods adopted for this study. Immersing myself in the lifeworlds of those on road provided a feasible way of understanding the diversity of road culture. Unlike in more quantitative modes of enquiry, I was not interested in counting how many times a phenomenon occurred; rather, the aim was to locate and make sense of the meanings participants themselves attached to being on road. My methodological approach was unique in terms of UK research. While gang researchers tend to explore youth violence from the outside looking in, there is a private and personal dimension underpinning this study, as I had an intimate (insider) connection with my participants. However, although my position offered an insider understanding of a domain that is not very well represented, while I was actively/self-consciously 'in the field' I was forced to confront the partial and elastic nature of my insiderness, which created various tensions. I stretched between two poles (insider and outsider)

simultaneously, with the boundary between the two statuses being a shifting entity. This was something that I did not anticipate at the beginning of the research. My semi-insider positioning remains significant, however, in that it enabled me to get close enough to interpret the mandem's social worlds, placing me in a position where I could offer an analysis and interpretation of their lives on road.

Chapter Four was the first of three analysis chapters which introduced the neighbourhood and the key actors, whose lives form the basis of the thesis narrative. The chapter explored the important relationship between life on road and the hood, focusing particular attention to the symbolic spaces that form the backdrop of the mandem's everyday lives. The mandem placed a great deal of importance on the hood, exhibiting a deep-seated connection to the urban environment and the male peer group who live there. Through a shared childhood of structural limitations, the mandem adopt a distinct 'hood mentality' consistent with attitudes of survival to navigate transitions from childhood to adulthood. Life on road had emerged as a direct response of the mandem's lived experiences of exclusion, and was distinguished by particular forms of cultural capital, road customs interactions and gender performances. More complicatedly, this road habitus was instrumental in shaping attitudes and distinct outlooks on life, working to entrap the mandem within the social field of road while limiting opportunities to integrate into mainstream society.

Chapter Five considered life on road as 'work', examining the different ways the mandem innovate in the illegal drug economy to compensate for disadvantage. In an attempt to make the most of their limited situation, the mandem used the resources available in this context and entered the illegal drug economy, a precarious drug market that trapped them in dangerous work roles. In essence, this chapter counteracted gang talkers' overemphasis on the offending behaviour of gang-involved young people, through the introduction of a new typology of 'trappers'. This draws attention to the illegal and legal work practices on road, which are arguably looser than those of the gang. For some, the drug economy was a main source of income. Others supplemented their legal, poorly paid work with illegal business transactions.

The need to cultivate a financially viable self was omnipresent on road. This was defined mainly by engaging in dangerous and risky pursuits, which essentially trapped the mandem in a volatile marketplace where victimisation, violence and, competition for distinction were normal.

Chapter Six explored the role of religion in the lives of the mandem, focusing particular attention on the rationale for Islamic conversion. The overriding experiences of life on road was one of status anxiety, normative violence and psychological stress. These negative experiences created the foundation for self-reflection, particularly regarding the 'trappedness' that life on road produced. What emerged strongly from the interviews was a recognition of being trapped and unable to get out, and a desperate desire for a new way of being in the world. This led many of the mandem to employ Islam as a spiritual guide through which they could exit criminal identities and bleak and dangerous social worlds. Islamic was largely associated with a frantic longing to transform existing (badman) identities and move out of 'trappedness' towards a fulfilling existence; a spiritual, physical and psychological connection to God. What the findings revealed, however, were significant differences amongst the mandem in terms of their conversion narratives. While Islam offered the religious space for some men on road to move out of the liminal space by transforming their social status from badman to devoted pilgrim, others found it difficult to depart entirely from engrained road custom, and instead blended local cultural norms with rich Islamic symbolism.

In Chapter Seven I adopted a blended theoretical approach to interrogate my findings, drawing in particular on the work of Turner (1967) and the notion of 'liminality'. I argued that life 'on road' represents a rites of passage where the mandem become temporarily or permanently disconnected from mainstream society and trapped in liminal period for a sustained period of time on road. Further to this I argued that 'trappedness' is best understood as the symbolic violence of late capitalism, whereby the mandem are trapped by/in their diminished cultural capital, lived experiences, and classed and racial/ethnic identities, which they thus find difficult to translate into straightforward socially recognised neoliberal success. While on road, the mandem find partial to structural problems, but become trapped by the powerful social

categories and boundaries embedded in road. Therefore, as well as being a distinct lifestyle that represents distinct cultural customs and norms (Gunter, 2008), life on road crucially symbolises a transitional process; a transformation of self. More specifically, the mandem's practices on road could be understood as an adaptive mechanism to rescue stigmatised identities. This was evident in Northville through 1) creating alternative career paths, 2) visual markers of masculinity, and 3) by engaging in aspects of Islamic practice. In this thesis, I highlight three central arguments:

- Far from being only a pathological and criminal subculture, references to being trapped were far more common than narratives centred on crime and delinquency and have indicated a crisis-situation, whereby the mandem became trapped in the geographic space, the local drug economy and, subsequently problematic self- identities. In Northville this 'trappedness' have produced a distinct way of being and seeing the world, in which life on road compounds already disadvantageous situations. Any analysis of street-based violence must take into account both the material and psychological aspects of this complex social condition in order to understand (but not condone) its origin and prevalence.

- Contemporary gang discourse (gang talk) has the tendency to construct urban youth as alien Other. I have argued that although the mandem can be clearly positioned as deviant, if not criminal, a much more complex analysis is required to understand their ambiguous transitions to adulthood. For example, I have reasoned that through socialisation into road culture, the mandem are taught how to survive in unequal structures, how to accumulate a steady income and how to cultivate honour and respect. All of these are components of very 'normal' (non-deviant) hegemonic values and practices in Western 21st century society.

- Unlike Gunter's (2008) study that draws attention to one definitive male road identity, I have argued that in Northville there were

multiple identities and various gradations of 'onroadness' – degrees of adoption of the identity or identities that embody different degrees of immersion – and thus multiple ways of performing these gendered identities. These identities were complex and revolved around a fragile-seeming sense of self. Life on road can therefore be recognised as a way of managing this fragility (vulnerability) of trying to strengthen, or even deny, the material realities of living in relative poverty with limited access to social and economic capital.

