'Handy Lads': An Ethnographic Research Study of Men and Violence in Northern England

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Thesis Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the University of Sheffield

School of Law, University of Sheffield

October 2013

I dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my Grandma, Barbara Ellis, who passed away on the 26th December 2010.

Acknowledgements

I would never have reached the stage where I can write this acknowledgements section had it not been for the help and support of so many wonderful people. The people I acknowledge here have all contributed in some way, however small, towards helping me complete this incredibly challenging but immensely rewarding piece of work. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for everything they have done for me.

I begin by acknowledging and thanking unreservedly all the men who participated in the research upon which this thesis is based. Despite scaring the life out of me on one or two occasions and giving me a few sleepless nights, they were all incredibly helpful, friendly, and gave up so much of their time to help me despite having little to gain from doing so. Without their help the research simply would not have been possible. It has been an immense privilege to have been able to document their lives and their experiences. I only hope that what I have written here is an accurate description and analysis of them. I also want to thank my various 'contacts' who helped with access, made the necessary introductions, gave such glowing 'references', and helpful advice. For obvious reasons I cannot name you here, but you know who you are, and I am immensely grateful to you all.

I am indebted to my supervisory team, who have supported and guided me expertly throughout the process. As my main supervisor Dr Maggie Wykes has been fantastic. Over the last three or so years Maggie has always been patient, supportive, kind, insightful, knowledgeable, and unwavering in her enthusiasm. Maggie has been an inspirational mentor. I could not have completed this thesis without her, nor could I have wished for a better supervisor. Prof Simon Winlow was second supervisor for the first 18 months of the project. His perceptiveness, knowledge, advice, and encouragement were invaluable and I want to thank him for the continuing support he gave me after leaving the supervisory team. Dr Rowland Atkinson covered the second half of the project and provided a thoroughly seamless transition following Simon's departure. His support, encouragement, insights and advice around the writing and presentation of my work were invaluable; as were his excellent comments and suggestions on the full draft.

Abstract

This thesis empirically explores the relationship between masculinity, identity and violent crime amongst a sample of white working class men. It draws upon in-depth ethnographic research conducted over a 12 month period in de-industrialised communities in Northern England. The author gathered detailed life history material from ten individual men who participated in repeated, in-depth, unstructured interviews. These life history interviews were supplemented with extensive periods of observation with some of the men, as well as other men involved in violence and crime. The thesis utilises contemporary critical criminological and psychosocial perspectives to theorise gender, identity, masculinity, subjectivity and violence under neo-liberal capitalism.

The main arguments in the thesis are that masculine identity and subjectivity are products of pragmatic biographical experience, memory, and their on-going interaction with socio-cultural and economic conditions. The data indicates strongly that the men involved in this research have learned to value, and are committed to using, violence through being socialised in micro climates of acute marginality, insecurity and occasional brutality; where interpersonal violence and threats are encountered regularly from a young age. Such traumatic and humiliating experiences shape the habitus at a deeply profound level, and consequently recourse to violence becomes a habitual almost unconscious response to specific situations that are perceived as threatening, humiliating, or potentially so. Violent behaviour is reinforced through interaction with immediate marginalised masculine cultures that equate self-dignity and respect with an ability to physically defend and take care of oneself. In the broader contexts of de-industrialisation, aggressive neo-liberalism and post-political abandonment, male violence has become a personal resource. It provides a means for the participants to enforce a sense of moral self-righteousness against a perceived dangerous and unforgiving milieu populated by threatening, brutally instrumental 'others' seeking to harm and denigrate valued aspects of their symbolic identities.

Thesis Contents

Chapter One

Introduction

It is not at all contentious to claim that men commit virtually all recorded and un-recorded interpersonal violent crime (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2005; Wykes and Welsh, 2009). This 'is possibly the nearest that Criminology has come to producing an indisputable fact' (Hall, 2002, p.36). Neither is it 'contentious to claim that the majority of these men come from working-class, marginalised or excluded social locations' (Winlow, 2012, p.203). The validity of these two statements is borne out by the overwhelming amount of empirical evidence: men are far more likely than women to commit violence (Wykes and Welsh, 2009) with the evidence indicating strongly that young, economically marginalised men, are the most likely perpetrators (Hall, 2002; Ray, 2011; Zedner, 2002). But, paradoxically, these trends are mirrored when one looks at violent victimisation, as socio-economically marginalised men are more likely to be victims of violence, particularly in public settings (Wykes and Welsh, 2009).

The most recent data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW formerly British Crime Survey) and the police supports these aforementioned trends. The risk of being a victim of violent crime[1] was highest for young men aged 16-24 and the same group were found to be most likely to commit violence (Office for National Statistics, 2013). These patterns of victimisation and offending are consistent with those uncovered in previous measurement periods (see Hall and Innes, 2010; Roe et al, 2009), with the 2008/09 sweep indicating that the risks of violent victimisation are highest for those experiencing a variety of indicators of deprivation: including living in social-rented housing, in communities with high levels of poverty, and not being in employment (Roe et al, 2009).

These patterns of men's violence are not specific to the contemporary period nor only to the UK. Men's use of interpersonal violence is a global issue (Hautzinger, 2003), which transcends cultural contexts and historical epochs (Emsley, 2005a; 2005b; Eisner, 2011; Nivette, 2011; Spierenburg, 1998; 2008;

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[1] The definition of violent crime used in these surveys includes all types of physical assault, from pushing and shoving resulting in no physical harm, to wounding and murder.

Wykes and Welsh, 2009) - although available historical evidence points strongly towards a gradual shift in the socio-economic composition of men using physical forms of violence. Regular physical confrontations and highly ritualised duels once common amongst groups of socially elite men became increasingly less prevalent from the 17th century onwards, as Spierenburg (2008) explains:

> Dueling did not stay fashionable enough to prevent the gradual pacification of the upper and middle classes…Many lower class men, on the other hand…stood ready to attack those who insulted or hindered them (p.66)

However, within criminology, studying gendered 'men as the doers of violence' (Hearn, 1998, p.34) is only a very recent and long overdue development within the discipline. Masculinity, and its relationship to offending, has remained marginalised within criminological thinking, despite its obvious salience within patterns of offending and victimisation. This is not to deny the recent significant advancements that have been made in the study of men, masculinities and crime since the early 1990s, which has generated a substantial body of literature and empirically-based research that will be reviewed in chapter two. However, even within sections of the more recent violence literature, the pressing necessity for a critical engagement with questions of masculinity in the perpetration of violence have often been side-lined and obfuscated at the expense of other variables/issues that were granted greater explanatory credence, such as youth, race, social class, 'gangs', and troublingly, victim/women blaming (Howe, 2008; Wykes and Welsh, 2009). And so, questions of gender within criminology continue to be associated with what women do, rather than with what men do and think (Collier, 1998).

Like gender though, social class is also a marginalised discourse within criminology, although this has not always been the case. Once a fulcrum of criminological and sociological theorising, academic interest in social class has slowly dissipated amidst the growing hegemony of postmodernist theories across the social sciences. The transition in Western societies into a 'postmodern' epoch has effectively marginalised discourses around social class within political and everyday rhetoric more generally (see Charlesworth, 2000; Hall, 2012). Changing patterns of consumption, demographics, and alterations to traditional labour markets, have led some commentators and scholars to suggest that classificatory mechanisms and analytical frameworks based around social class are no longer

useful or relevant. This has been extremely damaging for criminological theory and its ability to adequately grasp the complex subjective motivations that underpin criminality (Hall, 2012); particularly crimes involving violence, given the aforementioned socio-economic backgrounds of most violent offenders.

This thesis explores the intersection of these two marginalised discourses and their relationship to the perpetration of interpersonal violence. But before introducing the thesis and the ethnographic research upon which it is based in more detail, I will briefly outline the contemporary scholarly and socio-economic political contexts that frame this thesis as they have been significant in determining both its focus and theoretical orientation.

Violent Times?

The research for, and the writing of, this thesis took place at a time when overall recorded crime rates were reported to be falling in the UK and across the globe. Predictably politicians spoke proudly of the success of their law and order mandates in bringing down crime, while some criminologists were quick to start considering the reasons behind the 'drop'; particularly as these trends occurred in the midst of one of the worst economic recessions of recent times, when it was anticipated by many that crime rates would actually increase.

Rates of interpersonal violence were reported to have followed this trend. Commenting on recent findings from the UK Peace Index showing declining rates of violent crime, the BBC's Home Affairs Editor Mark Easton suggested the findings might indicate the emergence of a growing peacefulness and potentially a new morality that is increasingly repugnant towards violence (BBC, 2013). This certainly is an interesting set of trends, but one must exercise caution, as overall rates of violence and criminality when taken nationally/internationally mask concentrations of crime within particular localities and spaces – and the majority of violent crime tends to occur in highly specific geographical spaces and communities (see Ray, 2011). The findings acknowledge the places in the UK with the highest concentrations of recorded violence: several highly deprived urban areas experiencing multiple disadvantages. Yet, quite contradictorily, the report then seemingly rejects evidence that inequality is a predictor of violence. Furthermore, disappointingly, there was no further discussion of the conditions

and issues impacting those deprived and marginalised communities that continue to experience frequent violence and criminality. Is not regular exposure to violence an inequality in itself that might lead to further violence? And is this not an issue worthy of consideration for its potential impact upon those who routinely experience violence and intimidation? The report also seemed to quite conveniently circumvent the weight of evidence that indicates much violence takes place within familial and social/communal networks of individuals who often know each other (see Stanko, 1990; Wykes and Welsh, 2009). These relationships and contexts for interpersonal violence constrain attempts to uncover the extent of it, while providing victims with little incentive to come forward and report it. For those individuals who occupy those areas where violence is a regular feature, like the men involved in this study, evidence of a crime drop is distinctly absent. Neither are such individuals likely to report instances of crime or violence. As data presented in the later chapters of this thesis will indicate, violence and the threat of it (however *real* or imagined), has remained an enduring feature of these men's biographies and something that they attempt to face stoically with their own personal resources. The men involved in this study, and those communities where crime and violence remain rife, are the largely forgotten and neglected groups of recent criminological theorising and research (Hall, 2012).

When one takes into account the West's current socio-economic and political context, which constitutes the backdrop to these discussions, the whole notion of a 'crime drop' is even more surprising and perplexing. Quite unbelievably, few criminologists, with the exception of a small contingent of critical scholars (see Burdis and Tombs, 2012; Ellis and Wykes, 2013; Hall, 2012), have had anything to say about the various harmful (criminal?) practices that actually plunged the economy into recession and the various 'harms' that have resulted from this incredibly deep and complex global economic decline: unemployment and austerity to name but a few. Yet still, debate about a miraculous 'crime drop' continued during a period when widespread and multifarious harms[2] and crimes continued to take place globally, and were being

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[2] I use the term 'harms' as despite the clearly harmful character of some of these examples, they were not always labelled or defined as 'criminal' (see Ellis and Wykes, 2013).

uncovered, reported on, and which have emerged from economic and political systems and from the actions of individuals. For instance, the 'expenses' scandal within British Parliament; the transatlantic banking crisis and the uncompromising levels of corporate dishonesty and recklessness that caused this; the 'phone hacking' scandal involving several high-profile tabloid newspapers and journalists; the Jimmy Saville scandal and the various other allegations that have followed concerning possibly decades of systematic and habitual abuse of children, particularly young girls, by high profile public figures and within a number of children's homes and educational institutions; the crisis in Syria; the UK summer riots of 2011; the violent rampages of Derrick Bird in Cumbria and former nightclub doorman Raoul Moat in the North East of England; the brutal and disturbing execution of a British soldier outside of Woolwich Barracks in London in May 2013…and I could go on.

Of course, current crime figures do indicate that 'we may be beating and shooting each other a little less than 10 years ago' (Winlow, 2012, p.204), and the broader long-term trend for interpersonal violence, which is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, is one of steep decline over the last several centuries. However, despite talk of a 'crime drop', and the broader inferences drawn by some scholars from long-term violence trends as representing a 'civilising process' (Elias, 2000), there remain significant groups of men, however small in number, who are willing to use extreme violence against others. It is these men that this research is concerned with. Furthermore, the nature of the harms described above, and that we face contemporarily, remain complex, multifarious and increasingly intertwined with the Neo-Liberal marketplace (Hall, 2012; Hobbs, 2012). These harms often do not even fit neatly into the legalistic frameworks of particular nation states or the definitions/variables and recording instruments that many criminologists use to define and measure crime (Ellis and Wykes, 2013).

Like their legitimate counterparts, criminal markets do not recognise sovereign borders, nor do they remain static in the face of technological innovations that might better conceal them (see Treadwell, 2012). They are comprised of various flexible groups and loose networks of entrepreneurial individuals willing to resort to extreme violence and intimidation to secure and protect their market position and share (Castells, 2000; Hobbs, 1995; Paoli, 2003; Varese, 2001; Wieviorka, 2009). Interpersonal violence itself has become

intertwined with the market as a consumable product through regulated competitive sports. But ethnographic research reveals that this violence is a consumer product that continues to circumvent the thin legislative framework around it in order to fill a voracious market demand for images of usually marginalised vulnerable men engaging in extreme, unregulated visceral aggression (see Brent and Kraska, 2013). Indeed, states' monopolies of violence are being increasingly challenged, contested and undermined from within the 'de-civilised' interstices of global governance that have been strategically severed and isolated from the economic benefits of global capitalism (Castells, 2000). For instance, politically de-stabilised areas in the developing world; ambiguous border regions; and the 'no-go' areas and inner city 'sink' estates of the West's de-industrialised urban wastelands (Spierenburg, 2008).

Given this highly complicated context of contemporary criminality and crime control, as well as the widely acknowledged methodological limitations of measuring crime rates and the inaccuracies of recorded crime data, the reported decline in crime rates should be approached with caution. As this brief introduction will hopefully have indicated, the motivation to break laws and harm others is still very much present in contemporary society (see Matthews, 2013). But such reported trends are likely to give the dominant conservative and liberal wings of criminology yet more justification and reason for continuing to disavow the current aetiological crisis within the discipline. And to also continue to approach the turbulent socio-economic times we are facing with the same established theoretical frameworks that struggle to give sufficient critical consideration to contemporary market societies and their shadow criminal variants as well as the lives, biographies and subjectivities of those that occupy them (Hall, 2012; Hall and Winlow, 2012; Hobbs, 2012; Treadwell et al, 2013).

I now introduce my research and discuss its design in relation to this, briefly overviewed, broader context.

Introducing the Research

At its initial inception, the research was a PhD opportunity attached to the White Rose Network – an alliance between three Yorkshire Universities: Leeds, York and Sheffield. The network contained six academics (two from each institution) all

with interests in crime, violence, governance and globalisation. The network offered funding for three separate PhD studies that addressed various issues contained within the broad thematic umbrella of 'Responding to Global Challenges of Crime and Insecurity'. My two academic supervisors developed the broad epistemological and methodological framework for the project, which would explore, using qualitative interviews, men's use of interpersonal violence. The project's framework was intentionally developed into a loose structure, granting the researcher a high degree of flexibility in terms of the men and the types of violence that could be researched. However, there remained several key issues that the research would need to address:

- The effects of social change and globalisation upon male identity and culture;
- Men's insecurities and why violence might be used as a response to these;
- The processes by which men come to value violence as a resource; and,
- The contextual settings in which men become dangerous.

The broad aims of this research became encapsulated in the following set of research questions:

- How, and in what ways, are social and cultural transformations impacting on male identity? And how are these linked to interpersonal violence committed by men against other men?
- In what ways do contextual settings impact on men's use of interpersonal violence?
- In what contexts do men feel it is appropriate to use interpersonal violence? And why is this?
- How is the use of interpersonal violence and intimidation linked to the construction of men's identities?
- Why do some men view interpersonal violence as useful or worthwhile? How do these men come to value it in this way?

In an attempt to answer these questions I take a broad approach to understanding these men, their masculinities and the violence they commit against others. As I discuss in more detail in the next chapter, the existing literature on masculinities and violence tends to begin with a focus upon a particular type of violence that occurs in a specific contextual setting (e.g. football violence/hooliganism; domestic violence; night time economy violence etc.) and then focuses upon the men, and their masculinities, that perpetrate violence in that setting. In an attempt to deliver an original contribution, my research is not focused on a particular type of male violence that occurs in a specific spatial/environmental context, but is more concerned with exploring the life courses and subjectivities of men who perpetrate violence against other men – whatever the specific context in which they are using it. The emphasis then, is upon men who use violence, why they use it, and how they came to value it.