8.3 Contribution to Knowledge

Through analysis of the mandem's narrative, I have attempted to illustrate that endeavouring to understand the lifeworlds of urban men through the gang alone is problematic, but especially meaningless if the central characteristics of their real lived experiences are themselves not clearly understood. As argued throughout the thesis, criminality and violence in urban areas is often framed around gang imagery, which largely ignores the everyday mundane and routine struggles of urban life. What I found, however, was much more subtle, and rooted in these men's battle to formulate a viable sense of self. Therefore, my study seeks to contribute to an emerging body of research that challenges problematic gang discourse (see Alexander, 2008, Aldridge et al 2008; Hallsworth and Young, 2008; Hallsworth and Brotherton, 2011; Fraser, 2013; Ilan, 2015) locating urban men's experiences within the context of an on road culture. In recognising the life that exists outside the gang, the thesis moves away from a one-dimensional approach to the study of urban street violence, offering instead a nuanced understanding of the ambiguous transitions from childhood to adulthood in disadvantaged urban areas. While my research was situated within a specific space and time, I propose that the crisis confronting the young and adult men in Northville is a pronounced social condition characteristic of growing up with limited life choices. I would argue that the themes and aspects of the mandem's lived experiences (in one sense, not unique) can be applied to urban milieus outside Northville, although further

work would be necessary to demonstrate this. The thesis draws a number of conclusions and contributes to academic knowledge in the following ways:

Firstly, while much empirical research on gang-riven communities is characterised by defining gang activity and behaviour from an outsider lens, my thesis contributes an ethnographic (semi-insider) perspective (at street level) that generates knowledge concerning the texture and meaning of experience of a culture that is often misunderstood. By adopting an ethnographic approach, I tried to look beyond gang talk and the stigmatisation of gang communities, and instead immerse myself in a group considered to be on the margins of society. I became close enough to understand, and therefore interpret, their social worlds. In this way, I accommodate subjectivity, placing emphasis on understanding road culture from the position and meanings of those involved

Secondly, in contrast to gang talk that depicts gang violence through an essentially racialised framework, this thesis contributes to a nuanced understanding of street-based violence that moves away from categorising 'gang communities' through the lens of race alone. I found that engagement in street violence was not exclusive to young black men, as much of contemporary gang discourse suggests. Rather, the men on road reflected the demographics and cultural diversity of contemporary urban areas. The thesis locates life on road and, by extension, street-based violence in the broader macro-structural conditions and social changes inherent in contemporary British society.

Thirdly, in opposition to Thrasher (1927), who argues that the gang is a transitory phase whereby young people move through this passage at a particular life stage, in Northville transitions to adulthood were not defined by linear pathways. Rather, the mandem's youth transitions were fragile and fragmented, with many becoming stuck in the passage to adulthood and failing to make these transitions successfully. What was evident in terms of the mandem's transitions to adulthood was that not only did class and race converge to constrict particular pathways, but their transitions are marked by a sense of 'trappedness' in which they are subjected to a series of key crises

in their pathways to adulthood. In locating life on road as liminal space, the thesis offers a critical approach to the trap/trapping which detracts from the view of urban men as deviant collectively, towards viewing the concept as a constituted part of urban males' self-narrative. Trap/trapping also offers an understanding of how and why transitions break, and why urban males then become trapped in problematic self-identities.

Fourthly, life on road provided an important economic function for the mandem and entailed much more than recreational violence. Life on road constituted hard work and economic survival, distinguished by a desperate desire to escape poverty and the risk of hunger. A precarious drug economy in Northville offered various menial jobs and some lucrative career opportunities for its participants. Unlike some gang research that points to the organised and hierarchal arrangements of gangs and their offending behaviour (see, Pitts, 2008; Jankowski, 1991 and Klein, 1995), my thesis extends these debates by challenging these key theorisations centred on notions of the 'super-gang' as discussed in Chapter Two. In a similar vein to the 'sceptics' (Aldridge and Medina, 2008; Hallsworth and Young, 2008), who argue that gang activity tends to be disorganised, messy, casual and opportunistic, in Northville the drug economy was fragmented and leaderless, occupied by men whose central objective was to benefit economically from their crimes. In his 'reluctant gangsters', Pitts (2008) drew attention to a coercive relationship between the older and younger groups of men in his study. I found, however, that the majority of mandem were willing participants who worked in collaborative rather than coercive networks. In addition, my thesis introduced a new typology of street collectives that is not apparent in other gang research, providing insight into the different trappers (drug employees) that are manifested in a street context. For example, the typology of trappers is divided into three categories, 1) the glutton trapper, 2) the predatory and 3) the humble trapper, who are distinguished from each other in terms of criminal activity engaged in, levels of violence, types of masculinity performed and differing cultural norms and values. This trapper typology offers a counternarrative to contemporary representations of urban youth, drawing attention to the different ways in which masculinity is performed in

an urban context. Finally, by analysing life on road through the lens of work, our understandings of the disjointed labour markets of neo-liberal capitalism are deepened, recognising how neo-liberalism shapes even these deviant/criminal careers.

Finally, while religion was not part of my original question, it emerged as a key theme throughout data collection and analysis. Islam turned out to be an important mechanism in mandem's transitions from childhood to adulthood, from illegality to legality and from 'lost' to 'found'. Religion, particularly Islam, appeared to play an important role in pulling some urban men out of the liminal space and into a legitimate social identity. This is important given the emerging literature on gangs, Islam and Jihad, and negative connotations attached to Muslim identities. What I found was a positive association with Islam, whereby some urban men found legitimate pathways out of their lives on road. The USA's research traditionin particular has a wealth of literature regarding the conversion experience (See Rambo, 1993 and Flores, 2014). For example, Maruna et al's (2006) USA-based work focused attention on urban men finding 'god behind bars', while others have explored the ways in which Islam provides an important function for developing a personal and social identity (Peek, 2005). Similar work within the UK has however, remained relatively sparse. Overall, American conversion narratives tend to be linked to redemption, or as a source of esteem for young men experiencing trauma. In a similar way, I have argued that Islamic conversion offered some level of spiritual redemption, and the opportunity to construct a new identity for young and adult men who battled with fragile self-identities. However, the findings of this study offer new themes and insight into two contrasting modes of religiosity (a localised version of Islam and the devoted Islamic convert) that have emerged in a UK street context. My participants, particularly as they moved through the transition on road, realised that what we sociologists would call their cultural capital is poorly recognised beyond their particular (and highly classed) environs.They questioned the stigma attached to being 'bad' and the futility of continuing as a badman, and sought to reinvent themselves by constructing their own version of appropriated Islamic practice. Exiting criminal identities and transforming existing lives was central to the

conversion process, and is best understood as a reflective response to rescue aspects of identity. Much of UK contemporary academic and policing discourse centred on Islam and urban youth highlights a relationship between Jihad and gangs, linking such groups to terrorism, and draws attention to Islamic prison gangs (Phillips, 2012). However, this thesis attempts to understand Islamic conversion not as a way of furthering illegality, but sometimes as an exit from it, and sometimes in a curious balance with it.