There are, as one might expect, individual differences within these men's biographies, which undoubtedly are partly reflective of the wider social and economic transformations characteristic of post/late modernity that have fractured what had previously been relatively stable and predictable life course trajectories and transitions for working class men (see Charlesworth, 2000; Winlow, 2001; Winlow and Hall, 2006). Some of the men who participated were in employment and although none were employed in highly paid/elite professions, there was some variability in the type of employment and sectors they worked in. Other participants were unemployed, and some of these men had not been in employment for many years. Some of the men were fathers, they had wives/partners, and others did not. Some had been, and still were, actively involved in acquisitive criminality; some had never been involved in any criminality other than violence. The sample of men I worked with exemplify what some scholars have described and what has been identified in recent literature as the differing ways in which men might embody and express masculinity (see Connell, 2005a). Despite this they all, nevertheless, have had some quite similar personal experiences, particularly with violence, and share a broadly similar socio-historical lineage to such an extent that I argue 'all hail from what was at the time of their birth unhesitatingly called 'the working class'' (Winlow and Hall, 2009, p.285). In addition to this point, and importantly given the focus of the study, like samples of men involved in the small body of empirical work on masculinities

and violence, amongst the men I worked with 'similarities became apparent when' they 'discussed the role of violence in their lives and their feelings about their involvement in it' (Winlow and Hall, 2009, p.286-287).

Given my attempt at taking a 'broader' approach to the issue of men and violence, an equally flexible set of qualitative methods seemed most appropriate to fulfil these aims. Ethnography was my chosen method partly for this reason, but also because I had the personal attributes and access points to take an 'ethnographic' approach to doing research with men involved in violence. I did not set myself particularly stringent inclusion criteria: participants had to have experience of using physical violence against other men during their adult lives, and on more than just one or two isolated occasions. In sum, they had to be men who possessed genuine reputations for violence and were known by others for their potential for violence. I understand this may be viewed as potentially vague inclusion criteria to use, but I expand upon and explain this further below.

I did not restrict myself in terms of age either. As pointed out by Ancrum (2011), criminological research and theory has long focused upon young criminals, to the neglect of those that remain committed to criminality well into adulthood. So I wanted to have a fairly diverse range of ages in my sample, which actually do range from early twenties to late forties. In the beginning I did not restrict myself in terms of ethnic background either – again the emphasis was upon 'men' who were physically violent, rather than specific smaller sub-groups within that research population. However, despite this, all of my participants were white and I believe this was much to do with the ethnic composition of the areas in which I did the research. These were predominantly Northern, white populated areas and 'working class' in social composition. I am a white male and my 'contacts' and sources were also all white. During the ethnography I did encounter and interact with men from non-white backgrounds, but these were friends and acquaintances of some of the men that participated and did not have the violent reputations that I was focusing on.

To return to the issue of identifying and recruiting men with sufficient reputations for violence, I was in a fairly privileged position when I began this research thanks to my biography, which had given me access to a range of trusted 'informal' contacts to support my access to the 'field'. My biography had also given me a certain form of cultural capital and knowledge useful for this

project. I am not violent myself, but I hail from a socio-cultural background that is very similar to the men who participated, and I have experienced some of the things that they have. I am from a working class family and grew up in a de-industrialised urban community in the north of England. Throughout my life I have been in regular contact with a number of men actively involved in acquisitive criminality. I also socialised, and continue to do so, within networks of male peers capable of violence. I witnessed a fair amount of violence while growing up and have found myself in threatening situations. I also occasionally benefitted materially from knowing individuals actively involved in serious criminality: food I ate, clothes I wore, even the computer I used during my undergraduate studies, were all acquired from these individuals through their positioning within localised criminal markets. In short, violence and criminality are not alien to me. And more importantly, I understand the significance that violence can come to have in some men's lives and the cultural values that surround it, which are bound up with notions of shame, humiliation, personal reputation and status.

So from the outset I had the trust and respect of several contacts that could make required introductions and attest to my character. Once in the field, I could also make use of my own cultural knowledge to think critically about what I was told, saw and heard. Entering the field inevitably meant encountering the vague hierarchies of 'hardness' that exist amongst men that occupy particular geographical areas: the hearsay, the rumours, and various 'reputations' that exist in these communities. Because of the significance that violence has in some men's lives, there is genuine potential for individuals to exaggerate or distort their experiences in the name of 'saving face' and maintaining reputation. There is also potentially something to be gained from creating and maintaining a façade of 'hardness', which some men will actively pursue. It was important therefore that I had the ability to engage with these various complexities and be able to recognise potential 'bull shitters' from those with genuine histories of, and potential for, violence who would be able to properly assist my research endeavours. I did this through several methods: my own specific cultural understandings and knowledge of violence from having spent years socialising with men willing to use violence; my prior knowledge of certain participants (I knew who some of them were because of their reputations and I had also

witnessed some of them behave violently before); and through the help and support of my research contacts.

The fieldwork for this thesis took place in several urban areas across the north of England, many of which I was already familiar with prior to beginning the research. Data was gathered from a variety of spaces and places that the participants occupied on a day to day basis, which included: their homes, bars, pubs, nightclubs, on the streets, at professional football matches, at their workplaces, occasionally in their cars, and, with one participant, the visiting room of a prison. All of the names that appear in this thesis are pseudonyms to protect the identities of those who participated or were present during fieldwork, as well as anyone else discussed by the participants. The identity of locations has not been disclosed and, where necessary, I have also withheld certain information to maintain anonymity. The data was gathered through a combination of taped interviews and, where recording was not possible, field notes. I did not take notes during fieldwork; these were written up from memory as soon as possible after vacating the field. I accept the limitations of memory as a tool for recording data and the possibility for inaccuracies. However, in an attempt to minimise this, subsequent checks were made with participants or relevant individuals to verify the data that had been written up from memory.

A brief word on theory and a word of warning…

Given my brief critical discussion above concerning contemporary crime and criminology, this research took a more nuanced approach to understanding masculine identity, subjectivity and its relationship with violence. One that recognises that masculinity is connected to the life course and is far more complex than simply performing a set of particular behavioural traits and qualities that are designated, culturally, as *masculine*. This research was diligent to the complexities of men's inner lives and recognises that subjectivity is formulated through biographical experience, memory, as well as men's relationships with other men, women, the social, culture, and political economy (see Collier, 1998; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007; Hall, 2012). It recognises that these men, although capable of making decisions within particular symbolic socio-structural contexts, are also 'anxious human subject(s) shot through with tense, conflictive emotions

and desires' (Hall, 2012, p. 192), and therefore will often contradict themselves, exaggerate, distort, dissociate, lie, and not always act and behave in ways that are considered 'rational' or that 'make sense', even to themselves. Some participants actually found it incredibly difficult to articulate the reasons behind their, at times, highly destructive behaviour, and I suspect genuinely lacked on occasions a clear understanding of 'why they do it'. This thesis incorporates and utilises some 'new theoretical directions' (see Hall and Winlow, 2012) to interpret the rich and highly complex data that I gathered from the ethnographic fieldwork; particularly those perspectives that integrate sociological and psychological approaches to understanding gender, identity, subjectivity and violence (see Gadd & Jefferson, 2007; Hall, 2012; Jones, 2008; 2012; Ray, 2011; Treadwell and Garland, 2011; Winlow, 2012; Winlow & Hall, 2009). The sheer volume of data and the complexity of it meant that utilising new theoretical approaches capable of dissecting criminal motivations and subjectivities was the only viable means of adequately making sense of these men and their lives.

When referring to the men who participated I try, as much as possible, to avoid using the term 'violent men'. Being in possession of considerable knowledge of their lives and having spent considerable time with them, I do not consider this to be an accurate label for describing them and their lives. This label simplifies the complexities of these men's identities and their relationships with violence, which as the reader will discover in the forthcoming chapters, are complex and far from straightforward. Although violence has been a feature of these men's lives (both as perpetrators and victims) and more so than it has for the majority of men, it is but one facet of these men's identities and not something that they engage in all of the time (see Collins, 2008). These men's occasionally violent and destructive behaviour is complex and as Jones (2008) argues:

> …must be understood as functioning within specific immediate circumstances, but also within their own histories and cultures…they are psychological events that are linked to wider social and cultural issues (p.179)

Crucially, these men possess, and have exercised, the capability to negotiate particular confrontational situations and interactions with other men without

making recourse to *actual* violence; and this will be discussed in much greater depth in the analytical chapters.

Having said that, some of the violence I came to know about that had been perpetrated by these men and that had been inflicted upon them by others was truly disturbing and appalling. I have not sought to 'water down' any of the things that were described to me or that I observed; only enough to ensure full anonymity for those that took part. This thesis comes with a slight health warning, but I make no apologies for that. I took an empathetic and critical approach into this research and made clear to the participants from the outset that my purpose was not to cast judgement, but to learn and understand. Although my observations and arguments in this thesis are at times highly critical of these men and their occasionally violent behaviour, in no way does this represent an attempt to demonise or pathologise them. I want the reader, and so do the men who participated (knowingly), to acknowledge and better understand the occasional harsh brutalities that are perpetrated by, and inflicted upon, minorities of often severely marginalised groups of men who occupy the insecure, de-industrialised communities of advanced capitalism.

I am certainly neither naïve nor overly optimistic about the potential contribution of this thesis. I hope though, that by utilising an under-used research method, with an under-researched/theorised group (see Maguire, 2008), that draws upon new, contemporary theoretical ideas to interpret the data, my thesis will make some valuable contributions to furthering criminological knowledge of men, masculinities and violence in the contemporary UK context.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is comprised of nine individual chapters. The next chapter, chapter two, discusses and critically reviews empirical and theoretical literature on masculinities and violence to provide a context for my own arguments and potential contribution. Chapter three provides a detailed discussion of the research methods utilised to gather data, which were principally in-depth unstructured life history interviews and observations with a small sample of men involved in violence and some were also involved in other crimes. This chapter describes how the research was conducted, the data analysed, as well as some

of the pragmatic and ethical challenges encountered. Chapters four through to seven, present various data gathered from the ethnographic fieldwork and outline the analytical themes that emerged from the analysis. Chapter four acts as a forerunner and signpost to these various analytical themes by documenting in detail the life history of one of the participants, who I refer to as 'Darren'. Darren's life history and experiences of violence, as both a perpetrator and a victim, provide a foundational context for the rest of the thesis. Chapter five explores some of the other participants' childhoods and the significance of violence within this phase of their lives. This chapter engages with the issue of why and how some men come to value violence. In chapter six, I look in more detail at perpetrating violence from the perspectives of the men who participated and draw on interview and fieldwork data to explore the motivations for violence and its relationship to subjectivities that have been cultivated in marginalised, occasionally brutalising circumstances. Some of the men's experiences of being victims of violence are also described and outlined in this chapter, which engages with the issue of men's motivations to use violence against others. Chapter seven addresses the moral justifications for violence given by these men as well as exploring their reflections on their identities as men, and how, for some of them, their experiences inform relationships with others, particularly children. Chapter eight provides an overall discussion of the research findings and situates them within a wider theoretical context of de-industrialisation and socio-economic transformation under the global hegemony of neo-liberal capitalism. The final chapter, chapter nine, provides a brief afterword which includes my personal reflections on the contribution of the research, discusses some methodological issues, and makes several suggestions for future research on the pertinent issue of better understanding men's experiences of, utilisation of and relation to, violence.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Approaches to Men, Masculinities and Violence: A Review of Literature

This chapter critically reviews the existing literature on masculinities and violence. The review sketches out the theoretical developments that were made over the 20th and into the 21st centuries within this literature. These advancements within criminological thinking were part of a much broader transition within the area of gender studies as a whole. This transition was characterised by a shift away from theories anchored in biological approaches to understanding gender towards more sociological, social constructionist and more recently, psychosocial approaches. These successive paradigmatic shifts (Hood-Williams, 2001) within the masculinities and crime literature drew attention to the plurality of gender expression, specifically the socially, culturally, and historically contingent nature of masculinities; and, more recently, the psychological dimensions of male subjectivity at the nexus of these broader social conditions.

The overall purpose of this chapter is to chart this theoretical terrain to identify what is, and what is not, being said with regards to men's use of interpersonal violence. Through doing this, I situate my own research and identify how this can contribute to the existing literature.

Gender 'Blindness' and Biological Perspectives

It was not until very late in the 20th century that masculinity and its relationship with offending began to be considered or subjected to any requisite level of scrutiny. Although criminologists had prior to this period acknowledged that men commit the vast majority of crimes, this acknowledgement was implicit within their work rather than explicit, as was the case within most social science research which tended to use men as an all-inclusive term and failed to acknowledge gender as a variable (Hearn and Morgan, 1990; Beynon, 2002). So in criminology, the discipline had failed to engage with the masculinity of those being studied and had afforded men's evidently greater propensity to offend a degree of normality (Messerschmidt, 1997). Studies of violence did describe and analyse the actions

of men, but this had been done in an indirect way which did not address men as gendered beings. Criminologists had also systematically ignored women's place in crime and criminal justice until the 1970s when feminist criminologists began to engender the discipline, drawing attention to the endemic use of gender stereotypes and assumptions to explain men's and women's involvement in criminality as both offenders and victims (Smart 1976; Heidensohn, 1986).

For Walklate (2004), this legacy of gender blindness can be traced back to criminology's disciplinary inception. With its origins firmly rooted in two associated projects: the Governmental and the Positivist inspired Lombrosian (Garland, 2002), the discipline was founded on a scientific tradition with a specific ontology and epistemology concerned with identifying the causes of crime through rigorous scientific investigation and method. Heavily influenced by theories of evolution, the criminal anthropologists headed up by Cesare Lombroso, claimed that criminality was a product of atavism. Criminals were considered to be under-developed in evolutionary terms, their uncivilised behaviours and dispositions were manifestations of their inferior biological constitution. Criminals were therefore understood to be biologically different from non-criminals and could be identified through the presence of particular physical 'abnormalities'.

The association between offending and biology is still perceived to be a strong one, particularly men's biology. The hegemony of biological positivism created a framework for thinking about men and women that is firmly rooted in biological difference (Walklate, 2004). In contrast to the meekness of femininity, it is often assumed that men are *naturally* violent and aggressive, with uncontrollable voracious sexual drives (Brittan, 1989; Smart, 1976). This is a powerful discourse that is still often evoked every day, within the media, and in some scientific explanations for acts of violence that are committed by men (Hearn, 1998; Whitehead, 2002; Whitworth, 2004). There have been numerous studies that have sought to locate the propensity to commit violence and crime at the level of the male (criminal) body, which is said to have dangerously high levels of testosterone surging through its veins; problematic chromosomal patterns; or to be at the mercy of instinctive psychological drives that have evolved in the human species as a means of gaining and then defending the resources (food, territory and sexual partners) necessary for survival (Edwards, 2006; Hearn, 1998; Jones, 2008). The presence of particular substances in the

body, such as alcohol or drugs, are also often implicated in explanations for violence that are utilised both by scholars, practitioners, and perpetrators themselves who can draw on such discourses to explain violence (Hearn, 1998). The media coverage of former nightclub doorman Raoul Moat's campaign of violence following his release from prison, made reference to his reported use of steroids as a possible reason for his overly aggressive and acutely paranoid behaviour (Ellis et al, 2013).

It is understandable, given men's greater inclination to use violence, that some scholars might assume a biological basis to violence. Yet, strictly biologically approaches are highly deterministic, as they are unable to explain why only some men commit violence, and then not all the time or at every opportunity, and others never do. They avoid human agency and the capacity for decision making from accounts of violent crimes, failing to acknowledge the linkages between embodied male actors and their relationship with the social world. Violence has strong cultural dimensions (Jones, 2008) both in how it is perceived by humans, as well as its prevalence, which are influenced by temporal, spatial and contextual factors (Wieviorka, 2009).

In spite of the discipline's gradual shift during the 20th century from explanations rooted in biological causation and determinism to theoretical approaches concerned with psychological, sub-cultural and social explanations for crime, the legacies of Lombroso and the Positivist tradition of seeking aetiological explanations for offending still linger on. For some time the discipline of criminology continued to cling to the implicit assumption that biological differences between men and women determine behavioural patterns which are natural to each sex, and in some areas this assumption has yet to be fully dispensed with (Walklate, 2004).

Sex Role Theory

Early theoretical approaches of the 20th century, which drew on offenders' immediate social contexts and wider socio-structural conditions to explain their involvement in crime, were aware of the evident greater propensity amongst males to become involved in crime and violence. In light of this, attention was directed towards the differential processes of socialisation for males and females,

and how these might create differing opportunities to become involved in illegal activities. These approaches highlighted the significance of male and female 'sex roles' in creating 'specific sexed patterns of crime' (Messerschmidt, 1993: 15). Sutherland and Cressey (1966) captured nicely the recognition of these gendered patterns of offending during their discussion of the variation in sex ratios of offending populations:

> The variations in the sex ratio in crime are so great that it can be considered that maleness is not significant in the causation of crime in itself but only as it indicates social position, supervision, and other social relations (Sutherland and Cressey, 1966, p.142)

For these early theorists, the 'maleness' of crime and violence was evident and acknowledged. However, a requisite interrogation of this masculine quality that seems to lie at the heart of violent crime was disregarded in favour of an engagement with sex roles. Drawing on Sutherland's theory of 'differential association', in which crime is learned through exposure to criminal values and cultures, Sutherland and Cressey (1966) argued that boys were more likely to experience greater exposure to criminal cultures. Girls on the other hand, who are subjected to increased supervision and encouraged to adopt caring, maternal roles in preparation for inevitable motherhood, had fewer opportunities to become exposed to these cultures. Boys were allowed greater freedom and encouraged to value 'toughness', which meant that involvement in crime and violence had greater symmetry with the male sex role.

In a similar vein, functionalist sociologist Talcott Parsons attributed young males' greater involvement in crime and delinquency to a form of compensatory masculinity, stimulated by their sense of alienation within the feminising space of the family. Young girls identify with the familial context through their recognition of a future role within that space as a primary carer of children. Boys however, recognise that their role is external to the family unit. Seeking escapism from this context they are liable to become involved in delinquent activities to demonstrate toughness and bravado (Messerschmidt, 1993).

Cohen's (1955) study of delinquent youth gangs drew on the previous works of Sutherland and Parsons. Being 'characteristically *masculine*' (author's emphasis) (Cohen, 1955, p.139), the activities of the delinquent gang did not compromise the qualities associated with the male sex role. The gang

represented a solution for those young males experiencing alienation from US society's respectable values embodied specifically in the middle class institution of the education system. For Cohen, the female sex role was reducible to the need to find a suitable male partner for marriage which would secure a future livelihood and respectable status – a role not compatible with the masculinity of the delinquent gang.

As Messerschmidt (1993) rightly noted, these early theoretical approaches displayed a solid awareness of how offending behaviour was heavily gendered and drew attention to the masculine quality of violent crime. Yet, their theoretical approach remained partially anchored in biological differences between men and women and was deterministic in terms of gender identities and potential behavioural outcomes. This inherent biological orientation to sexed categories imposed a rigid dual dichotomy, each with its own associated role expectations which were assumed to be 'natural'. The female role was equated with passivity, nurturance, motherhood and the domestic sphere and the masculine role with aggression, toughness, control, and the public realm. What was missing and could not be explained through recourse to socio-biological approaches alone, was an explanation for the evident differences that existed between men – specifically a further dichotomy between criminal and non-criminal men. If being violent and criminal represented the masculine role *par excellence,* then why do only some men behave violently and become involved in crime? Emulating and investing in such a tough, aggressive, rigid masculine role as described above is not so well-suited to contemporary means of gaining status as a man in Western societies (Archer, 1994). These extremely rigid models of masculinity and femininity, particularly the absence of any account of women's experiences of offending and victimisation, inspired a major shift in criminological thinking that was spearheaded by the growing influence of feminism.

Pro-Feminist and Structural Perspectives: Hegemony, Power and Performance

> …the raw and unfinished business of "becoming a man" sometimes comes at great cost…serving the ideals of masculinity can severely tax the resources of many individuals (Hatty, 2000, p.110)

The development of critical approaches to the study of men, masculinities and crime, is very much indebted to the work of feminist scholars on issues of gender and its relationship with offending. The problem of the evident 'maleness' of crime, particularly violent crime, long ignored by criminologists and obfuscated amongst other variables that were granted greater explanatory credence, was an issue that interested feminist criminologists from the outset (Gelsthorpe, 2002). It was feminist scholars who first drew sustained attention towards the pervasive levels of abuse perpetrated by men within the domestic context; an issue that had long been ignored by criminologists and criminal justice practitioners alike. Shifting the criminological gaze away from a concern with controlling public forms of violence and disorder committed by dangerous individual men (Stanko, 1994), feminist research drew attention towards physical, sexual and psychological forms of violence concealed within the sanctity of the familial home and the threats posed to women by those men closest to them (Kelly, 1987; 1988; Stanko, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1992). This rendered problematic, in a number of ways, the powerful masculinities that lie at the heart of the normalised heterosexual order of the familial and domestic sphere (Collier, 1998; Hatty, 2000; Wykes and Welsh, 2009). The much critiqued works of early radical feminist criminologists, perhaps epitomised by Brownmiller's (1975) approach to rape as an act of ideological power rather than a rare individualised pathological crime, significantly challenged traditional thinking, implicating all men in the oppression of women. Although this model did suggest a rather limited and one-dimensional model of male dominance. Nevertheless, it generated more sustained interest in the area of masculinities (Gelsthorpe, 2002) amongst theorists who desired to more accurately theorise relations of power and dominance based on gender as not bound by biological sex, but acquired and variable over time and place.

Andrew Tolson was one of the first writers to openly acknowledge and discuss masculinity as socially constructed. Tolson (1977) describes the nature of

class based masculinities and how these intersect with social institutions, patriarchy and the means of production. He argued that experiences within the family, school, peer group and the workplace, socialise men (of both working and middle class backgrounds) into particular masculine roles which emphasise their independence, privilege and dominance. Despite his analysis being still partially rooted in the inheritance of specific sex roles, Tolson's work represented a real theoretical advancement in the area of gender studies through his use of feminist theory, acknowledgement of power relations, and awareness of the potential variability of men's experiences by social class.

By the late 1980s, the essentialist and inherently biological connotations present in early sex role theories were coming under sustained attack from the critical interrogation of the concepts of sex and gender, as well as the growing recognition of the potential social, cultural and historical variability of gender-based identities. Within the social scientific literature that has emerged since this period, masculinity has increasingly been referred to as 'masculinities', as the plurality of men's experiences and their manifest behaviours, even within the same cultural context, were recognised as evidently varied, multiple and fluid (Whitehead, 2002). Through intersecting with a multitude of other variables and socio-structuring divisions, such as age; sexuality; ethnic background; social class; geographical location; education; and lifestyle; a varied range of masculinities are produced that are socially, culturally and historically contingent (Beynon, 2002; Morgan, 2005). Such accounts undermined the lingering but still influential assumption that particular manifest male behaviours are inevitable products of male biological constitution rooted in a pre-social, pre-discursive realm (Butler, 1990; Beynon, 2002; Whitehead, 2002).

Being identified as belonging to the sex category of male was no longer theorised as a given based purely on the possession of particular physiological and anatomical features. Contrary to such thinking, in which masculinity was an assumed naturalistic biological quality possessed to varying degrees by all men (Brittan, 1989; 2001), phenomenological and poststructuralist inspired theorists began to draw attention to gendered 'performances' which constitute and confirm gender. Accurate gender categorisation relies on an effective interactional performance in which social actors 'do' their gender in accordance with institutionalised expectations (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Men cannot simply

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'be' masculine; they must 'do' their masculinity and be seen to 'do' it. It is a context bound performance that is subject to circumstances, involving active negotiation and agency (Morgan, 1992). For Judith Butler (1990), there 'is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (p.25). Butler's post-structuralist analysis locates gender identity within powerful medical and legal discourses, which promulgate and reproduce coherent sexed binaries and gendered comportment as 'naturalised'. Outside of these powerful discursive frameworks there exists no biologically determined essence to gender, which 'has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality' (Butler, 1990, p.136).

When applied to men's violence, such a model of gender foregrounds the fleeting dramaturgy of the violent performance, which constitutes an expression of the gender outfit worn by criminal men. For Butler then, violence would be considered nothing more than performance – the materiality is inconsequential. Yet, for the next group of theorists to be discussed, such performances uphold dominant, oppressive gendered ideologies, which have very material and ontological consequences for men and women.

This group of theorists comprise what Edwards (2006) calls the second wave of men's critical studies and were among some of the first to critically examine the culturally and historically contingent nature of masculinities. Adopting a pro-feminist stance, this group of theorists were concerned with deconstructing the relations of power and subordination that exist between men, and between men and women (Hearn and Morgan, 1990). One of the seminal works that has emerged from this group of writers was Connell's (1987; 2005a) conceptual approach to gender relations and masculinities, which theorises gender in relation to social structure and power. This work represented a backlash against biological and sex role theories of gender.

Connell, in the most updated edition of this work (2005a), argues that there is not a unitary masculinity, rather there are numerous masculinities, which must be located in relation to a larger social structure – 'the gender order'. This order is constituted via relations of power, production and sexuality. Borrowing Gramsci's concept of hegemony – the term used to describe the elite's ideological control and domination of the proletariat via culture – Connell argues

that a plethora of masculinities are constituted via their interaction with other social structures (namely class and race). At any given time there is one that occupies an ideologically dominant position. Hegemonic masculinity 'embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (Connell, 2005a, p.77). The form of masculinity designated hegemonic is neither fixed nor static, it represents a historically contingent mode of ideological dominance which can be challenged, contested and consequently transformed into a new hegemony. Although the gender practices and qualities of hegemonic masculinity are liable to change, Connell argued that it is women and, in general, non-white, homosexual, and lower class males that are subordinated.

> In the West, as Kimmel (1994) states, the

> …hegemonic definition of manhood is a man *in* power, a man *with* power, and a man *of* power. We equate manhood with being strong, successful, capable, reliable, in control. The very definitions of manhood we have developed in our culture maintain the power that some men have over other men and that men have over women (author's emphasis) (p.125)

The maintenance of this hegemonic ideology is not achieved exclusively through naked force, but physical coercion is not incompatible with the establishment and exercise of hegemony (Connell, 1987). Thus, violence represents an instrument of power that is available to men, as Hearn (1998) explains:

> Men are the main *doers* of violence of all kinds – to women, children, each other, animals, ourselves... The doing of violence is dominance, is the result of dominance, and creates the conditions for the reproduction of dominance. Violence is a means of *enforcing* power and control, but it is also power and control in itself (author's emphasis) (p.35-36)

Although the proportions of men who enforce hegemonic masculinity through violence may be small, the majority of men benefit and enjoy the privileges of a 'patriarchal dividend' that is then reaped from these practices (Connell, 2005a). All men are therefore complicit, sometimes indirectly and unconsciously, in the maintenance of the hegemonic form of masculinity; orientating themselves strategically to it in different situational contexts (Connell, 2005a). This secures the dominant masculinist ideology that *naturalises* the underlying inequality of gender relations (Brittan, 2001).

Connell's sophisticated theorisation showed how men's dominance and access to material and cultural benefits is secured from the structuring of the gender order. Yet, simultaneously, Connell drew attention to the ways in which men's experiences of power are not uniform, and can, in fact, be experienced as disempowering. As Kimmel (1994) has argued, hegemonic models of manhood place expectations upon men who are encouraged to compete with and out-do one another, which has generated feelings of fear and homophobia within men. Men pay a heavy price through having to suffer the pains of suppressing emotions that threaten or contradict the exercise of power. Patriarchy creates a contradictory experience for men who have exclusive access to restricted privileges and advantages, while experiencing pain at suppressing weakness, vulnerability and their emotions (Kaufman, 1994).

The need then, for men to achieve and appear to be in possession of a particular form of masculinity, has relevance for understanding violent criminality, which can represent a means to exert dominance and power over others. Describing criminology as an 'inept' discipline on account of its gender blindness and failure to adequately explain men's dominance of recorded crime figures, Messerschmidt (1993; 1997) was the first criminologist to produce a theoretical framework that attempted to explain men's criminality. Heavily influenced by feminist criminology and Connell's work, Messerschmidt wove linkages between gender and crime through his theory of structured action. Messerschmidt's conceptual approach to understanding gender is based on the dialectical relationship between social structures and human agency. It takes account of both the constraining influence of social structures and individual men's capacity for agency based on their positioning relative to these. Drawing on West and Zimmerman's (1987) approach to gender as an interactional performance, Messerschmidt argues that men 'do' their gender and accomplish their masculine identity with the resources that are available to them. Men's 'crime may serve as a suitable resource for "doing gender" – for separating them from all that is feminine' (Messerschmidt, 1993, p.84), when other more legitimate avenues for gender expression are restricted or unavailable. Messerschmidt developed this framework in *Crime as Structured Action* (1997) when he integrated race, class and gender into his analysis:

> Although men and women are always constructing gender, race, and class, the significance of each accomplishment is socially situated and, thus, is intermittent. That is, certain occasions present themselves as more effectively intimidating for demonstrating and affirming gender, race, and class...Under such conditions, crime may be invoked as a means for constructing gender, race, and class (p.13)

More recently, Messerschmidt's work has integrated the role of male bodies in the process of 'doing' masculinity, through using the violent body to dominate others within specific structural conditions (Messerschmidt, 1999; 2005).

Pro-feminist work within this structural approach to theorising masculinities made huge strides towards explaining the bases of male dominance and challenging the assumed biological foundations of male aggression. Exposing interpersonal violence as not a pure biological inevitability, but one possible strategy for the reproduction of entrenched dominance and gender inequalities and therefore potentially eradicable through social change and a commitment to transformation by men.

Pro-feminist structural perspectives have not gone un-criticised however. During the late 1990s and early 21st century a wave of critical writings emerged in response. Opposition was vocalised most strongly by British criminologist Tony Jefferson (2002), who spearheaded a paradigmatic shift within the masculinities and crime literature from structures towards psyches (Hood-Williams, 2001); which is discussed in more detail below. The general thrust of Jefferson's critique was that pro-feminist and structural perspectives had generated an over socialised view of men, who simply internalise and orientate themselves in a predictable fashion to the masculinity which is rendered ideologically dominant and desirable. Jefferson made an important point here, as theories of socially constructed masculinities, whether hegemonic or subordinated, had become imbued with the taint of causality despite some evident disagreement and confusion regarding their definitional and conceptual precision (see MacInnes, 1998). As MacInnes (1998) has pointed out, social theorists have long theorised masculinity in isolation from the sexed bodies of men, which raises questions around how accurately the use of masculinity reflects what men, as a group, actually do and think in practice. Similarly, Collier (1998) suggests hegemonic masculinity is associated with a set of predominantly negative behavioural traits which reflect popular ideologies of 'being a man', equating these with men's

criminality. Without doubt, aggression, competitiveness, egotism, and dominance, are qualities one might expect to find in violent, criminal men. But for Collier, the psychological complexities of men's subjectivities cannot be captured within an approach which theorises criminal masculinities as being confined to a range of ideologically popular behavioural traits.

Hall (2002; 2012) argues that those theorists using hegemonic models of masculinity are rather naive in their assertions that men's interpersonal violence acts as a consolidator of male power, which benefits men from all socio-economic groups by re-affirming a 'patriarchal dividend'. Hall argues that the concept lacks sufficient engagement with the changing historical usage of violence, which has gradually been divested of its function as a source of genuine power, and is utilised predominantly by 'powerless' men occupying economically and socially excluded communities.

Men's sense of agency within structural perspectives is therefore imbued with a rather rigid inevitability. Hood-Williams (2001) captures nicely the thrust of these critical points:

> Why do only a minority of men summon crime when their masculinity is threatened? Should we suppose that the majority of non-criminal men have never had the essential nature of their masculinity questioned and so have never needed recourse to crime? Surely not. Are there then no non-criminal things that a man might do if his masculinity is threatened? Surely there are. And, to repeat the crucial question, what is the theoretical mechanism that enables us to discriminate between men who choose crime when their masculinity is threatened and that large majority of men who do not? (p.44)

Without doubt, there exists 'plenty of support for the view that masculinity and gender relations are socially structured and varied' (Treadwell and Garland, 2011, p.624). But whether these theoretical approaches can explain men's violence remains highly questionable.

In spite of these criticisms, this theoretical work made some important and timely contributions to the criminological literature, and resonances of these theoretical approaches can still be detected in several contributions to the literature that have followed since. The important contribution from these theorists, particularly in terms of the impact made on subsequent literature, was the observation that men will often act in destructive and violent ways in contexts that they perceive to be threatening. An important theme which has permeated the

literature since and that will now be explored in more detail with the suggestion made by some scholars that masculinity is experiencing a 'crisis'.

Men and Masculinity in Crisis

Alongside assertions that men are the most privileged and dominant group there has emerged a contradictory theoretical current, which suggests that during the past several decades a series of global transformations have begun to threaten and de-stabilise the traditional historic dominance of men (Jefferson, 2002). This debate has emerged at the nexus of a variety of issues that Edwards (2006) describes as being confined to either 'without' or 'within' men (p.7-8). The former refers to broader socio-structural and economic shifts; the latter, to men's subjective experiences of these changes and their perceptions of themselves as men. The two, Edwards argues, are interconnected.

Generally, some of the following trends have been cited as challenging contemporary masculinities and have formed the evidential basis for the 'crisis': a widespread recognition of growing academic and educational failure amongst boys; growing concerns about the state of men's physical and mental health; the absence of men from some family units and the decline of the traditional nuclear family; greater gender equality, the growing influence of feminism, and growing educational and employment opportunities for women; de-industrialisation and the concomitant decline in opportunities for employment in semi-skilled and unskilled manual labour – traditionally the preserve of working class men; global economic transformations which have altered day-to-day working practices, institutional bureaucracies and proliferated use of information technology within the workplace; and, importantly, growing concerns about persistent male offending, particularly the destructive and violent behaviours exhibited by groups of excluded men occupying economically deprived communities (Beynon, 2002; Bly, 2001; Collier, 1998; Connell, 2005a; 2005b; Edwards, 2006).