8.4 Future Research

Overall, this ethnography has shifted the focus away from 'gangs', offering instead an alternative framework for understanding street violence in an urban context. The conclusions drawn in this thesis have implications for further research, particularly in the area of sociology, criminology, gang studies and, youth violence. Outlined, below are areas that would benefit from further exploration.

For instance, although the mandem narrated their lives through the idea of 'trappedness', I identified a group of young men ('boys with Afros') in Northville who were more socially, educationally and economically mobile than those men on road. Their understandings about how they avoided life on road, why they did not enter the illegal drug economy and how they perceived road culture demands further exploration. Further to this, in recent times, Government policy (for example, within the so-called Troubled Families agenda) has linked the family and the gang. While the thesis has not explored the family context of these men in detail, this is an important area that requires more work. Potential areas for research might include research on the young men's family members including, their mothers, or women more generally in this context. Following on from discussions about the diversity of identities that manifested in a street context, an exploration on the way in which white masculinities are represented in street culture would be valuable both in terms of furthering understandings of street-based violence and dispelling the overly racialised 'gang' discourse. Finally, an exploration of the lives of young people who escaped the trap as well as deeper exploration of the

conversion experiences of those involved in road culture would also prove insightful.

9.0 References

Abdurahman, A. (2002) 'South Africa, 1870-1940'. In C. Kurzman (ed.) *Modernist Islam 1840-1940: A Sourcebook,* New York: Oxford University Press.

Agar H.M. (1980) *The professional Stranger.* New York: Academic Press INC.

Aguilar, J. (1981) 'Insider Research: An ethnography of a Debate'. In D. A Messerschmidt (ed.), *Anthropologist at Home in North America: Methods and Issues in the Study of one's on Society.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aikens, S. C. (2001) *Geographies of Young People: The Morally Contested Spaces of Identity.* London: Routledge.

Alexander, C. (2000) *The Asian Gang: Ethnicity, Identity, Masculinity'.* Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Alexander, C. (2008) *(Re)thinking Gangs', Runnymede perspectives.* Runnymede Trust.

Aldridge, J. and Medina, J. (2008) *Youth Gangs in an English City: Social Exclusion, Drugs and Violence.* Full Research Report ESRC, End of Award Report, RES-000-23-0615. Swindon: ESRC.

Aldridge, J. Medina, J. and Ralphs, R. (2008) 'Dangers and problems of doing 'gang' research in the UK'. In F. Gemert, D. Peterson and I. Lien (eds.) *Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity.* London: Willan.

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 2nd edition. London: Verso.

Anderson, E. (1999) *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence and Moral Life of the Inner City*, New York: Norton & Co.

Baca Zinn, M. (1979) 'Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological and Political Observations by an Insider'. *Social Problems*, 27(2): 209-219.

Ball, S. J., Maguire, M. and Macrae, S. (2000) *Choices, Pathways and Transitions Post-16: New Youth, New Economies in the Global City*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Barley, S. (1989) 'Careers, identities, and institutions: The Legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology', in M. Arthur, D. Hall and B. Lawrence (eds.) *Handbook of Career Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barry, M. (2006). *Youth Offending in Transitions: The search for social recognition.* Oxon: Routledge

Baudrillard, J. (1994) *Simulacra and Simulation.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Beazley, H. (2003) 'Voices from the Margins: Street Children's Subcultures in Indonesia'. *Children's Geographies.* 1(2) 181-200.
Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity.* London: Sage.

Becker, H. (1963) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance.* New York: Free Press.

Becker, H.S. (1967) 'Whose Side Are We On'. *Social Problems*, (14) 3: 239-247.

Bell, V. (1993) *Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault and the Law.* New York: Taylor & Francis.

Bennett, T. and Holloway, K. (2004). 'Gang Membership, Drugs and Crime in the UK'. *British Journal of Criminology*, 44(3): 305-323.

Blackman, S.J. (2007) 'Hidden Ethnography: Crossing Emotional Borders in Qualitative Accounts of Young People's Lives'. *Journal of Sociology*, Volume 41(4): 699-716.

Blumer, H. (1969) *Symbolic Interactionism.* Englewood Cliffs. NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1989) 'Social Space and Symbolic Power', *Sociological Theory*, 7(1): 14-25

Bourgois, P. I. (1995, 2003) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio'*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bowling, B. and Phillips, C. (2002) *Racism, Crime and Justice.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998) *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bradford, S. (2007) *Sociology, Youth and Youth Work Practice.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brake, M. (1980) *The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Brake, M. (1985) *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada*. London: Routledge.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3(2): 77-101

Brewer, J. D. (2000) *Ethnography.* Buckingham: Open University Press

Brotherton, D.C. (2015) Youth Street Gangs: *A Critical Appraisal*. London: Routledge.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brymer, A. R. and Farris, B. (1967) 'Ethical and Political Dilemmas in the Investigation of Deviance: A Study of Juvenile Delinquency'. In G Sjoberg (ed.) *Ethics, Politics, and Social Research*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Company Inc. pp. 297-318

Buchanan, P.D. and Bryman, P.A. (ed.) (2009), *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Research Methods*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Burgess, E. (1929), *The Hobo.* Chicago: Chicago University Press

Calvey, D. (2000) 'Getting on the door and staying there: a covert participant observational study of bouncers'. In S. Linkogle and G. Lee-Treweek (ed.) *Dangers in the Field: Risks and Ethics in Social Research*. New York: Taylor & Francis. pp. 43-60

Centre for Social Justice (2009) *Dying to Belong: An In-depth Review of Street Gangs in Britain.* London: The Centre for Social Justice.