While very few scholars would disagree that Western societies have altered in fundamental ways during the past several decades, claims that these changes have catalysed a crisis for all men have been rightly received with a high degree of scepticism (see Beynon, 2002; Collier, 1998; Edwards, 2006; Whitehead, 2002). Historical research reveals that masculinities of previous

historical epochs have endured 'crises' in the face of challenges to their legitimacy (Hatty, 2000). Beynon (2002) suggests that masculinities are inherently disposed towards crisis tendencies during times of change. This does not constitute a refutation of claims being made contemporarily that some men are struggling to cope with material changes to their everyday lives and are experiencing subjective feelings of powerlessness and inadequacy as a result. However, as Whitehead (2002) has rightly noted, we should be wary of attempts that are made to grant credence and legitimacy for the 'crisis'. Positioning oneself as being in a state of crisis may be potentially attractive to some men who may desire to identify themselves as victims to justify certain behaviours, particularly violence against others (see Gadd, 2004). This has added pertinence given claims made by some writers that the evidential basis for the 'crisis' is, in many respects, rather weak (Beynon, 2002; Edwards, 2006). Beynon (2002) is perhaps much closer to an accurate description of what is being referred to as the 'crisis of masculinity'. He argues that the 'crisis' reflects a coalescence of various socio-economic and political changes that are unlikely to impact on men in a straightforward, uniform manner. In short, the impact will be experienced differentially by different groups of men.

Masculinity, Marginality and Violent Crime

Literature that emerged in the late 1990s and post Millennium began to consider in more depth this context of profound socio-economic and political transformation and its impact upon those men who have been disadvantaged most by these changes: those who occupy working class communities and marginalised social locations.

The fracture and 'decline of the culture of the working class has been one of the most powerful, telling developments in British society' (Charlesworth, 2000, p.2). The difficult living and working conditions characteristic of the industrial phase of capitalism's history (see Engels, 1953) engendered highly durable and un-reflexive embodied forms of resilience and hardened emotional dispositions amongst the working class: occupational cultures characterised by distinct forms of masculine chauvinism, toughness, stoicism, physical strength and tradecraft skills. Working milieus containing anti-authority attitudes and sentiments were

common, as were the activities of 'pilfering' and 'fiddling' as manifestations of workers' informal attempts at regaining a semblance of mastery and control over the work process (Tolson, 1977; Willis, 1977). Hall (1997) describes these as 'visceral cultures', actively cultivated as adaptive and pragmatic responses to this historical context:

> ...in response to the immediacy of these conditions, durable cultural forms established themselves, developing internally coherent 'practical logics' founded upon physical 'hardness', mental sclerosis and egocentrism (which opposed all political variants of civilised practice) and producing subjects whose fierce devotion to these practices was held in place by the enforced development of a suite of brutalizing sensibilities (p.465)

These qualities became rigidly embodied in what Hall (1997) terms the durable visceral habitus. Hall drew on Bourdieu's (1984) work, who defined class habitus as 'the internalized form of class condition and of the conditionings it entails' (p.101), representing an unconscious internalised guide for approaching the everyday social world that is inter-generationally reproduced. This equips the individual subject with embodied forms of habitual comportment, practices, speech, and bodily gestural sets that are deployed without recourse to pre-meditated or calculative, rational thought.

The harshness and the physical toils of day-to-day working life under industrial capitalism were uncompromising. The vexatious proximity of poverty and destitution made accepting the enforced dangerous working conditions and concomitant labour relations of this era an unavoidable economic necessity (Charlesworth, 2000; Engels, 1953). It was not, and still is not, uncommon for working class men to revel in their capacity for physical and mental fortitude in the face of arduous external conditions and backbreaking manual work (Hall, 1997). Yet by the middle of the 20th century this socio-economic context had slowly fostered a nascent politico-symbolic structure based around collectivised social conflict with the owners of the means of production (Hall, 2012; Wieviorka, 2009). This 'provided generations of men and women with a suite of dispositions that enabled them to cope with the practical and cultural pressures they faced' (Hall et al, 2008, p.21). It was during the immediate post-war period that some advances in levels of equality were made, while rates of crime and disorder remained relatively (in comparison with the contemporary period) low (Reiner 2012). Rates of lethal and serious interpersonal violence were equally low. They

reached 'some of the lowest points in history, and the claim that this was indeed the golden age of the pseudo-pacification process can be made with some confidence' (Hall, 2007, p.92), as working communities were sufficiently stable and integrated to exert informal forms of social control upon their members (Lea, 1997).

The gains that were made by a working class that had successfully organised itself into a politically conscious population, were swiftly and uncompromisingly obliterated during turbulent economic change and the election of Neo-Conservative administrations in the US and the UK at the end of the 1970s, headed up by Ronald Regan and Margaret Thatcher respectively. Traditional forms of working class employment began to rapidly disappear, much of which through de-industrialisation and the opening up of this sector to foreign competition and investment was re-located to areas of the developing world with cheaper sources of labour (Harvey, 2005; Lash and Urry, 1987; Lea, 1997; 2002). The resultant decline in demand for semi and un-skilled manual labour was replaced by employment opportunities that place a high premium on formal education and qualifications; requiring employees to display dynamism, flexibility, and a set of skills designed to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing and highly competitive economic environment (Harvey, 1989). The abundance of job opportunities that now exist within growing consumer and service industries are very often, in contrast to their industrial predecessors, expendable, low-paid, menial, with a determinate contract length, de-unionised, and vulnerable to the whims of a mutative post-industrial economy which may suddenly render them obsolete in the name of 'efficiency' or 'cost-effectiveness' (Taylor, 1999; Winlow and Hall, 2006).

During this tumultuous period of British history recorded crime rates began to rise rapidly, reaching unprecedented levels in the 1980s and 90s (Hall, 2007; 2012; Reiner, 2012). It was during this period that a dramatic increase in rates of lethal interpersonal violence occurred, which was 'concentrated almost exclusively in men of working age living in the poorest parts of the country' (Dorling, 2004, p.186). These increases occurred in spite of an overall longer-term decline in rates of interpersonal violence across Europe since the Middle Ages that some scholars argued was a product of a 'civilisation process' (Elias 2000; Fletcher, 1997) and an attendant transformation in masculine cultures,

which began to embrace passivity (Spierenburg, 2008). The last few decades have also experienced almost cyclical outbreaks of large-scale urban rioting in the UK, most recently in the summer of 2011, involving predominantly large groups of young men. Being in stable paid employment is a central prop of masculinity and male culture in Western societies (Morgan, 2005). Men 'are brought up to value work, as an end in itself, and to fix their personal identities around particular occupations' (Tolson, 1977, p.13). These disturbances, particularly those in the early 1980s and 90s occurred in rapidly de-industrialising communities experiencing high levels of unemployment and deprivation. Many of these, and similar working class communities, have remained in states of permanent recession since, and are dogged by long-term, intergenerational unemployment (Hall et al, 2008; Willott and Griffin, 1996).

The once economically functional visceral cultures that emerged to service the economic imperatives of the heavy industrial phase of capitalism were, then, quite suddenly and abruptly divested of their economic utility in the wake of de-industrialisation (Hall, 1997; Hall and Winlow, 2004). Despite being discarded as a set of archaic dispositions that are (largely) no longer functional in an economic sense to the advanced capitalist project, the durability of the visceral habitus has left it tragically un-reflexive and unable to comprehend and recognise its economic obsolescence (Hall, 1997). Yet, the durable habitus and its valorised qualities, continue to be reproduced amongst generations of working class men; for some of whom, a potential for violence lies at the core of their self-identities (Ayres and Treadwell, 2012; Winlow and Hall, 2006; 2009). Of course the majority of men from lower class backgrounds are not violent. Yet, there tends to exist within working class male culture a general appreciation and recognition that violence does exist and that it happens. Tolson (1977) argued that working class masculinity largely revolves around the local neighbourhood, embracing territoriality and a firm commitment to a tough, aggressive style. Violence is, and has always been, part of working class life (see Hobbs, 1988) and continues to offer men from such backgrounds a potential means of earning the respect of male peers (Armstrong, 1998; Winlow, 2001). This is particularly the case when taking part in fights that are construed as 'honourable' and which affirm an idealised masculine identity (Whitehead, 2005). Historical analyses of England found some working class families endorsing and actively encouraging their

children to behave aggressively, revelling in their children's potential for violence, particularly in the presence of a local audience (Emsley, 2005b). Davies (1998) discusses violence as a pervasive feature of both domestic and public life in the working class communities of late 19th century Salford and Manchester. It was likely in these neighbourhoods that young males would witness violence in the home and on the street regularly. The father-son relationship was often punctuated with regular bouts of corporal punishment and the gradual inheritance of appropriate codes of masculine behaviour which had at their core aggression and toughness (Davies, 1998).

Men socialised in this socio-historical climate become acutely aware of their close proximity to other men who are willing to use violence and the cultural benefits and respect often afforded to these individuals (Winlow, 2012). Experiencing violence is a distinct possibility particularly for young working class men – a possibility that requires regular negotiation (Willis, 1990). Within socio-cultural climates that are characterised by proximal threats, a demonstrable willingness to defend oneself is elevated in significance and often considered to be an unavoidable necessity (Anderson, 1999; Winlow, 2012; Winlow and Hall, 2009). Working class men are often bombarded by those close to them with exhortations to 'not take any shit' and 'stand up for yourself'; sentiments which are largely defensive in nature and designed to encourage self-preservation and the maintenance of self-dignity (Winlow and Hall, 2009; Winlow, 2012). The desire to adequately prepare the young boy to defend himself and to 'be a man' may become abusive and be justified as necessary 'to toughen the boy up' (Winlow, 2012, p.206). Some qualitative research with men who have committed violent crimes has found evidence of physical and emotional abuse within their biographies, in most cases at the hands of family members and carers (Athens, 1992; Hobbs, 1994; 1995; Jones, 2012; Messerschmidt, 1999; 2005; Stein, 2007; Winlow, 2012).

There is strong evidence to revoke suggestions that the sudden and dramatic increases in crime, and violent crime in particular, were solely due to changes in policy and police recording practices (Hall, 2012). Rather, as Hall (2007) has argued, the evidence points, potentially, towards the 'possible return of interpersonal violence as a routine aspect of everyday life' (p.77), particularly within the most economically marginalised communities of the West. And it is the

unequal re-distribution of capital on a global scale that has coincided with these explosions in rates of violent crime within highly specific urban spaces and communities (Ray, 2011).

Analysing the urban riots of 1991 in Newcastle, Cardiff and Oxford, Campbell (1993) situated the disturbances within a wider context of growing unemployment and a New Right governmental agenda indifferent to the plight of an increasingly excluded sub-section of the industrial working class. Crippled by deprivation, chronic unemployment and a lack of state support, these communities had reached crisis point. For Campbell, these violent disturbances were a culmination of the actions of both powerful (the uncaring, indifferent politicians and aggressive police officers) and powerless men (the violent and aggressive young men who took to the streets wielding bats, stones and petrol bombs). The riots, then, were not solely the problem of socially excluded 'protest' masculinities (Connell, 2005a) mourning the loss of employment opportunities in traditional industries, but were actually symptomatic of a problem with masculinity as a whole:

> ...the lads were surrounded by a macho propaganda more potent in its penetration of young men's hearts and minds than at any other time in history – they were soaked in globally transmitted images and ideologies of butch and brutal solutions to life's difficulties... The lads' problem was not that they were starved of male role models, it was that they were saturated with them (Campbell, 1993, p.323)

Indeed, such public violence, destruction and nihilism, has been theorised by other scholars in relation to a sense of 'loss' felt by groups of men who are finding themselves increasingly excluded from traditional forms of employment, institutions and the resources that affirm working class masculinity. Instead, some of these men seek alternative meaning frames and sources of status in football 'firms', leisure, consumption of clothing, alcohol, drugs and involvement in occasional violence (see Armstrong, 1998; Ayres and Treadwell, 2012; Bairner, 1999; Canaan, 1996; Collison, 1996; Slaughter, 2003; Treadwell, 2010). Given the long-standing historical relationship between working class masculinities and the qualities that connote 'hardness' as discussed above, several scholars have noted how some marginalised men's personal reputations remain contingent 'in part upon the maintenance of a credible threat of violence' (Daly and Wilson, 1988, p.128). Such men are often willing to resort to occasionally extreme

violence; sometimes with minimal provocation (Anderson, 1999; Polk, 1994). Focusing upon the foreground and emotive aspects of violence, Katz (1988) noted the importance of humiliation and its close relationship to rage. Such traumatic emotions, that are likely to motivate violence, arise when the individual's masculinity, reputation and sense of 'honour' are threatened or challenged (Polk, 1994; Spierenburg, 2008). Very often these are considered 'trivial' matters by outsiders, but for some groups of men they represent a challenge or threat to the value systems that prop up their sense of self-worth and identity, requiring an aggressive confrontational response in order to prevent their loss (Archer, 1994). Gregory (2012) analysed cases of homicide-suicide where men first kill an intimate partner, their children, and then themselves. She suggests that when faced with the imminent loss of proprietary over intimates these men's sense of masculinity is threatened, so much so that they feel this can only be resolved through lethal violence towards others and then upon themselves. Ray et al (2004) in their study of hate crime noted the presence of unacknowledged shame in the accounts of offenders, which was transformed into rage against South Asians. Importantly, Ray et al noted that this shame rage cycle was rooted in the broader socio-economic context of the offenders' lives, which was characterised by multiple disadvantages.

Other scholars have found that extreme violence is increasingly being used for more instrumental, economic purposes. In the absence of traditional routes into stable employment that existed under industrial capitalism, brute strength, physicality and violent potential represent forms of cultural capital that when fused with entrepreneurial acumen creates masculinities suited to a highly competitive globalised market place (Winlow, 2001). As Hobbs (1995) explains:

> The residue of traditional masculine working-class culture, the potential for violence and instrumental physicality that remains from industrial domestic and employment cultures, once it is divested of the potential for communal action via collective responsibility, is ideally suited for engagement with serious crime (p.108)

Within a rapidly mutating social order, where the market for legitimate manual occupations is shrinking, the criminal milieu and those legitimate markets that place a hefty premium on physicality, represent contexts where the visceral

habitus and violent potential still retain their commercial utility (Hall, 1997; Hobbs, 1994; 1995; Hobbs et al, 2003; Treadwell, 2010; Winlow, 2001).

International scholarship has also contributed to these debates around marginalised masculinities in a changing and turbulent economic environment. Mindful of ethnicity and the impact of migration on gender relations, Bourgois (1996; 2003) explored the adaptive responses of second and third generation Puerto Rican immigrant males to acute poverty and structural disadvantage. In the absence of the traditional indigenous familial and gender structures of native Puerto Rico, in which men were domestically and economically privileged, the young males in Bourgois' study found themselves increasingly marginalised in a rapidly re-structuring global economy. Perceiving them to be emasculating, these men rejected employment opportunities in the US economy's low-level service sector. Instead, they turned to localised drug markets, interpersonal and sexual violence in a desperate search for masculine affirmation. Similar conclusions were reached by DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2005), who theorised violence against women in intimate relationships within Messerschmidt's (1993; 1997) masculinity as structured action framework (see above). The cumulative effect of far-reaching economic and demographic alterations has, within many familial households, inverted traditional patriarchal relations between men and women. Violence against women within a domestic context equips men with a means to re-assert these relations (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2005).

In line with these broadening conceptual approaches to masculinities and violence, Australian criminologists Carrington and colleagues (2008; 2010) explore the varying impact of socio-spatial dynamics and geographic locations on masculinities. Responding to high rates of violence in rural locations of Australia, they explore the ways in which the rural and the masculine coalesce to produce culturally valorised rural masculinities juxtaposed against the supposed effeminacy of urban men. Rural masculinities, like the masculinities of industrial visceral cultures (Hall, 1997), are aligned with rugged manual work, brute physical strength and bodily resilience. This is a form of masculine identity deemed authentic and genuine, one which has been mobilised by new men's movements as the essence of a lost masculinity that must be reclaimed. Yet social, economic and cultural changes are threatening traditional working practices and gender relations in rural locations, to the extent that rural

masculinities are becoming increasingly redundant. Rural men who do not have access to a greater variety of 'dialogic expressions of masculinity' (Carrington and Scott, 2008, p.655), are likely to resort to exaggerated physicality and violence as a response to this growing fragility (Carrington and Scott, 2008).

As an extension to this conceptual approach, Carrington et al (2010) discuss the recent growth in mining and resource extraction industries in remote locations of Australia. The multi-national companies that control these industries employ and rely heavily on a large non-resident population of men from lower/working class backgrounds who are skilled in manual trades and live, temporarily, in these resource rich communities. These are men whose sense of identity has been cultivated within 'a culture that valorises hard physical labour, big machines and conspicuous consumption and normalises excessive alcohol consumption and displays of aggression' (Carrington et al, 2010, p.404). Frequent violence and disorder involving the men working and residing within these communities are manifestations of the subterranean convergences of frontier masculinities that characterise these rural communities, and the aggressive corporate masculinities of the multi-national companies that mobilise and organise them for effective resource extraction (Carrington et al, 2010).

In contrast to pro-feminist, structural perspectives on men's violence explored earlier, this section has focused upon literature that addresses more directly the impact of a changing socio-economic environment upon men and masculinities and how these transformations might be linked to violent criminality. This literature is characterised by a clearer acknowledgement of the *"highly specific sub-groups of the category 'men'"* (author's emphasis) (Hood-Williams, 2001, p.43) that use violence against others: socio-economically marginalised men. These various studies have taken a more nuanced approach to the expression of masculinity through being more attentive to issues of subjectivity and emotion. Some of which has explored subjective feelings of worthlessness, shame, anger, and how the embodiment of particular corporeal and mental qualities collectively referred to as 'hardness' are connected to wider socio-historical conditions within marginalised communities. These developments are certainly promising, particularly these early discussions around the role of emotions in relation to masculinity and violence. Yet, a more fully developed subjective reading of violent men informed by psychological theory is absent from

these contributions to the literature. The remainder of the review will focus upon more recent perspectives that have explored men's 'inner worlds'. The focus here has been upon the subjective and psychological dimensions of masculinity, and how men actually interact, psychically, with broader socio-structural forces and what relationship this might have with violence.

The Turn to 'Psyches': Psychosocial Perspectives

As discussed above, the critical backlash against hegemonic masculinity and socio-structural approaches to men's offending, which were heavily influenced by this concept, paved the way for a paradigmatic shift from structures to psyches (Hood-Williams, 2001). Suggestions that men accept and seek to emulate, without question or difficulty, particular hegemonic masculine identities to experience a sense of power and choose violence to 'be a man' and 'do' masculinity, were subjected to extensive criticism. Jefferson (1994) instead highlighted the complex ways in which individual men orientate themselves psychically towards dominant discourses of masculinity; sometimes in a spectacularly unsuccessful fashion. Jefferson began to assemble his theoretical foundations through a highly detailed psychoanalytic case study of the former world heavy weight boxing champion Mike Tyson (Jefferson, 1996; 1998), through which Jefferson unpicked the contradictory tensions in Tyson's subjectivity. A reportedly withdrawn, passive child from a difficult family background in a poverty stricken community of Brooklyn, New York, Tyson was a prime target for local bullies. This childhood image of acute vulnerability and victimisation serves as a drastic contrast to Tyson's awesome physical prowess and uncompromising brutality demonstrated during some of his professional boxing bouts. But as Jefferson argues, this transformation in Tyson's biography was not straightforward. The history of a 'painful psychic legacy of emotional neglect and the resulting pattern of anxiety' (Jefferson, 1998, p.94) have punctuated Tyson's adult life, at times breaking through the seams of his sub-conscious recesses, inducing feelings of powerlessness and a consequent return to his former withdrawn state of passivity (Jefferson, 1996).

Through this case study of an extremely violent individual man, Jefferson offered a highly detailed and nuanced account of the complexities involved in the

construction of male identity and how recourse to physical violence may be implicated in this process. His discussion of Tyson's changing subjectivity is informed by a theoretical framework which is premised upon the individual's attempts to ward off and defend against overwhelming anxieties. Together with Wendy Hollway (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) this theoretical approach to understanding subjectivity was developed further through the positing of the individual as a 'defended subject', who is constantly attempting to manage and defend against anxiety inducing emotions and memories that are deemed threatening to the self. Much of the theorising here around the defended subject relies heavily on Kleinian inspired approaches to psychoanalysis, which focus on the infant's early and then subsequent experiences of persecutory anxiety and how these are defended against through the use of splitting and projection (Jefferson, 2002). Difficult and painful biographical experiences can leave individuals heavily reliant on this form of primitive defence to alleviate feelings of anxiety, and it is this which formulates the theoretical bedrock of much of Jefferson and colleagues' writings on crime and violence.

This broad theoretical framework was utilised by Gadd (2000) in his study of men who regularly abused their female partners. Critical of those approaches to men's violence based solely on the relationship with social structure and discourse, Gadd exposed the ambivalences and anxieties ridden in one man's account of the violence he had inflicted upon his female partner. Rather than acting as a context for the performance and affirmation of a masculine identity based upon power, control and dominance, physically abusing his partner acted as a means to defend against persecutory anxieties and vulnerabilities stemming from a difficult childhood. This induced an array of ambivalent emotions regarding his behaviour, which complicate and render problematic the straightforward assumption that violence, particularly against women, equates a masculine affirming experience.

Jefferson and colleagues' early works were heavily psychoanalytical and have been subjected to numerous criticisms on that basis. Howe (2008) is critical of psychoanalytically inspired theoretical approaches to understanding men's use of interpersonal violence; particularly Jefferson's work for writing in, what she describes as, a sympathetic manner about the motives and behaviours of men who commit acts of violence. Approaches rooted in psychoanalysis fail to

sufficiently engage on a critical level with problematic forms of masculine sexuality, culture, and a powerful discourse which 'is not simply... verbal communication, but also, fundamentally, a set of practices, attitudes and belief systems that render men's violences as 'normal' and, thus, inevitable' (Whitehead, 2002, p.38). It is, therefore, largely devoid of the potential to be mobilised into a political project, as 'it remains unclear how theorising subjectivity at the level of the individual can ever be an effective strategy in facilitating social change in a broader sense' (Collier, 2004, p.296).

In the context of some critical readings of these early works Jefferson, along with Gadd, developed *Psychosocial Criminology* (2007), which is critical of those criminological approaches that had, according to Gadd and Jefferson, poorly theorised the human subject. Utilising the case study method with individual offenders, the psychosocial approach takes account of the social world and the discursive realm encountered by the subject and their psychic inner world of 'unconscious as well as conscious processes' (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007, p.4). The defended subject is positioned as a purveyor of complex, contradictory and often inconsistent narratives on their lived experiences. Rather than theorising masculinity as rooted solely in structural conditions or discourse, their more psychoanalytic readings of gender suggest men will seek to occupy particular subject positions that avoid feelings of insecurity and powerlessness that stem from particularly traumatic biographical events:

> ...displays of excessive force, whether through robbery, murder, sexual or domestic violence, often conceal the protagonist's unacknowledged/unacknowledgeable sense of weakness...The idea of masculinity seen only as a manifestation of power but not also a defence against feeling powerless was one shortcoming we sought to counter (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007, p.185)

Gadd and Jefferson's psychosocial approach, rightly, focuses upon the under theorised realm of men's subjectivities, which had for long periods been marginalised at the expense of a theoretical engagement with socio-structural conditions. This move towards a greater recognition of the complex interaction between individual biography, psychology and the social world in the constitution of male subjectivity is a positive one. As discussed above, early literature had tended to portray men as rather static, ready-made fighting machines, willing and capable of 'doing' violence when masculinity was threatened. Gadd and Jefferson

make a compelling case for a more nuanced approach to the study of masculinities and interpersonal violence, one which is capable of capturing the subtleties and nuances of this relationship.

Some criticisms still remain along similar lines to those already discussed above. Wykes and Welsh (2009) suggest that psychosocial criminology still represents a rather reductive return to the psychoanalysis of individuals through case studies. They argue this is to the detriment of what is a much needed critical engagement with problematic aspects of culture around masculinity and violence. Indeed, an analysis of interpersonal violence that is rooted too deeply within the individual biographies and psyches of men runs the risk of pathologising those individuals (Treadwell and Garland, 2011). I would argue that it is imperative, if we are to understand why men commit acts of violence, to not discount significant moments within men's biographical histories and their potential for analytical value; so individual psychology must enter our analysis of men's violence to some extent. This is a point that has been made by several other scholars (see Hall, 2012; Jones, 2008). However, in a similar vein to the critiques that have been outlined above, I too would argue that Jefferson and colleagues do fall short of a significant engagement with aspects of the 'social', privileging instead a greater focus upon individual psychology and experience. Crucially, Gadd and Jefferson's (2007) *Psychosocial Criminology* does not clearly acknowledge the group of men who were discussed in the previous section and are most likely to commit interpersonal violence and be its victims, particularly in public settings: socially and economically excluded men. Gadd and Jefferson's analyses do not subject the changing historical, material and social conditions of this group of men's existence to requisite critical scrutiny. In the more recently published *Losing the Race* (Gadd and Dixon, 2011), the psychosocial approach to crime is utilised to engage more thoroughly with the far-reaching consequences of social and economic transformation in some of the most acutely deprived communities of England. Yet, this work continues to grant theoretical primacy to psychoanalytical approaches that are focused on understanding the individual subject. Being firmly anchored within these approaches severely limits the potential for theoretical speculation beyond individuals to the more troubling and problematic aspects of the social world. By contrast, some branches of critical criminology have recently attempted to 'account for the economic, socio-

political and hegemonic-cultural macro-contexts in which relations are forged' (Hall, 2012, p.194) while simultaneously keeping their analytical eye on 'the micro-world of drive, anxiety and narcissism' (Hall, 2012, p.194). These will now be discussed in the final section of the review.

Critical Psychosocial Approaches

Building on the previous theoretical foundations of their earlier works, which have been described earlier in this chapter (See Hall, 1997, 2002; Hall and Winlow, 2004; Winlow, 2001), Winlow and Hall draw on critical psychoanalytic and continental philosophical approaches to subjectivity. They conceptualise violent/criminal masculinities as products of a fusion between individual psychology/subjectivity and historic socio-economic transformations in the fabric of capitalism's political economy.

Winlow and Hall's (2006) qualitative study of young people and interpersonal violence within the night-time economy addressed, in some detail, the unprecedented transformations that took place during the second half of the 20th century and the psychosocial consequences of this for young people growing up within an increasingly atomised and competitive culture. The hedonistic milieu of the night-time economy is a consumer-based environment designed specifically for the narcissistic display of one's conspicuous and competent ability to consume, which can inspire fear within individuals and an atmosphere of intense competition. Young working class males socialised in a durable habitus that clings to largely redundant notions of idealised, tough masculinity, make recourse to inter-personal violence in this milieu to temporarily avert incessant feelings of humiliation, insecurity and anxiety. This restores a temporary semblance of balance and triumph over their individual victim(s), who represents one of the threatening atomised 'others' that audaciously attempts a spectacular affront of ostentatious individualism (Winlow and Hall, 2006).

These evidently emotive aspects of men's interpersonal violence have been explored in further works through examining humiliation and shame within violent men's biographies (Winlow, 2012; Winlow and Hall, 2009); emotions that have been alluded to already in this chapter, but which Winlow and Hall connect to the political economy of advanced consumer capitalism. Winlow and Hall claim

that within contemporary postmodern culture, the needs and desires of the individual subject have taken precedent and have become increasingly elevated in significance. The anxious, insecure subject, who has been released from the fetters of collectivised identities that are capable of insulating against insecurity and feelings of personal isolation (Hall, 2012; Winlow and Hall, 2012), experiences a strong compulsion towards instant gratification and *jouissance* (Zizek, 2006), which is now achieved predominantly through various forms of consumption (Hall et al, 2008). In contemporary market culture individuals become embroiled in a process of constant re-appraisal of their individual identities. They ruminate on missed opportunities and individual mistakes, all the while tormented by a re-orientated superego injunction that mocks them for their personal failings. The durable habitus works in tandem with this re-orientated subconscious ethical agency, forcing the persistently violent male's psyche to recall violent encounters in idealised terms. In reality, this subverts and represses the actuality of the violent incident – the actual reality of which may be too painful to remember completely. The experience of being physically dominated, and of failing to act in socially and culturally expected ways, is likely to be powerfully humiliating for men who have emerged from marginal social locations that continue to cling obsessively to an image of powerful, invulnerable masculinity. It is the memory of being humiliated which taunts the violent subject and these memories and traumatic emotions are then harnessed and utilised when perpetrating violence against others (Winlow, 2012; Winlow and Hall, 2009).

Jones (2012), also taking a more critical psychosocial approach to masculinities and violence, suggests such traumatic emotions that threaten individuals with primitive feelings of isolation and abandonment have become all the more acute and genuine in late modernity. There exists now an increased potential for social isolation within individualistic and competitive cultures awash with potential shame (Jones, 2012).

Yet the very ephemeral quality of physical violence as a means of aversion from deeply ingrained psychological traumas, only serves to lock these men further into a spiral of *'materially and politically pointless'* (author's emphasis) (Hall, 2002, p.43) altercations that bring no discernible enduring rewards. For Treadwell and Garland (2011), the use of physical violence must be understood as 'a psychological process of individual identity making' (p.632) that takes place

within particular structural constraints. Albeit an unsuccessful process, in that it does not harbour the potential to create any lasting solutions to structural marginality and exclusion.

Discussion

Since the first sustained examinations of masculinity and its relationship with crime and violence in the early 1990s, the literature has grown quite considerably and undergone several significant paradigmatic shifts. There is overwhelming evidence, despite the very positive and important contribution made by this early literature, to suggest that purely structural or social constructionist accounts of masculinity cannot sufficiently theorise the complexities of men's subjectivities and how these are related to the use of interpersonal violence. In this respect, the subsequent shift within the literature towards better understanding men's psyches and how these interact with gender structures has evidently been a positive one. However, this shift certainly did, initially at least, swing the theoretical pendulum too far towards the individual, to the neglect of a requisite integration of socio-structural conditions into the analysis. More recent contributions to the literature that attempt to fuse psychological and sociological theoretical approaches into an understanding of masculine subjectivities and violence provide a more useful and promising theoretical framework for exploring the relationship between the two. In particular those perspectives that emanate from the critical tradition and that integrate ideology, culture, history and economy into their analyses of violent men (Hall, 2012; Jones, 2012; Treadwell and Garland, 2011; Winlow, 2012; Winlow and Hall, 2006; 2009).

In terms of the focus of the existing masculinities and violence literature that has been reviewed here, the emphasis is upon a particular context and therefore a particular type of violence which takes place within that context (football violence/hooliganism; domestic violence; violence within drug and other criminal markets etc.). Researchers have focused upon the men that occupy and commit violence within those contexts to explore their masculinities. What constitutes the existing literature then, are a collection of theoretical and empirical studies of different types of violence that are committed by men, which have produced important ideas about the relationship between men, their masculinities

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and violence. However, the nature of the current literature mirrors, as Winlow (2012) has argued, the tendency within criminological and sociological studies 'to treat subjective violence as a tangent to some other discussion' (p.199) without necessarily focusing upon the violence itself and the subjectivities of those perpetrating it. A point echoed by Ray (2011), who has also commented upon the fragmentary nature of violence within sociology and related disciplines that have consequently lost 'sight of the intimate connection between violence and the human condition' (p.2). Given this current situation within the violence literature, both theorists argue for more integrated approaches to researching and theorising violence that grant it a more centralised position within criminology and associated social science disciplines.

This research then, intends to begin addressing this current gap/lack within the literature by taking *men* who use interpersonal violence against other men as the primary focus; rather than a specific contextual setting in which such violence occurs. Men/masculinity is the main 'variable' within this research, which is concerned with exploring the life courses and subjectivities of men who perpetrate violence, whatever the specific context in which they are using it. Its aims, as discussed at length in chapter one, are to better understand why some men value violence, what motivates them to use it, and what service and benefits violence might provide for these men, if any (see Hall, 2002). In this sense, the research explores men's relationships with violence within the context of their own biographies. And in contrast to the small number of other ethnographic studies of criminality, mine is an ethnographic study of men's violence rather than men's criminality more broadly. This will now be the focus of the next chapter, where I will outline and discuss in depth the methodology used in this thesis.

Chapter Three

Methodology

As was discussed briefly during the introductory chapter, my research utilises an 'ethnographic' approach which draws principally upon in-depth, unstructured life history interviews and observations. Like any study utilising an ethnographic approach the process of gathering data was often 'a messy business' (Pearson, 1993, p.vii). So I strive in this chapter to describe this process as transparently as possible to ensure that it has not been 'cleansed of the 'private' (author's emphasis) goings-on between researcher and researched' (Pearson, 1993, p.vii).