Clarke, J. (1975) 'The Skinheads ad the Magical Recovery of Community' in S. Hall and T. Jefferson (ed.) *Resistance through Rituals*; Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

Clarke, J et al (2005) 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class' in K. Gelder (ed.) *The Subcultures Reader.* 2nd edition. London: Taylor & Francis. pp. 94-105.

Clements, J. and Roberts, B (2007) 'Gun Culture UK: The Shocking Truth', Mirror Online. Available at: www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/gun-crime-uk-the-shocking-truth-454434 (accessed on 08th Feb 2013)

Citizens report, Mapping the Location and Victim Profiles of Teenage Murders in London from 2005 to 2013. Available at: http://www.citizenreportuk.org/report/teenage-murder-london.html (accessed 06th February 2013).

Cloward, R. and Ohlin, L. (1960) *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs.* London: Routledge.

Cohen, A. (1955) *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cohen, P. (1972) 'Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Communities'.In S. Hall, D Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis (ed.) *Culture, Media and Language.* London: Hutchinson.

Cohen, S. (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers,* London: MacGibbon &Kee.

Connell, R. (1995). *Masculinities.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Conquerhood, L, D. (1993) 'Homeboys and Hoods: Gang Communication and Cultural Space'. In L.R. Frey (ed.) *Group Communication in Context: Studies of Natural Groups.* Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. pp. 23-55

Corbin, J.M. and Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory.* Thousand Oaks, CA, United States: Sage.

Corrigan, P. (1979) *Schooling the Smash Street Kids.* London: Macmillan.

Costley, C. Elliott, G. and Gibbs, P. (2010) *Doing Work Based Research: Approaches to Enquiry for Insider- Researchers,* Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Cressey, P. (1968/1932). *The Taxi-Dance Hall.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches.* 4th edition. London: Sage.

Critcher, C. (2003) *Moral Panics and the Media', Buckingham*: Open University Press

Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspectives in the Research Process.* London: Sage.

Davies, C. A. (1999) *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others.* New York: Routledge.

Davis, J. (1990). *Youth and the Conditions of Britain: Images of Adolescent Conflict.* London: Athlone Press.

De Chesnay, M. (2015).*Nursing Research using Ethnography: Qualitative Design and Methods.* New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Decker, S. H. and Curry, G. D. (1999) 'Responding to Gangs: Does the Dose Match the Problem?'. In J Sheley (ed.) Criminology: *A Contemporary Handbook.* Belmont CA: Wadsworth, 561-576.

Denzin, N.K. (1971) 'The logic of naturalist inquiry', *Social Forces,* 50: 166-82

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005).*The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research.* 3rd edition. London: Sage.

Deuchar, R. (2009) 'Gangs, Marginalised Youth and Social Capital'. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

Downes, D.M. (1966) *The Delinquent Solution: A Study in Subcultural Theory.* New York: The Free Press.

Duncan, P. and Thomas, S. (2000) *Neighbourhood Regeneration: Resourcing Community Involvement,* Bristol: The Policy Press.

Durkheim, E. (1952) Suicide, A Study in Sociology, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Eisenstadt, S.N. (1956) *From Generation to Generation: Age Groups and Social Structure,* London: Routledge.

Ely, M. et al (1991) *Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles.* London: The Falmer Press.

Eppley, K. (2006). 'Defying Insider-Outsider Categorization: One Researcher's Fluid and Complicated Positioning on the Insider-Outsider Continuum'. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* 7(3), Art. 16.

Fern, E.F. (2001). *Advanced Focus Group Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ferrell, J. (1998) 'Criminological Verstehen: Inside the Immediacy of Crime'. In J. Ferrell and M.S. Hamm (eds.) *Ethnography at the edge: Crime, Deviance and Field Research.* Boston: Northeastern University Press. pp. 20-42.

Fetterman, D.M. (2010) *Ethnography: Step- by-Step.* 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Firmin, C. (2010) *Female Voice in Violence Project: A Study into the Impact of Serious Youth and Gang Violence on Women and Girls*, Race on the Agenda.

Foote- Whyte, W. (1943) *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (1988) 'Technologies of the Self'.In L. Martin, H. Gutman and P. Hutton. (eds.) *Technologies of the Self: A seminar with Michel Foucault.* pp. 16-49. The University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst

France, A. (2007). *Understanding youth in Late Modernity.* Berkshire: Open University Press.

Fraser, A. (2010) *Growing through Gangs: Young People, Identity and Social Change in Glasgow.* PhD thesis, University of Glasgow.

Fraser, A. (2013) 'Street Habitus: Gangs, Territorialism and Social Change in Glasgow'. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16(8), 970-985

Furlong, A. (ed.) (2009) *The Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and agendas.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (1997) *Young People and Social Change: Individualization and Risk in Late Modernity.* Buckingham*:* Open University Press.

Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (2004) *Vulnerable Young Men in Fragile Labour Markets Employment, Unemployment and the Search for Long-term Security.* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Galland, O. (2003) 'Adolescence, Post-Adolescence, Youth: Revisited Interpretations', *Revue Francaise de Sociolgie* Vol 44: 163-188.

Geertz, C. (1973).*The Interpretation of Cultures.* London: Fontana.

Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society': Outline of the Theory of Structuration.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Gidden, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self- Identity: Self and Society in the late Modern Age.* Cambridge: Polity.

Gillis, J.R. (1981) *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relation, 1770-Present,* London: Academic Press INC.

Gilroy, P. (1982). *Police and Thieves, in CCCS Race and Politics Group, The Empire Strikes Back.* London: Hutchinson.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, *Harmondsworth*: Penguin

Goslinga, G. and Frank, G. (2007) *'Forward*: In the Shadows: Anthropological Encounters with Modernity'. In A Mclean and A Leibing (eds.) *The Shadow Side of Field work: Exploring the Blurred Borders between Ethnography and Life.* Malden: Blackwell Publishing. pp. xi- xix

Griffin, C. (1993) *Representation of youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescence in Britain and America.*Cambridge: Polity Press.

Guba, E. (1978) *Towards a Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry in Educational Evaluation.* Los Angeles, CA: Centre for the Study of Evaluation, UCLA Graduate School of Education.

Gunter, A. (2008) 'Growing up Bad: Black Youth, Road Culture and Badness in an East London Neighbourhood'.*Crime, Media, Culture*, 4(3), 349-366

Gunter, A. (2010) *Growing up Bad: Black Youth, Road Culture and Badness in an East London Neighbourhood.* London: Tufnell Press.