Existing qualitative research on men's violence tends to fall into one of two distinct, albeit not mutually exclusive, methods-based camps: ethnographies conducted in the broad tradition of the Chicago School of Sociology, and, interview-based studies. The former use a combination of 'ethnographic' research methods (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) - predominantly observations and in-depth interviews, with the objective being to achieve a degree of immersion in the cultures and everyday life worlds of those participating. This often entails the formation of pseudo and actual friendships with participants to facilitate access and data collection. Most existing ethnographic studies, as mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, retain a dual focus on both interpersonal violence and crime. The latter, interview-based studies, do not entail the same level of immersion in the everyday that is achieved through ethnography. In some of these studies, particularly those that adopt a pro-feminist position, the emphasis is on taking a sufficiently critical stance with participants during interviews, with a wider political objective of the dissolution of gender inequality. Hence, these particular studies tend to focus on men who commit interpersonal violence against intimate female partners and emphasise a critically challenging approach to data gathering.

My own research, in methods terms, is aligned with the ethnographic tradition and it is to this body of scholarship that my work contributes. Although, I did consult some of the pro-feminist research literature and incorporated methodological techniques from this literature into my life history interviews - particularly challenge questioning (see Cavanagh and Lewis, 1996 and page 58

below for further discussion) to encourage the men I worked with to reflect on their lives and their violence.

I begin this chapter by describing and defining ethnography as a research method, with a specific focus on its application during studies of violence and crime and what implications this has for my research. This discussion is followed by a description of my own research covering the methods used, gathering data, issues of access, developing trust, and gaining rapport with participants. The ethical issues raised by the research are also considered, and I provide a narrative description of how I organised and then analysed the data.

Introducing Ethnography

Ethnography's origins as a research method lie in Anthropological Studies. Ethnography was the standard method used by Western Anthropologists to study and describe cultures located outside of the West (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Anthropologists would live amongst the groups and societies they studied for a sustained period of time, becoming immersed in the everyday practices of the community through observations and interacting with members. For Bryman (2008), ethnography, or ethnographic research, is defined fundamentally by this *immersion* in the *everyday* lives of a particular social group over an extended period of *time*.

Definitions of ethnography remain varied and often contested. Contestation occurs around two main areas of methodological concern. Firstly, the method(s) used and what research methods should be used in order to define the research as an 'ethnographic' study. Secondly, there is debate in relation to what the researcher should actually do during the research, particularly what their level of participation should be and what role(s) they might adopt. Bryman (2008) distinguishes ethnography from participant observation, as the former entails more than simply watching what a group does and interacting with the members. Eventually the ethnographer will need to ask specific, more focused questions of those they are researching to gain the information they desire, which will often be done using more formalised interview encounters. Similarly, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that during the course of doing ethnography a range of different qualitative methods may be utilised depending on purpose,

circumstances and requirements. These include: observation, at times participant and non-participant; interviews, both semi-structured and unstructured; the gathering of life histories; short informal conversations; and, where appropriate, collecting and analysing documents used by, or that are about, the group/community under study. The debate around whether in-depth interviews, when used in isolation, can actually count as ethnography has been taken up by several scholars.

Sherman Heyl (2001) describes 'Ethnographic Interviewing', which is defined by a process of re-interviewing that occurs over a sustained period of time and takes place within the context of on-going relationships of mutual trust between the researcher and participants. Her discussion therefore draws directly upon issues of *time* and *immersion* that were identified by Bryman (2008) as core features of ethnographic research, as re-interviewing implies more than one-off meetings with participants. *Immersion* is relevant and pertinent here, as re-interviewing opens up the potential for the researcher to build up relationships over time with interviewees that may lead to the gathering of information regarding the on-going issues a participant experiences daily.

Hockey (2002) takes up the issue of the *everyday* also identified by Bryman (2008) during her discussion of whether interviews can be considered ethnography. Hockey's discussion focuses upon the relevance of the traditional 'ideal-type' of ethnography characteristic of Anthropological studies, in which the researcher actually 'packed their bags and moved in' (p.211). She asks whether this is actually sustainable for qualitative researchers studying in contemporary Britain, where interaction and social life has taken on an increasingly 'disembodied' quality. Hockey alludes to a methodological hierarchy in which ethnographies incorporating participant observational methods continue to occupy a privileged position. While qualitative interviews are often regarded as fairly brief encounters in which the interviewee is extracted from their everyday context(s). Accounts of lived experiences and events are then re-told rather than observed directly and experienced by the researcher for themselves. Hockey argues however that interviews are not 'mere snapshots abstracted from the present' (p.214). Rather, they are grounded in the flows of interaction that characterise contemporary Britain, where technology and social transformation

has enabled relationships and communities to continue to exist beyond the confines of 'the present' and specific geographical spaces.

While there remains much discussion regarding ethnography's definition, the qualitative 'turn' produced a number of critiques of the methodological foundations upon which traditional ethnography was founded; particularly concerning objectivity and the knowledge claims made by ethnographers about the communities they studied. In writing about their experiences and immersion within a culture, the ethnographer inevitably makes decisions about how that culture is actually portrayed and represented – the fieldwork does not represent culture, it is the written product which does this (Van Maanen, 1988). In a similar vein, Hammersley (1992) discusses the tension between providing an authoritative account of the community or social group under study and the need to recognise the multiple accounts of that world from the participants' perspectives. For Hammersley, this undermines the naturalistic assumption that an ethnography can 'tell it like it is'. He argues that in response ethnographers must accept this tension and make explicit their values and decisions and justify these where necessary. This turn towards greater self-reflexivity and recognition of the ethnographer's role while in the field and subsequently during the crafting of the text is important, but needs to be appropriate and should not take precedent over understanding the section of the social world that is actually under study (Coffey, 1999).

What this brief discussion indicates is the current and on-going ambiguities that surround 'ethnographic research', particularly in terms of the methods researchers use. In this sense it is perhaps more useful to focus upon those features identified by Bryman (2008) - *time*, the *everyday*, and perhaps most importantly, *immersion* - all of which were present in my own research. Before I describe my own 'ethnographic' study in more detail, I will first describe the use of ethnography by other criminologists to study crime; with a particular emphasis on studies that have looked at violence. This discussion will serve as a wider methodological framework in which to situate and contextualise my own research.

Using Ethnography to Study Violence and Crime

Since its inception, understanding the causes of crime has remained a central concern for criminology (Garland, 2002). Though this still remains a central issue, some critical theorists have argued that in recent decades criminology has slipped into a state of aetiological crisis and theoretical inertia (Hall, 2012). Symptomatic of this is the increasingly less time that is being spent actually doing qualitative research with individuals and groups who offend (Maguire, 2008). The situation is even starker in the case of ethnographic field research with 'active' criminals, not confined to prisons and other criminal justice institutions (Maguire, 2008).

In spite of the current research context there are, and have been since the early 1900s, a small, but very committed group of Western scholars from both sides of the Atlantic who continue to champion ethnography as a means to engage with offenders and their everyday lives. This relatively small contingent owes much to the endeavours of the intrepid members of the famous Chicago School of Sociology during the early decades of the 20th century. It was the prominent Chicago School member Robert Park who actively encouraged his students to get amongst the poor, disenfranchised, and criminal communities within the city armed with 'a 'hands on' or a 'getting one's hands dirty method' (Deegan, 2001, p.22) as opposed 'to merely quantitative methods or 'armchair philosophy' involving only library research' (p.22). He and Ernest Burgess together supervised some of the seminal ethnographic texts of that era, which described the social world using observations, interviews, life histories and face-to-face interactions (Roberts, 2002; Deegan, 2001). Although time has rendered much of this work methodologically unsophisticated by contemporary standards (Deegan, 2001; Hobbs, 2001), members of the Chicago School were instrumental in establishing a niche methodological approach within the discipline that enabled and encouraged researchers to work in those spaces and contexts where active criminals live and ply their trades.

Although, the marginal position that ethnographic research on criminality occupies currently is understandable to an extent, as Wright et al (1992) have observed:

> … most criminologists have shied away from studying criminals, so to speak, in the wild. Although their reluctance to do so undoubtedly is

attributable to a variety of factors… probably the most important of these is a belief that this type of research is impractical. In particular, how is one to locate active criminals and obtain their cooperation? (p.149)

Locating active criminals for the purposes of involving them in research is difficult. By virtue of their regular involvement in illicit activities, criminals avoid drawing attention to themselves. They are a clandestine population and potentially have much to lose by divulging information to individuals who are located outside of the criminal community (Jacobs, 2000). Successfully identifying active criminals willing to cooperate in research is by no means the end of the matter though.

Conducting research 'in the field' requires criminologists to spend often lengthy periods of time doing their research in spaces and places where offenders live, work and socialise. Becoming (if not familiar already) conversant with the general comportment, behaviours and etiquette expected in these settings is necessary (Lee, 1995). These spaces can be chaotic and sometimes intimidating. Research of this kind can be tiresome, frustrating, and the threat of 'danger, it must be remembered, is "inherent" in fieldwork with active offenders' (Jacobs, 1998, p.162). To minimise danger and gather sufficiently reliable and valid data, requires a certain level of rapport and trust to develop between the researcher and the participants. This process requires time and a concerted effort on the part of the researcher, as well as the support of 'sponsors' or 'gatekeepers' who are trusted members of the community under study and who can attest to the researcher's credentials and character (Hobbs, 2001; Jacobs, 2000; Winlow, 2001).

Patrick's (1973) ethnographic account of his brief membership of a violent Glaswegian youth gang contains many of these methodological issues. Patrick was able to successfully gain access after accepting an invitation from gang leader 'Tim' – a student attending the reformatory school where Patrick worked as a teacher – to spend time with the gang. Although Patrick had formed a trusting relationship with his gatekeeper, who did not disclose his real identity, Patrick was forced to assume the role of covert participant observer to ensure complete access. Covert research requires willingness on the part of the researcher to engage not just in deception, but to take part in the group's activities. By his own admission, Patrick was unwilling to completely immerse himself in the gang's activities, particularly violence. Despite the support and

frequent intervention of 'Tim', Patrick's refusal to fully engage eventually aroused the suspicion and indignation of other gang members. Although representing a ground-breaking covert ethnography of violence, Patrick's study is riddled with ethical issues, some of which seriously compromised his duties as a teacher and his personal safety. Patrick was left with little alternative but to sever ties with the gang in the face of these escalating threats to his safety.

Ethnographers like Hobbs (1988; 1995) and Armstrong (1993; 1998), used their prior knowledge and existing personal relationships with members of the groups they wished to study in order to secure access to their respective research 'fields'. Hobbs (1988), who was already familiar with the cultural mores of the informal economy, utilised his personal contacts to access both Metropolitan police detectives as well as individuals involved in semi-licit trading networks to conduct his ethnographic study of entrepreneurial culture in London's East End. Hobbs' subsequent work on professional criminality (1995), although not discussed at length in the published text, appears to have followed a similar process of methodological design and access.

Having been a supporter of Sheffield United FC since childhood and known supporters involved in football violence, Armstrong (1993; 1998) was able to establish a regular presence amongst the club's hooligan group, the 'Blades' over a period of several years. In contrast to Patrick (1973) discussed above, Armstrong occupied the role of an overt ethnographer, in that he was open with members of 'the Blades' from the beginning about his role as a researcher. However, this did not alleviate him from some ethical and pragmatic difficulties. Some accused him of being a police informer and were suspicious of his motives for studying them. Neither did his refusal to become involved in the group's violent clashes with rival supporters prevent him from becoming a victim of violence, having to defend himself physically, or from being subject to police arrest and harassment (see Armstrong, 1993).

Ethnography of this kind immediately raises the question of appropriate ethical conduct and practice. Getting close to individuals who are involved in illegal activities increases the probability that the researcher may come into the possession of 'guilty knowledge' (Polsky, 1967), or find themselves engaging in, or becoming party to, such activities themselves, as both Hobbs and Armstrong did during their respective studies (see also Treadwell, 2010; Winlow, 2001). If

not planned and conducted diligently, the research can become vulnerable to accusations from the wider academic community of being ethically vacuous. Even with sufficient diligence and pre-planning this is not always the end of the matter, as the researcher is likely to encounter unanticipated ethical dilemmas at some point. This is an often unavoidable and inevitable component of ethnographic research, which requires researchers to be prepared to practice 'situated ethics' (Calvey, 2008) – a process of managing ethical issues as they arise, which often requires ethnographers of violence and criminality to risk receiving 'a bad academic review' (Levi, 1994, p.345) in exchange for not getting their 'face smashed in' (Levi, 1994, p.345).

Research that relies heavily on the ethnographer occupying a covert role in order to gain and maintain access cannot avoid the practice of 'doing' ethics on the spot. Winlow's (2001) research on masculinities, crime and violence in the North East of England required him to gain employment as a nightclub bouncer. Like his colleagues whom he was studying, he had no alternative but to use violence and intimidation effectively during his ethnographic fieldwork; not just to protect himself, but to ensure he displayed the necessary competencies and skills that are required by the occupation. This enabled Winlow to gain the trust and acceptance of this violent and insular sub-cultural group (see Hobbs et al, 2003; Winlow et al, 2001; Winlow, 2001). However, as is discussed by Winlow (2001), he had perhaps become too well accepted by some of those he was studying. He found himself becoming increasingly drawn into the illegal protection rackets that some of his colleagues were involved in and took the decision to intervene when some of them began severely beating an individual. Fortunately, his colleagues stopped the assault and Winlow maintained his cover. David Calvey's (2000) account of his brief stint on the doors of some of Manchester's pubs and clubs reiterates the importance of occupational competences, the vexatious possibility of physical danger, and the deceit that must often be practised by those studying violence covertly.

The pressures of the field can force ethnographers of crime into making difficult choices about how to act in a manner that is considered sufficiently 'ethical' by both those they are studying and the wider academic community whom they represent. Despite the necessity for situated ethics when studying those milieus that have little regard for research ethics, the practice remains,

understandably, unpalatable amongst particular sections of the academy (Calvey, 2008). Completing the fieldwork and vacating the field for analysis, write up, and eventual publication is by no means the end of such ethical matters either, as certain measures must be taken to continue to protect participants and oneself from potential punitive sanctions (see Wolf, 1991).

Doing qualitative research with active offenders is certainly not every criminologist's preference. In some cases the enduring aspects of a researcher's identity, such as gender (although I recognise that gender is malleable through presentation of self and potential biological and anatomical transformation), age, ethnicity and social class background, can all, in some cases, represent immediate obstacles to engaging in this form of research (Ferrell, 1998; Lee, 1995; Williams and Treadwell, 2008). Yet these, as well as other, facets of a researcher's identity can also be beneficial resources for entering and then maintaining access to the field. The success of Winlow (2001), Calvey (2000) and Monaghan's (2002) covert research studies of bouncers were all predicated upon their biographies and the evident bodily capital they all possessed. In his ethnographic study of football violence, Treadwell (2010) utilised biography, personal contacts and prior association with a football 'firm' to negotiate access. This personal background was particularly useful when Treadwell was mistaken for a 'rival lad' during the early stages of the ethnography. Being already familiar with violence Treadwell responded by refusing to back down, a response which eventually earned him the respect of his participants.

So far in this section, great emphasis has been placed upon the importance of personal background as a means to gain and maintain access. As Wolf (1991) has rightly pointed out, personal propriety is also hugely important in ethnographic research with deviant groups, as the 'researcher's personality will determine her or his ability to get along with the people under study' (p.212). Such methods should not be undertaken if the researcher is unwilling to forsake some personal value judgements during fieldwork or would be unable to empathise with those participating (Wolf, 1991). The ability to display humanistic qualities during research with deviant populations, as Wolf suggests, are as important as cultural competence and familiarity with the setting under study. Coffey (1999) discusses 'selfhood' which can fragment, be negotiated and reconstructed during the course of fieldwork. For Coffey (1999), ethnography's

strengths lie in the real involvement of the researcher, who becomes central to the enterprise:

> Our own sense of personhood – which will include age, race, gender, class, history, sexuality – engages with the personalities, histories and subjectivities of others present in the field. Our own subjective personality is part of the research and is negotiated within the field (p.57)

It is not just the enduring aspects of identity that impact upon fieldwork, but in the course of interacting with participants, establishing a presence in the setting, all of which require an emotional, interpersonal and physical investment on the part of the researcher, 'selfhood' is constantly being crafted (Coffey, 1999).

Some US based researchers had no prior connection to the respective communities in which they completed their studies; yet all were able to develop enduring and generally positive relationships with particular contacts. Whyte's (1981) seminal *Street Corner Society*, in which he studied the social structure of an Italian-American inner city community, was instigated after Whyte moved into the neighbourhood and began to appropriate contacts at every level of the community. Although Whyte's study was not focused on violence, his ability to develop positive relations with trustworthy contacts is significant for the discussion here. His close relationship with 'Doc' proved to be instrumental in gaining access and becoming accepted within the community. Likewise Bourgois (1996; 2003), who studied Puerto Rican drug dealers, poverty and violence in East Harlem, New York, occupied a property next door to a house frequented by drug dealers and drug users throughout the course of his ethnography. Slowly Bourgois built a relationship with significant individuals within that community, in particular 'Primo', who greatly facilitated his access. Although Bourgois reported feeling disgusted and was frequently outraged by the way some of his respondents behaved, his ability to remain empathetic to these men's lives was instrumental in maintaining the positive research relationships he had formulated. This was also crucial in the formulation of his field 'self' (Coffey, 1999), in which Bourgois' interaction with the setting under study enabled him to cope with the often brutalising circumstances his participants experienced daily.

Bruce Jacobs, who studied drug dealers (1998) and then the use of violence during drug robberies (2000), deliberately spent time in a deprived inner city area renowned for high levels of drug sales in order to make himself known

to locals. Despite suspicions he was an undercover police officer, Jacobs eventually made contact with some street level drug dealers, one of whom introduced him to several other dealers operating in the area. Although Jacobs had formed what appeared to be a relationship based on mutual trust, this particular individual later robbed Jacobs at gunpoint. This example underlines the need to remain ever vigilant, even with gatekeepers that may appear helpful and supportive of the researcher's endeavours.

More recently Venkatesh (2008) spent a decade doing ethnographic research in a Chicago housing project with its residents and local street gang. His chance encounter with leader of the 'Black Kings', J.T, provided Venkatesh with an ideal conduit into a world of violence, drug distribution and extreme poverty. J.T granted Venkatesh unbridled levels of access and kept him safe in a community blighted by desperation and predatory criminality. However, some of Venkatesh's contacts exploited his trust, as they used data he was gathering in the community for their own material benefit. Venkatesh evidently lacked at the beginning of his research the cultural capital, knowledge and competence possessed by other more 'streetwise' ethnographers. He represents something of an antithesis to some of the other researchers that have been discussed so far, particularly some British ethnographers, who already possessed some of the competencies embodied by those individuals they studied (see Calvey, 2000; Hobbs, 1988; Williams and Treadwell, 2008; Winlow, 2001). What Venkatesh may have lacked, he more than made up for in bravery and sheer determination. It appears that a combination of naivety, bravery, serendipity, as well as a large slice of good fortune, certainly played their part in Venkatesh being able to secure and then maintain access. This evidently had a significant impact upon him as an individual and his field identity, as slowly Venkatesh began to learn the general etiquette and comportment of the gang and its community.

While the various issues discussed here represent important ethical and pragmatic considerations that require on-going management throughout any ethnographic project on criminality, none of them should be used to prevent criminologists from engaging in fieldwork with offenders in their everyday contexts when it is both possible and feasible for them to do so. As Polsky (1967) warned:

> ...we can no longer afford the convenient fiction that in studying criminals in their natural habitat, we would discover nothing really important that could not be discovered from criminals behind bars (p.123)

Yet, beyond the pragmatic barriers discussed above which may deter/prevent some criminologists, the marginal position that qualitative research with offending populations holds within the discipline is largely due to a variety of wider changes that have impacted upon the broader research agenda. Alterations in research funding and the topics being researched, as well as the emergence of ethics committees and research governance frameworks within the academy, have collectively constrained criminological research that seeks to understand offending populations by engaging with them directly (Ancrum, 2011; Winlow and Hall, 2012; Calvey, 2008; Maguire, 2008).

Research Methods and Methodological Approach

My research incorporated several methods of data collection: in-depth, unstructured life history interviews, some of which were recorded digitally; periods of participant observation, during which I actively participated in conversations as well as some of the activities the men were engaged in (see below for a more detailed discussion) writing up detailed field notes afterwards; and, where possible, I consulted media articles in which some of the men and their acquaintances featured. It must be pointed out that the deployment of these methods varied according to the participant and the constraints I encountered during the field, as did my role as a researcher.

My use of in-depth, life history interviewing resembled that articulated by Mason (1996), which is characterised by informal, topic-centred conversations, during which a range of issues are discussed with participants in an unstructured format. These interviews were conducted within the context of a set of established and respectful on-going relationships between me and the participants based on mutual trust, and fit neatly into the type of interviews described earlier by Sherman Heyl (2001) as 'ethnographic'. These interviews were always relaxed encounters and took place in a location of the participant's choosing; but they did vary in terms of their formality and structure. Some were pre-organised with particular participants several days before, conducted in

private settings with no distractions, and lasted between two and three hours; these resembled more formalised interviews. On other occasions, and with some other participants, they were much more informal encounters that sometimes developed spontaneously during the course of 'hanging around' with participants: conducted over drinks in a pub, while watching football matches on TV, or while in a participant's car. During these instances no digital recorder would be used and these more informal interviews would be interspersed with other unrelated conversation – sometimes with participants' acquaintances or family members present. Roberts (2002) describes the varied forms interviews can take during ethnography and the important function of this for gathering life history data:

> Perhaps the most prominent method described in discussions of fieldwork, apart from participant observation, is the 'ethnographic interview' – the most direct means of gaining 'the life' in traditional ethnography. These may vary from informal to formal, requested or unrequested with regard to the length and type of contact made, context, types of question and so on. In fact, a wider range of 'interviews' are conducted in fieldwork than often acknowledged, with some questions being formulated beforehand or in other cases arising during contact (p.155)

Prior to beginning my research I decided on several thematic areas that would be discussed with participants. These themes broadly covered: participant's life histories, including detail on their familial backgrounds, education, employment and involvement in any other criminal activities; issues of male identity and culture; and, their experiences of interpersonal violence with other men. The intention was to allow these themes to act as a broad structuring framework for the interviews, but with significant flexibility within this loose thematic structure to allow the participants to discuss issues and experiences that they considered to be important in their own lives. Once the themes had been devised and developed on paper, a one off interview was conducted with a male friend[3], which served as a pilot to determine the efficacy of the thematic framework. Although I had several years' worth of professional experience of qualitative interviewing prior to beginning this research, the pilot interview provided me with a valuable opportunity to re-acquaint myself with this method; as I hadn't conducted an interview for well over a year prior to the pilot. Feedback and reflection on this

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[3] This individual was not involved in the actual research; but had, on occasions, experienced interpersonal violence throughout his life, and was able to answer the questions as if being interviewed formally as part of the project.

pilot interview, which lasted for around an hour, led to several slight alterations to the thematic framework.

During the first one or two more formalised interviews that I conducted, a short paper copy detailing the thematic topics was taken along purely as a memory aid, which I would usually read through shortly before I met participants to re-familiarise myself. The interviews were not intended to be formulaic or highly structured, but a means 'for the interviewees to explore purposefully with the researcher the meanings they place on events in their worlds' (Sherman Heyl, 2001, p.369). Not using a topic guide for prompts meant that gathering the data relied heavily on my ability to ask appropriate questions, which were usually open-ended initially to elicit a detailed narrative that could then be probed at with more focused, closed questioning. Although I would tend to start interviews by asking participants to tell me about themselves – often alluding to childhood, family background, current life circumstances etc. – as is the case when gathering life story data, the narrative accounts provided by participants were often verbalised in a confused, sometimes superficial, and illogical fashion (see Hollway and Jefferson, 2000); which initially left me with more questions than answers. In a similar vein to Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) free-association narrative interview approach, following a first interview I would transcribe what had been discussed and use this process as a means to generate more focused questions that would be asked in subsequent interviews and meetings. As Goodey (2000) argues, repeated interviews are essential to capture the various intricacies of a masculine biography that has experienced crime and to ensure one's findings are well founded.

Being familiar with some of the pro-feminist research on men's violence and the ways in which perpetrators will often position themselves within particular discourses that deny, excuse and justify their violence (see Cavanagh and Lewis, 1996; Gadd, 2004; Hearn, 1998), I strived to incorporate techniques into my interviews which would challenge these men to reflect on their lives and their violence. Being male myself, I was critically aware of the affect my own masculinity may have had during the interview encounters (see Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001) and that 'for men to critically interview men on violence involves attention, listening, empathy, but also critical distance and critical awareness' (Hearn, 1998, p.55). Critique and challenge is vital, but must also be

accompanied by sufficient rapport and empathy with the participant to ensure positive research relationships are maintained. Gadd's (2004) reflective analysis of interviewing a man who habitually abused his female partner, reveals the importance of inter-subjective dynamics during interviews and the need for researchers to display humanistic qualities no matter how anxious and defensive they feel about the behaviours of participants.

During one particular period of fieldwork a participant described a serious assault he had committed. The participant's friend was present too and occasionally laughed while the violence was being described. The participant himself laughed and smiled on occasions during his re-telling of it. Personally, I found the assault rather disturbing and their amusement at it even more so. Conscious of maintaining a positive relationship I forced myself to smile and laugh too, and I did not pass judgement; I continued to encourage him to describe in detail what had happened and why.

During the observations my researcher role was commensurate with that of a *participant-as-observer* (Gold, 1958, cited in Bryman, 2008), as I participated in the activities taking place, but was overt as the men I was researching understood why I was present. However, not everyone who I encountered during these periods was aware that I was a researcher, and sometimes the situation could be rather ambiguous. My experiences and roles while in the field were akin to movement along a continuum, as Murphy and Dingwall (2001) have argued:

> …the distinction between covert and overt research is less straightforward than sometimes imagined. In complex and mobile settings, it may simply be impractical to seek consent from everyone involved. Unlike experimental researchers, ethnographers typically have limited control over who enters their field of observation. All research lies on a continuum between overtness and covertness (p.342)

In the process of 'hanging around' with the men I was doing research with I frequently encountered their friends, family members and other acquaintances. Sometimes my presence and identity as a researcher was revealed and explained by the participant to these individuals. On other occasions it wasn't, and I was simply introduced as *"this is my mate/pal Tony"*. During these times I would simply follow the participant's lead and act accordingly. Depending on what was happening and who was around I would adjust my behaviour during observations. On some occasions I would be more open and inquisitive with my

questions and during these times the encounter would sometimes develop into an informal interview (see discussion above). On other occasions I listened to and engaged in the conversations taking place, which was often a useful way of supplementing information gathered previously during more formalised interviews or other observation sessions; and sometimes I would simply watch what was going on.

With Darren, a man with a long history of involvement in football violence and who will be introduced in the next chapter, I began initially by conducting life history interviews with him at his home. This then evolved into participant observation, as Darren invited me to spend time with him on match days where I was able to observe him during hooligan gatherings. Apart from not involving myself in violence and illicit drug use, I participated fully in these gatherings: I dressed in 'casual' clothing associated with the hooligan subculture (see Treadwell, 2008); consumed large quantities of alcohol; and engaged in conversations with other men who were present. Through this I was also introduced to some of the other men involved with the football 'firm' that Darren has fought with for most of his adult life, including Darren's brother, who Darren had talked about frequently during interviews. A few of these men knew I was a researcher and some would provide me with information that they thought might be useful and interesting for my research (see Armstrong, 1993).

The dynamics of the qualitative research process are not rigid, but are constantly in flux. Whether a researcher is interviewing or observing, they must enter the social world that the participants inhabit. Researchers who utilise a qualitative methodological approach have an inescapably embodied presence amongst the communities and groups they are studying (Coffey, 1999); and this is regardless of whether their research intentions are known or not. While in the field, qualitative researchers become part of, to varying extents, the social world under study. This world is fluid, constantly changing, often unpredictable, and in the case of crime, potentially dangerous; researchers cannot remain static at these times. They must react accordingly to changing circumstances, pressures, and events, utilising, where necessary, a range of potential research roles as well as the appropriate research methods that constitute their methodological armoury. As noted by Ancrum (2011), it is not always possible, nor desirable, to announce that you are conducting research to every individual encountered during the

course of fieldwork on crime. As was highlighted earlier in the chapter, researchers studying offenders in their own communities are governed by pragmatic considerations and the need to safeguard personal wellbeing (Calvey, 2000), which often forces them to straddle both covert and overt stances. Sometimes openly inquisitive questioning and curiosity had to be suspended depending on who was around and what was happening, which meant that on occasions I had to remember to 'keep your eyes and ears open *but keep your mouth shut*' (author's emphasis) (Polsky, 1967, p.129).

Occasionally my fieldwork involved actually witnessing some of the criminal activities that my participants and gatekeepers engaged in: using, buying, and selling drugs; handling stolen goods; and I witnessed some of the men I interviewed and observed behave aggressively and violently towards others. During fieldwork I began to understand clearly how 'Machismo, as well as a veil of eccentricity, is responsible for the cult of fieldwork, as some of the grime of 'real' (author's emphasis) life is brought back to the office' (Hobbs, 1993, p.62). Being in the presence of feared, potentially violent men and observing others' reactions was both thrilling and unnerving. It involved 'posing' with these men in pubs and nightclubs; swaggering around the streets; being watched and filmed by police officers; seeing bouncers visibly 'stiffen up' when we approached their doors and witnessing other men's desperation to shake some of the participants' hands and be acknowledged by them. In sum, I began to see before my very eyes how personal reputation, as well as being threatening and feared, could be highly seductive and rewarding for the men I was researching. This level of immersion, although I did not partake in any violence myself, was vital for achieving my research aims which, broadly speaking, were to understand these men's relationships with, and their use of, violence within the context of their own subjective lives and biographies. This 'could never be obtained simply by 'hanging around' and 'watching the action'' (Pearson, 1993, p.ix), as I also needed to access details on their biographical backgrounds, as well as their descriptions of, and reflections on, the violence they had experienced across their life courses. This could only be gathered through researching the biographical using life history interviews and supplementing this with observations that contextualised these biographies within the 'social' (see Goodey, 2000). Despite their genuine potential for violence these men are, the vast majority of the time,

not violent (see Collins, 2008). So the combination of methods used provided the data necessary to meet the study's overall aims.

This methodological approach to my research is loosely situated within the broad philosophical tradition of interpretivism. Interpretive ontology posits the social world as an inter-subjective construction that is created and re-created constantly by individuals who possess the capacity to attribute meaning (Williams, 2000). In epistemological terms, this approach infers that researchers can reach an understanding of the human world through an interpretation of others' actions and the wider cultures which contextualise these actions. The process of interpreting human meaning and culture requires a degree of immersion on the part of the researcher, which is achieved via methods of observation and interviewing (Williams, 2000). More specifically, in criminological terms, my approach blends emerging critical realist perspectives with cultural criminology. Although I acknowledge the role of humans in the creation of the social world, as a critical realist my ontological view is that 'real' forces exist in that world as a result of human activities, which have 'real' pragmatic material consequences for other humans that we can document and observe. Like the violence my participants commit against others and that they have been victims of, these are 'real' harms that have dire physical and psychological consequences. As I discuss throughout chapters four to eight, social transformation and capitalist ideology are powerful forces that although driven by human activity, engulf other humans producing real effects in their lives and immediate environments that are also potentially harmful.

This approach utilises what cultural criminologist Ferrell (1998) has termed *Criminological Verstehen* – a methodological approach to researching crime aligned to the broad tradition of interpretivism. The purpose of using this approach is to interpret and understand the subjective viewpoints and emotive experiences of those who commit crime, by utilising research methods that bring researchers into close and sustained contact with them. Developed from Weber's initial formulation, Verstehen encapsulates 'a process of subjective interpretation on the part of the social researcher, a degree of sympathetic understanding between social researcher and subjects of study, whereby the researcher comes to share, in part, the situated meanings and experiences of those under scrutiny' (Ferrell, 1998, p.27). Criminological verstehen can involve researcher

participation that engages one to witness or partake directly in illegal activities to experience the thrill of 'edgework and adrenaline-rush experiences' (Ferrell, 1998, p.30), as I did on occasions during this research (see discussion above).

In his famous essay Howard Becker (1967) argued that undertaking research free from personal or political values was not possible and that instead:

> …the question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather whose side are we on (p.239)

Like Becker, I do not purport to occupy the position of a truly objective researcher who brings none of their own subjective background to the process. I do however take seriously my role as a critical realist ethnographer to document what I am told and observe in a manner which is non-judgemental, but is not devoid of an ethical position. My research approached the issue of interpersonal violence through the eyes of men that perpetrate it against others. It may be assumed that I have taken their side (see Becker, 1967). Yet, as discussed above and further below, I recognise that my participants behave in ways that are harmful to others, but that my participants are also 'harmed' themselves, as I will discuss in the forthcoming chapters. Overall, my methodological position, and approach to the research more broadly, is both ethical and political. Through trying to understand why some men are willing to harm others it attempts to contribute towards positive change that will lead to a reduction in violence and other social harms.