Hales, G. and Silverstone, D. (2004) 'Gun Crime in Brent': *A Report Commissioned by the London Borough of Brent Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership*, University of Portsmouth ICJS.

Hall, S. (1904) *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime and Education*. 2 vols. New York: D. Appleton.

Hall, S. and Jefferson, T. (eds.) (1976). *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain.* London: Hutchinson.

Hall, S.Critcher, C, et al (1978) *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*, London: Macmillan.

Hall, S. Winlow, S, and Ancrum, C. (2008) *Criminal Identities and Consumer Culture: Crime, Exclusion and the New Culture of Narcissism,* Cullompton: Willan.

Hallsworth, S. (2011) 'Gangland Britain'. In B. Goldson (ed), *Youth in Crisis?: Gangs, Territoriality and Violence*, London: Routledge.

Hallsworth, S. (2013) *The Gang and Beyond: Interpreting Violent Street Worlds*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hallsworth, S. and Brotherton, D. (2011) *Urban Disorder and Gangs: A Critique and a Warning*, Runnymede Trust.

Hallsworth, S. and Silverstone, D. (2009) 'That's Life Innit: A British Perspective on Guns, Crime and Social Order', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9(3): 359-77.

Hallsworth, S. and Young, T. (2004) 'Getting Real About Gangs', *Criminal Justice Matters*, 55: 12-13

Hallsworth, S. and Young, T. (2005) *Urban Collectives: Gang and other Delinquent Groups.*Metropolitan Police Service and Government Office for London.

Hallsworth, S. and T, Young. (2008) 'Gang Talk and Gang Talkers: A Critique', *Crime, Media, Culture*, 4(2), 175-195.

Hallsworth, S. and Young, T. (2011) 'Young People, Gangs and Street-Based Violence'. In C. Barter and D.Berridge (eds.) *Children Behaving Badly?: Peer Violence Between Children and Young People.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hamm, M. (2009) 'Prison Islam in the Age of Sacred Terror', *British Journal of Criminology*, (49)5: 667-685.

Hammersley, M. (1992).*What's Wrong with Ethnography?: Methodological Explorations.* London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995).*Ethnography: Principles in Practice.* 2nd edition. Abingdon: Routledge

Harding, S. (2012) 'Street Government: The Role of the Violent Street Gang in the London Riots', in D. Briggs, (ed.) *The English Riots of 2011: A Summer of Discontent,* Hook: Waterside Press.

Harding, S. (2014) *The Street Casino: Survival in the Violent Street Gang.* Bristol: Polity Press.

Hatty, S.E. (2000) *Masculinities, Violence and Culture.* Thousand Oaks, CA, United States: Sage.

Hebdige, D. (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Methuen.

Hegedorn, J. M. (1994) 'Homeboys, Dope Fiends, Legits and New Jacks'.*Criminology*, 32(2): 197-219

Hobbs, D. and Pearson, G. (2001) *Middle market drug distribution.* London: Home Office.

Hodkinson, P. (2005) 'Insider Research in the Study of Youth Cultures', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(2): 131-149.

Hoey, B.A. (2008) 'American Dreaming: Refugees from Corporate Work Seek the Good Life'. In E Judd and L Descartes (ed.) *The Changing Landscape of Work*

and Family in the American Middle Class: Reports from the Field. United States: Lexington books.

Ilan, J. (2007) *Still Playing the Game: an Ethnography of Young People, Street Culture and Juvenile Justice in the Inner-city Dublin Community.* PhD thesis. Dublin: Dublin institute of Technology.

Ilan, J. (2015) *Understanding Street Culture: Poverty, Crime, Youth and Cool.* London: Palgrave Macmillan

Inciardi, J. A. (1993). 'Some Considerations on the Methods, Dangers and Ethics of Crack House Research', In J. A. Inciardi, D. Lockwood, and A. E. Pottiger (eds.), *Women and Crack Cocaine.* New York: Macmillan.

Jacobs, B. A. (1998) 'Researching Crack Dealers: Dilemmas and Contradictions', in J. Ferrell and M.S. Hamm (eds.) *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime Deviance and Field Research.* Boston: Northeastern University Press. pp-160-177

Jankowski, M. S. (1991*) Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jefferson (1975) 'Cultural Responses of the Teds: The defence of space and status', in S. Hall and T. Jefferson (ed.) *Resistance through Rituals*, Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

Jones, G. (2009) *Youth*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jones, O. (2011)*Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class.* New York: Verso Books

Joseph, I. and Gunter, A (eds.) (2011) *Gangs Revisited: What's a Gang and What's Race Got to Do With It.* London: Runnymede Trust.

Katz, J. (1988) *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil.* New York: Basic Books.

Keeble, R. (2001). *Ethics for Journalists.* London: Routledge.

Kehily, M.J (2007) 'A Cultural Perspective'. In M.J Kehily (ed.) *Understanding Youth: Perspectives, Identities and Practice,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press. pp.11-44.

Kitzinger, J. (1994) 'The methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants', *Sociology Health and Illness.* 16(1): 103-121

Kitzinger, J. and Barbour, R. (eds.) (1999) Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory and Practice. London: Sage.

Klein, M.W. (1984) 'Offence specialisation and Versatility Amongst Juveniles'.*British Journal of Criminology*, 24 (2): 185-194.

Klein, M. W. (1995) *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Klein, M.W. (2001) *TheEurogang Paradox: Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe,* Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Knight, K. R. (2015) *Addicted. Pregnant. Poor*, United States: Duke University Press.

Kruger, R.A. and M. Casey (2000).*Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lawson, H. (1985) *Reflexivity: The Postmodern Predicament.*London: Hutchinson Education.

Lea, J. and Young, J. (1984) *What's to be done about Law and Order?.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Lee, R. M (1993) *'Doing Research on Sensitive Topics'.* London: Sage.

Lee-Treweek, G. and Linkogle, S. (eds.) (2000) *Danger in the Field: Risk and Ethics in Social Research,* London: Routledge

Levitt, S.D. and Dubner, S. J. (2007) *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. London: Penguin Books

Lifton, R.J. (1961) *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A study of 'brainwashing in China*. New York: Norton.

Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. London: Sage.

MacDonald, R. and Marsh, J. (2002) 'Crossing the Rubicon: Youth Transitions, Poverty, Drugs and Social Exclusion', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 13(1): 27-38

MacDonald, R. and Marsh, J. (2005) *Disconnected Youth?: Growing up in Britain's Poor Neighbourhoods*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

MacQueen, K. M., E. McLellan, K. Kay, and B. Milstein, (1998) 'Codebook development for team-based qualitative analysis'. *Cultural Anthropology Methods Journal* 10 (12): 31–36

Madden, R. (2010) *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Malinowski, B. (1967) *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Malinowski, B (1922/2014). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific.* London: Routledge.

Maruna, S, Wilson, L. and Curran, K. (2006) 'Why God is often found behind bars: Prison Conversion and the Crisis of Self-Narrative', *Research in Human Development*, 3 (2-3): 161-84.

Matza, D. (1964) *Delinquency and Drift.* New York: John Wiley & Sons,

McCarthy, D. (2007) *Partnership, Collaborative Planning and Urban Regeneration.* Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

McCullough, K. and Blake, R. (2010). *Diary of a Hedge Fund Manager: From the Top, to the Bottom, and Back Again.* New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

McKenzie, L. (2015) *Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain.* Bristol: Policy Press.

McLagan, G. (2005) *Guns and Gangs: The Inside Story of the War on our Streets.* London: Allison & Busby Limited.

Mead, G.H. (1934) *Mind, self and society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Merton, R. (1938) 'Social Structure and Anomie', *American Sociological Review*, 3(5): 672-682

Merton, K. (1972) 'Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge', *American Journal of Sociology,* 78(1): 9-47

Messerschmidt, D.A. (ed.) (1981) *Anthropologist at Home in North America: Methods and Issues in the Study of one's on Society.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Messerschmidt, J. (1993). *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Miller, J.M. (2014) *TheEncyclopedia of Theoretical Criminology.* Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Mills, C. W. (1959). *The Sociological Imagination.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Moore, B. (2007) *Original sin and insider research.* Action Research, 5(1): 27-39.

Muijs, D. (2011) *Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS.* 2nd edition. London: Sage.

Mullins, C.W. (2006) *Holding Your Square: Masculinities, Streetlife and violence*, Collumpton: Willan.

Muncie, J. (2009) *Youth and Crime*, 3rd edition, London: Sage.

Murphy, E. and Dingwall, R. (2007).*Informed consent, anticipatory regulation and ethnography practice.* Social Science & Medicine, 65(11): 2223-2234

Murray, C. (1990) *The Emerging British Underclass.* London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Nayak, A. and Kehily, M.J. (2013) *Gender, Youth and Culture: Global Masculinities and Femininities.* 2nd edition. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Newburn, T. (2002) 'Atlantic Crossing: Policy transfer and crime control in the USA and Britain'. *Punishment and Society,* 4(2): 165-194.

Osgerby, B. (1998) *Youth in Britain since 1945.* Malden: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers.

Parker, H. (1974) *View from the Boys: A Sociology of Downtown Adolescents.* London: David & Charles.

Pearson, G. (1983*) Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears,* London: Macmillan.

Pearson, G. (1993) 'Forward'. In D. Hobbs and T. May (eds.) *Interpreting the Field Accounts of Ethnography.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Pearson, G. (2011) 'Perpetual novelty: Youth, modernity and historical amnesia'. In B. Goldson (ed.*) Youth in Crisis?: Gangs, Territoriality and Violence*, Abingdon: Routledge

Peek, L. (2005) 'Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity'. *Sociology of Religion.* 66(3): 215-242

Phillips, C. (2012) 'It ain't nothing like America with the Bloods and the Crips: Gang Narratives inside two English Prisons'. *Punishment and Society.* 14(1): 51-68.

Pini, B. (2005) 'Interviewing Men: Gender and the collection and interpretation of qualitative data', *Journal of Sociology* 41(2): 201-216.

Pini, B. and Pease, B, (eds.) (2013).'Gender Methodologies in the Study of Men and Masculinities'. In B Pini and B Pease (eds.) *Men, Masculinities and Methodologies'*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 1-25.

Pitts, J. (2008) *Reluctant Gangsters*: *The Changing Face of Youth Crime,* Abington: Taylor & Francis.

Price, C. (2009) *Becoming Rasta: Origins of Rastafari Identity in Jamaica.* New York: New York University Press.

Pryce, K. (1986) '*Endless Pressure: A study of West Indian Lifestyles in Bristol*', 2nd edition. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.

Polsky, N. (1967) *Hustlers, Beats, and Others*. Chicago: Aldine.

Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. (1922/1964).*The Andman Islander*. New York: Free Press.

Reddie, R. (2009) *Black Muslims in Britain: Why Are a Growing Number of Young Black People Converting to Islam?*. Oxford: Lion Hudson Plc.

Roberts, K. (1977) 'The social conditions, consequences and limitations of careers guidance', *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 5 (1): 1-9.

Roberts, K. (2005).'Youth unemployment and social exclusion'.In C. Pole, J. Pilcher, and J. Williams (eds.), *Young People in Transition: Becoming Citizens?*.Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Roberts, K. (2009). 'Socio-economic reproduction'. In A. Furlong (ed.) *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New perspectives and agendas*. London: Routledge.pp.14-21

Robins, D. and Cohen, P. (1978) Knuckle Sandwich: Growing up in the Working-Class City. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Rousseau, J.J (1911;1972) *Emile, or On Education*, London: J.M Dent & Sons.

Saldana, J. (2009) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sandberg, S. (2008) 'Street capital: Ethnicity and violence on the streets of Oslo'. *Theoretical Criminology,* 12(2): 153-171.

Sarwar, G. (2008) *Islam Beliefs and Teachings,* 8th edition.London: The Muslim Educational Trust.

Scott, G. (2004) 'It's a sucker's outfit: How urban gangs enable and impede the reintegration of ex-convicts', *Ethnography*, 5(1): 107-140.

Scraton, P. (ed.) (1997) *Childhood in Crisis*, London: Taylor & Francis.

Scully, D. (1994) *Understanding Sexual Violence: A Study of Convicted Rapists*. New York: Routledge.

Sharp, C. Aldridge, J. and Medina, J. (2006).*Delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour: findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey*. Home Office Report.

Shaw, C. and McKay, H. (1942) *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas. Chicago:* University Chicago Press.

Sibley, D. (1995). *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and the Difference in the West.* London: Routledge.

Sikes, P. And Potts, A. (2008) 'What are we talking about and why?',In P Sikes and A Potts (eds.) *Researching Education from the Inside*: *Investigations from Within.*Oxon: Routledge, pp. 3-12.

Silverman, D. (ed.) (1997).*Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice.* London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (2001). *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction.* 2nd edition. London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting Qualitative Data.* 3rd edition. London Sage.

Silverman, D. (2010) *Doing Qualitative Research.* 3rd edition. London: Sage

Skeggs, B. (1997) *Formation of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable.* Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage

Solomos, J. (1988) *Black Youth, Racism and the State: The Politics of Ideology and Policy.* Cambridge: University Press

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant Observation.* New York: Rinehart & Winston.

Springhall, J. (1986) *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960,* Dublin: Gill and Macmillan

Standing, G. (2011) *'The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class.* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Stenhouse, L. (1979) The problem of standards in illuminative research. *Scottish Educational Review*, 11(2): 8-20.

Strauss, A.L. (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Stuart, G.L. and Stuart, R.B (2008) 'Expressive violence'. In C. M Renzetti and J.L Edleson (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Interpersonal* Violence. London: Sage

Sullivan, M. L. (1989) Getting Paid: Youth Crime and Work in the Inner City. New York: Cornell University Press.

Sykes, G.M. and Matza, D. (1957) 'Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency'. *American Sociological Review*, 22(6): 664-670

Squires, P. Silvestri, A. Grimshaw, R. and Solomon, E. (2008) *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence.* Centre for Crime and Justice.

Squires, P. and Stephens, D. E. (2005) *Rougher Justice: Anti-social Behaviour and Young People*. Cullompton: Willan

Sullivan, L. M. (2005) 'Maybe We Shouldn't Study 'Gangs': Does Reification Obscure Youth Violence?', Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 21(2): 170-190.

Sutherland, E.H. (1947) *Principles in Criminology*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company.

Sviensson, K. P (2008) *A Tale of Two Englands- 'Race' and Violent Crime in the Press'.*Runnymede Trust.

Taylor, Y. (2012) *Fitting into Place?: Class and Gender Geographies and Temporalities.* Surrey: Ashgate Publishing.

The 2011 Census: A Profile of Brent (2011). Available at: http://intelligence.brent.gov.uk/BrentDocuments/Brent%202011%20Census%20profile.pdf (accessed on 7th April 2015)

Tilman, R. (ed.) (2015) *A Veblen Treasury: From Leisure Class to War, Peace and Capitalism.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Toy, J. (2008) *Die Another Day: A Practitioners Review with Recommendations for Preventing Gang and Weapon Violence in London in 2008*, Metropolitan Police Service.

Troyna, B. (1998) 'The white of my eyes, nose, ears...': a reflexive account of 'whiteness' in race-related research. In P. Connolly and B. Troyna (eds.) *Researching Racism in Education: Politics, Theory and Practice.* Buckingham: Open University Press. 95-108

Thrasher, F. M. (1927) *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Turner, V. (1967) *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Tyyska, V. (2014) *Youth and Society: Long and Winding Road.* 3rd ed, Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

Valentine, G. (2003). 'Boundary Crossing: Transitions from Childhood to Adulthood', *Children's Geographies,* 1(1): 37-52.

Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage.* (M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee, Trans.) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Original work published 1908.

Venkatesh, S. (2008) *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Venkatesh, S. (2013) *Floating City: Hustlers, Strivers, Drug Dealers, Call Girls and Other Illicit Lives in New York*. New York: Penguin.

Vicars, M. (2008) 'Is it all about me? How Queer!' In P Sikes and A Potts (ed.) *Researching Education from the Inside: Investigations from Within.* Oxon: Routledge.

Wacquant, L. (2003) 'Ethnografeast: A Progress Report on the Practice and Promise of Ethnography'. *Ethnography* 2003 4: 5-14.

West, C. and Zimmerman, D, H. (1987) 'Doing Gender', *Gender and Society*, 1(2): 125-151

Wikstrom, P.O. H, Ceccato, V, Hardie, B, and Treiber, K. (2010). 'Activity fields and the dynamics of crime', *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 26(1): 55-87.

Wilkinson, S. (1998). 'Focus groups in feminist research: Power, interaction, and the co-construction of meaning'. *Women's Studies International Forum,* 21(1): 111-125.

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs.*Westmead: Saxonhouse.

Wood, C. Giles, D. and Percy, C. (2009) *Your Psychology Project Handbook: Becoming a Researcher*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Wyn, J. and White, R. (1997) *Rethinking Youth,* Australia: Allen & Unwin

Yates, J. (2004) 'Criminological Ethnography: Risks, Dilemmas and their Negotiation', in G. Mesko, M. Pagon and B. Dobovsek (eds.) *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice.*Faculty of Criminal Justice, University of Maribor, Slovenia.

Young, J. (1999). *The Exclusive Society: Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity.* London: Sage.

Young, J. (2007). *The Vertigo of Late Modernity.* London: Sage.

Young, J. (2011). *The Criminological Imagination.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Young, T. (2015) 'Youth gangs'.In S. Isaacs, et al (eds.) *Social Problem in the UK: An Introduction. Abingdon: Routledge.*

10.0 Appendices

10.1 List of appendices

Appendix 1: Research Ethics Committee Approval

Appendix 2: Sample consent form

Appendix 3: Sample interview Script (olders)

10.2 Appendix 1: Research Ethics Committee approval

Proposer: **Ebony Reid – PhD Student**
Title: **Road Culture in Context**

Reference: **12/11/PHD/02**

05th March 2012

Letter of Approval

The School Research Ethics Committee has considered the amendments recently submitted by you in response to the Committee's earlier review of the above application

The Chair, acting under delegated authority, is satisfied that the amendments accord with the decision of the Committee and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- *The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee.*

NB:

- **Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the School of Health Sciences and Social Care Research Ethics Committee.**

- **The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee**

- **Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.**

- **The School Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.**

Elizabeth Cassidy
On Behalf of the School Research Ethics Committee
School of Health Sciences and Social Care

10.3 Appendix 2: Sample consent form

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: **'On road' Culture in Context: Masculinities, religion and 'Trapping' in inner city London**

Name of Researcher: **Ebony Reid**

Please initial all boxes

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data etc.) to me.

4. The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of Person taking consent   Date   Signature

10.4 Appendix 3: Sample focus group interview

Date: 08/09/12

Time: 7pm

Location: Outside Clives's house

Meet with: The veterans of Northville- Clive age 56 (Jamaican) and Rudy age 63 (Jamaican)

Ebony: Could you tell me about yourselves?

Clive: I have been here since I was 13. 43 years. I worked as a security officer; I use to be in the army for 6 years. I have always worked. I have always made good money. I was made redundant about two years ago.

Rudy: I was here from the 60's. 49 years. I have been to school over here and then worked too. I have done various jobs, pharmacy assistant, in the hospital. I have left these jobs because of the music. I am a well known Jamaican musician. I went back to college as my father said that I couldn't live on music alone, I had to have something on the side. I went on to study health and safety, I ended up being a health officer. I am retired now.

Ebony. Tell me about your experience living in Northville?

Rudy: These young ones have made the area a dangerous place to live in. All this killing one another, is no good. I would tell them, listening to your mum and dad. You must honour your mother and father. You must obey. It is vanity. This younger generation deal with vanity, they put these things before themselves. You have to put Jah ahead of everything. You have to have confidence in yourself, motivate yourself, don't depend on others to motivate you. If you can't motivate yourself that means that you don't have a sense of direction, you don't know where you are going. So you are going to end up mixing with bad company. If you see that your friend is up to something bad, you turn and walk away, you don't have to follow your friend. I have 9 children; my eldest is 42. I am not saying that all my children are good, but they listen to me. But knock on wood, none of them have been behind bars. It is better to walk by yourself than walk with tom, dick and harry. The time you choose that road you end up like your friend. By then it's too late.

Clive: I have 14 children.

Ebony: Are any of your children on road?

Rudy. No road business. We help people, see how I am helping you. The kids are stabbing each other and shooting each other, you can't get involved,I am talking about the English born. They have lost a sense of direction, they have Caribbean parents, but they have lost themselves. If they were to maintain their culture, we wouldn't have so much black kids in prison.

Clive: One of my sons is serving 16 years in prison. When he was younger he got into trouble, I spoke to him and even hit him, but do you know the first thing he said to me? This is how I know the law took over, he said dad I know the child line number. I could go prison if I hit him, so hand him over to the Government. He held up Abby national.

Rudy: I was brought up by my grandparents, not my mum and dad. When my grandparents died, that is when my parents send for me to dwell with them in this country, so I was more disciplined. Well disciplined. I have respect people, obey my olders. The culture has gone through the window, telling mum and dad f off, I couldn't do that in my days, me dead. I better dig a hole. From Margaret Thatcher ruled out the discipline in the 60's everything went sky high, children think they have the power over you. You can't even rough them up. You have the bend the tree from when it is small, when the tree gets mature, you can't blame the child. It's the parents, they let them do what they want. I am the parents what we say goes. You have to discipline the child.

Clive: I was strict with my son because of my strict upbringing; my father was a police officer in Jamaica. Because my son didn't get what he wanted he decided to go and do his own thing. When he got big he wanted to fight me.

Ebony: What is road culture?

Rudy: Not knowing where you are going. Young men and young women who do not know where they are going. What we built early on in the days for them to prolong it they do not carry it on. They turn to wickedness. What my ancestors have been through during slavery, our age group tried to make things better, we didn't want our children to go through that, so that's why many of us leave the West Indian islands, come over here, so that our children could get a better life. After we slave and go through all of that while we are growing and setting an example for our children to follow, but they do not follow. Foreign, European culture, they throw away their original culture. They are not honest or faithful to their friend, they back bite their friend. You need to culture your friend, pull up your friend.

Clive: Eediat ting that.

Rudy: You don't encourage your friend or big up your friend when they are doing wrong.

Clive: We don't come from a culture like that, not violence like this. We try to make peace. We are the same we are one.

Rudy: Road culture to me is rubbish, it is devil business. This road chat about were bad, its rubbish. Young bwoy dem ah pierce dem ears and pierce their nose, and these young gal ah put stud in dem tongue and in their belly. If you read Issiah and Jeremiah it will tell you these things, our great father denounce.

Ebony: What about the men your age that stand outside the bookie shop all day, would you describe them as road men?

Rudy. They don't set no example. Dem ah what we call in Jamaica bad sheep. Don't get me wrong not everyone is the same, but they don't set no example for the younger ones. Some people take things to deeply than they should, they put things on their head. In my time in the 60's I would leave a job today, I would take my lunch break and go look a job, and leave the next day. A lot of us came to this country and didn't want to stay in this country, so you would get the most jobs you can get, the most money, save and go home, back to the land of birth. But some people get caught up in the system. A lot of them live bad life. Ebony, if you do good, goodness follow you, if you do bad, badness follow you. Jah words.

Clive: What goes around comes around.

Ebony: So, do you think the olders were on a bad path when they were younger?

Rudy: Yes, the sins of the fathers and mothers travel up upon their children. They children will suffer because of what they have done. There are two roads, bad road and the good road. If it is your aim to go through college and university, that is good, but if you choose to be a thief you will always be in and out of prison. What do you expect your children to do, the same as you innit. Every girl child look up to their mother as a superior and every boy child look at their father as a superior. Watch father. All my children are doing something with their lives, if they wasn't I wouldn't want to know. I put them into education after their mother died. Me never go to prison yet, police never have my finger prints. You have to have a clean record to get these top jobs. I show them that I have never lived that kinda life. If one of them ever stepped out of line, don't look for me to help, I am the type of father that would tell the judge to lock him up if he had done something wrong. You know why, I didn't set the table like that.

Parents are not suppose to surrender to children, children are suppose to surrender to parents. Don't make your daughter wrap you around your little finger. Come out of me house since you are a big man or women. They are afraid of the law of the English people. We use to lick our children to discipline them, you can't even talk too loud to them in this country. Everything is vanity; materialistic world, and adopting the westernised way of life.

Clive: The majority of us here are Jamaicans, it is nice to have one tribe to unite. This is the bond between us, you see how peaceful it is. If I am down he will help me. You have to move loving with people. Love is key.

Ebony: Future?

Rudy: My future is my grand children. I ask the father to help me build solid foundation. The youts dem don't know the world, they don't know the danger of what is happening right now.