Access, Trust and Rapport

The method in which I gained access to the men who participated was vital for addressing many of the ethical issues inherent in this research. As I alluded to during the introduction, I was fortunate that my biography had positioned me within social networks that contained a series of informal contacts who were either suitable participants or gatekeepers. It was through these networks that I was able to develop my sample. I made use of this 'convenience sample' (see Bryman, 2008) and was able to 'snowball' from this to access several other men. As Lee (1993) has argued, this particular method of sampling is often the only way of generating a sample when researching deviant populations. Wright et al (1992) describe the benefits of using a snowball sampling type approach through informal contacts that are trusted by the participants:

> This approach offers the advantage that such a person already has contacts and trust in the criminal subculture and can vouch for the legitimacy of the research. In order to exploit this advantage fully, however, the… selected must be someone with a solid street reputation for integrity (p.151)

The drawbacks of using convenience and snowball samples are doubts over potential representativeness and the difficulties one has in speculating beyond the research sample - particularly when small, as in this study. On this issue, men who engage in physical violence are a minority group and one that is marginalised and highly difficult to access, particularly outside of the criminal justice system[4]. Using sophisticated 'randomised' sampling methods is, therefore, simply impractical for ethnographic research with this population. As Hobbs (2001) has observed, accessing the everyday lives and cultures of deviant groups often comes at a premium. Researchers have to be pragmatic and gather what data they can under difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances – 'a convincing account of a rarefied social field is often as good as it gets' (Hobbs, 2001, p.215). Those researchers able to gain prolonged access must often make concessions on some of the methodological standards around 'sampling technique' and 'representativeness' that are valued within the academy.

The points that are raised by Wright et al (1992) in the quote above regarding trust were borne out during the research. For example, one participant made clear he was willing to participate due to the trusting relationship he shared with one of my gatekeepers. Similar sentiments were echoed by another participant who I had known for several years before I became an academic, who said he was happy to participate because he knew and trusted me.

Once initial contact had been made it was vital that the nascent trust established through these introductions was then nurtured to ensure that these

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[4] One of the participants, Brett, was jailed during the research for a violent offence. I had not been introduced to him before he was arrested, but a contact suggested that he might be interested in participating. Fortunately and by coincidence, this contact's friend, who I was also acquainted with, was serving a sentence at the same prison that Brett had been sent to. He was also aware of my research and was able to discuss the project with Brett on my behalf before I made arrangements to visit him in person. So although data was collected from Brett via prison visits and not in an 'ideal' setting, this was organised informally in the same manner as the other participants, and ensured that arrangements had been made via individuals that Brett had known for many years and, crucially, trusted.

men would talk openly and honestly about themselves. Developing rapport, as well as appearing personable and likeable was therefore necessary (see Gadd, 2004; Wolf, 1991), and hinged partly upon my willingness to be open about myself and to allow these men to 'study' me also (Polsky, 1967), which I had no issue with[5]. While conventional discussions regarding openness with participants have centred on how much information is divulged regarding the nature of the research and its objectives, more recently, debates have emerged concerning self-disclosure by researchers to their participants and how these impact upon relations of power (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001). A general shift towards reflexivity in social science research, which orientates researchers towards greater transparency, introspection and critical self-reflection during and subsequent to the research process frames these emerging debates. Feminist researchers have long advocated for the dissipation of roles based around 'experts' and research 'subjects' and the incompatibility of these for qualitative research - particularly research on sensitive issues (Oakley, 1981). Coffey (1999) discusses 'selfhood' in ethnographic research and how this is unavoidably negotiated continuously through the relationships formed with participants. Within the contemporary intellectual climate, postulating the qualitative researcher as an objective gatherer and interpreter of participants' lives and experiences, who brings none of their own biography and subjective judgement to the field, is neither sustainable nor plausible:

> …discussion of the researcher's role (as a biographical participant) raises not simply the degree to which the researcher should place her/his 'voice' within a socio-political context but methodological and ethical questions concerning the researcher's role. For the researcher, questions arise across the research from collection to presentation regarding subjective interpretations and judgements as new issues or new insights arise. More profoundly, the degree and type of personal 'investment' is in question, e.g. how much to reveal of the self in 'sharing stories', in building trust, establishing 'credibility' or establishing 'solidarity' in the 'field' and in the written study (Roberts, 2002, p.14)

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[5] In the case of Brett, I was not able to spend time with him outside of prison as I had done with other participants. I had to use some of the time allocated during my visits to build up some rapport with him, while trying to gather data. Fortunately, Brett was very open and willing to talk at length about himself, which I feel was attributable to the mutual contacts we shared. While talking to Brett it also became apparent we shared acquaintances beyond my research contacts and Brett had also spent time living in a community that I knew well. This common ground between us was really helpful in building rapport.

Polsky (1967) recognised this several decades ago when he warned budding researchers of crime to be prepared for participants that are curious about those studying them. He argued that being honest and open in response was a necessity:

> In studying a criminal it is important to realize that he will be studying you, and to let him study you. Don't evade or shut off any questions he might have about your personal life, even if these questions are designed to "take you down", for example, designed to force you to admit that you too have knowingly violated the law. He has got to define you satisfactorily to himself if you are to get anywhere, and answering his questions frankly helps this process along (p.132)

Being 'tested' or having participants try to 'suss' you out is unsurprising given the potential dangers of sharing information with outsiders, and these appear to be common experiences for researchers who use qualitative methods to study crime and violence whether overtly or covertly (Maguire, 2008; Winlow et al, 2001).

I aroused such curiosity during the course of my fieldwork. The men who participated would often ask me about my work, my career aspirations, my motivations for doing the research, as well as my own biography and background. I did not want to deflect nor dismiss this curiosity as I felt it was important, given that I was asking them to talk openly and honestly about themselves, to share something of myself in a reciprocal exchange (See Oakley, 1981; Polsky, 1967). Not doing so would have been pure hypocrisy on my part and potentially damaging. Although on occasions such curiosity strayed into what I suspect were 'tests' that had to be managed in the situation (Calvey, 2008). One participant told his close friend, who is a known football hooligan, that I was an undercover police officer. This was clearly done as a joke, which the participant and his friend – once he realised I was not a police officer – both found highly amusing. However, I suspect that the ulterior motive was to test how I would react when suddenly placed in a highly pressurised situation. It was also a clear demonstration of his power and the power he wielded over me while I was present in his world.

On other occasions I was confronted with situations that were both frightening and immensely distressing. One particular evening I was interviewing a participant at his friend's house. During the interview a young woman came to

the house, who was an acquaintance of the participant, asking to buy a small quantity of amphetamines. She was severely intoxicated and had, only hours previously, been badly assaulted by another male, who I deduced from the conversations was her ex/current partner. Her face was severely swollen, beginning to bruise, and her neck was covered in scratches. As she stood in the middle of the smoke-filled living room, her hand clasped around a can of Special Brew, swaying in her drunken state as she struggled to maintain her balance, I felt an overwhelming sense of anger and disgust at what had happened to her and her quite evident vulnerability. Aware of the context I was in though, I had little option but to keep quiet and act in a blasé manner, as the participant and the other men present did.

So, this method of access did not extricate me from all the dangers, problems, stresses, and frustrations that are often associated with ethnographies of deviant groups. Although I was able to secure trust with those who participated, which, as I have just intimated and discussed previously, put me in situations where I was witnessing these men actually break the law, there were nevertheless limits to this trust. Some individuals were reticent about aspects of their lives and would not divulge detailed information on specific issues – a mumbled response, vague answer, or particular facial expression, were often good indicators to cease that line of questioning. And there were several issues that I felt it was unwise to ask about. Patience was a necessary and important virtue throughout the research. Some episodes of fieldwork and interviewing were far more productive than others and there were occasions when I came away from the field feeling frustrated that I had gathered nothing of significant interest despite considerable effort on my part. On occasions the presence of participants' friends and family members stifled the encounter and often prevented me from asking pertinent questions. Arranging fieldwork and interviews was also difficult at times: the participants had other more important commitments in their lives, like work and family, and fieldwork had to be negotiated around these. Some participants could be unreliable. Over the course of the fieldwork I spent hours waiting around for some of them to show up for arranged meetings; sometimes they did not. On occasions my text messages and phone calls requesting a meeting were ignored or not replied to until several days later.

Ethical Considerations

The issue of ethics has surfaced already on several occasions during this chapter, most notably at the end of the previous section in my discussion of access and the consequent ethically challenging situations I found myself in as a result of my particular access route. I will now consider the project's ethical issues and ramifications in more detail in this section.

Ethical considerations are multi-faceted and never finite in any research project. They must be managed throughout the research process on an on-going basis (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000), and as has been mentioned already, must be approached with the unpredictability of the research field in mind (Calvey, 2008). As was shown in the previous section, the process required to carry out qualitative field research on any form of criminality cannot hope to avoid the issue of appropriate ethical conduct. As Ferrell (1998) argues:

> ...field researchers cannot conveniently distance themselves from their subjects of study, or from the legally uncertain situations in which the subjects may reside, in order to construct safe and "objective" studies of them. Instead, criminological field research unavoidably entangles those who practice it in complex and ambiguous relations to subjects and situations of study, to issues of personal and social responsibility, and to law and legality (p.25)

It is important to recognise then, that individuals and groups involved in illegal activities constitute a vulnerable research population. Offenders are stigmatised, vilified, and marginalised by wider society because of their behaviour, and as a result are likely to be suspicious and distrustful of those who desire to learn about their lives and activities (Liamputtong, 2007). They are a group that must be researched 'sensitively', in a manner that does not stigmatise and marginalise them further.

Of immediate concern then, was the potential for participants to experience psychological and emotional harm. Plummer (2001) highlights the potential emotional and psychological strains that anyone may experience through simply telling 'their' story to a researcher:

> …telling their story could literally destroy them – bring them to a suicidal edge, to murderous thoughts, danger. More modestly, subjects may be severely traumatised. The telling of a story of a life is a deeply problematic and ethical process in which researchers are fully implicated…it is an act drenched in the possibility of power, abuse and exploitation (p.403).

The risks of participants experiencing psychological stress and emotional traumas were, in the case of my own research, heightened considerably; given that it involved asking men to talk, in depth, about their personal lives and their experiences of committing violence against other men and of being violently victimised themselves. Some research on violent offenders has uncovered evidence of abusive, traumatic childhoods and difficult personal experiences within their biographies (see previous chapter). Asking participants to tell me about what may be private and distressing aspects of their lives immediately raised issues of sensitivity (Liamputtong, 2007). Experiencing violence directly and even witnessing it can be extremely traumatising and may evoke any range of possible emotions, such as: anger; humiliation; resentment; fear; shame; remorse; and guilt. With time, the physical pains, marks, and injuries gained from violence fade, but the emotional experience of being involved in violence often remains deeply etched into memory.

To address some of these concerns I discussed the research process with participants beforehand, outlining what topics would be covered during interviews and giving them the opportunity to ask questions throughout. They were also reminded that they could opt out at any point and did not have to talk about anything that they were not comfortable with. Although there was the potential for causing distress through the process of re-visiting and discussing what might be painful memories, issues concerning the validity and reliability of the data being gathered also emerged. Despite the need to appreciate their vulnerability, it is important to acknowledge that such labels may not be accepted or even acknowledged by the individuals being studied. Some men will, in all likelihood, perceive themselves as invulnerable. Men who commit violence often place their ability to deploy it competently close to their sense of self-identity and will avoid, at all costs, showing signs of weakness. Leaving open the possibility that narratives of violence re-told to a researcher may be exaggerated, distorted, even fabricated to maintain this valued self-image. The qualitative interview is an encounter for the performance of one's gender identity and it has been suggested that men may attempt to deploy a range of tactics to try and maintain control over the encounter (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001). This methodological point

becomes all the more pertinent given my own gender as a male who is researching their masculinity.

Issues concerning the vulnerability of the researched aside, it was also necessary to consider my own vulnerability; particularly the potential threat to my physical safety, which as discussed already, was a genuine one. Firstly, I was spending significant periods of time with men who were more than capable of being violent. Secondly, this was done in places where these men felt comfortable and able to talk openly. My fieldwork was inherently and unavoidably dangerous and a series of actions/strategies were taken to minimise this danger to my physical well-being as much as possible (see Calvey, 2000).

While conducting fieldwork, my whereabouts was always known by someone else, in most cases my sister, who was informed prior to fieldwork where I would be and roughly for how long. I would always contact her by phone once I had finished, and when it was possible to do so, I would send her a text message during fieldwork to confirm I was okay. Research took place in both public and private settings. In public settings, other individuals were present which served to minimise the threat of physical danger. In the privacy of people's homes the potential threat of physical harm was heightened, and it was during these encounters that I was most aware of my vulnerability. At these times I would always take account of the physical environment: sitting strategically close to the door in the event that I needed to make a quick exit. Participants were only given my mobile number; my home phone number and home address were not divulged.

Despite these various measures, complete personal safety during the research could never be fully assured. There was always an element of danger that simply could not be designed out of the study, which I had to accept and be prepared to deal with. Those 'researchers encountering and negotiating danger in the conduct of studies have been reliant on their own experience, judgement and common sense' (Jamieson, 2000, p.61) when faced with threats to their personal safety. Despite the development of research governance frameworks that stipulate certain safeguards must be designed into qualitative studies to protect researchers, this situation still persists. In this respect, my greatest asset during the research was the cultural capital that I possessed. Crucially, my own social and cultural background is not dissimilar to the men who participated. In doing

this research I was not encountering an 'alien' or 'exotic' culture I knew nothing about – I entered environments, interacted with men, witnessed and heard about things (violence and crime), all of which I was already familiar with. I'd encountered violence and physical threats sufficiently throughout my own life and spent enough time around men capable of violence to know generally how to comport myself.

In some instances participants and I shared acquaintances beyond the gatekeeper who had made the necessary introductions – who I knew was often very important in building trust. While my strong regional accent, general appearance and my demeanour, were befitting of the types of men that the participants themselves encounter daily. In the case of individuals with whom I was already acquainted, trust and rapport was a given that did not require any work. With those men I had not met before, I benefitted tremendously from the strong endorsement of my character that was provided by my gatekeepers.

Ethical debates within the social sciences have traditionally been dominated by these concerns for the researcher's personal safety and managing dangers that threaten this. What has been less acknowledged, are the emotional dangers faced by qualitative researchers (Blagden and Pemberton, 2010), which can, as a consequence, be largely overlooked during the planning phases of a research project (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). Emotional dangers that can be all the more acute when the topic being studied has some relation to the researcher's own biography and personal identity (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). In many ways it was the emotional and psychological aspects of conducting this research which troubled me the most, rather than threats to my physical safety.

I understood many of the things the men described to me and that I observed during this research, as I had also experienced them myself; in this sense personal biography was also a useful research tool (See Hobbs, 1988; Treadwell, 2010; Winlow, 2001). Many of these men reiterated how important it was not to back down when challenged and to not allow others to *take the piss'* – the confrontations I witnessed during the research re-enforced these points. These are deeply entrenched, class-based, masculine cultural injunctions that I recognised immediately, as they had been instilled in me by significant individuals within my own life. Researching these men re-awakened many of my own past

memories of physical confrontations, some of which remain painful for me emotionally. While re-visiting some of these memories was difficult at times, they became useful in an analytical sense; as they helped me to think more insightfully about the worlds, motivations, and the sometimes perplexing actions of the men that I was researching (see Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000).

Danger did not just manifest in the realms of the physical and the psychological. All of these men were conscious of being identified through their participation, as most were known to local police and some had appeared in various news media through their involvement in violence and other criminal activities. Anonymity and confidentiality had to be assured to ensure their identities were protected. Although, this had to be granted in a fashion which did not unduly compromise the duty to public protection (Cowburn, 2005), which could have serious moral and professional ramifications for myself. The men were made aware of the limits to confidentiality prior to their participation, which would be breached if I was to learn that someone's life was in danger. Many of these men did describe to me serious violence, and other criminal activities, they had committed which had not come to the attention of the police. The threat of coming into the possession of 'guilty knowledge' (Polsky, 1967) was mitigated through the limited information that was given by participants during these disclosures. Information relating to names of others involved, as well as specific details on locations of where incidents took place were kept to a minimum.

For recording data, I relied on my own intuition as to whether to request that interviews be tape recorded. With participants who appeared more relaxed and comfortable with the research process, I broached the subject of using a tape recorder fairly early on and always with the caveat that this could be turned off if they so desired. With those who were initially quite uneasy, and who I suspected may still have harboured some distrust, I did not request this out of a fear that this may exacerbate their unease and result in their withdrawal. On these occasions I wrote up the encounter verbatim as soon as possible afterwards from memory. I also 'consolidated this information with detailed ethnographic accounts of the entire encounter' (Hall et al, 2008, p.19), which often helped me to recall what had happened and what had been said.

Data Analysis

The process of analysing the data began during the fieldwork and can be described in broad terms as a form of thematic analysis (see Braun and Clarke, 2006). As I transcribed recorded interviews and wrote up field notes, I noted particularly interesting points and themes along the way - particularly those that emerged during other interviews and seemed to adhere to patterns within the data. As I gathered more data and spent more time in the field these initial early themes began to change and develop in light of new information I gathered and I found my ideas would mutate and develop regularly. This process was also informed through asking questions of the men I worked with which related to analytical themes that were emerging or that seemed to me to be important, phrasing questions like:

"some of the other lads I've talked to said (theme) was important, what's your experience of that?"

This early phase of on-going analysis was then very much akin to that described in the process of conducting 'grounded analysis' (see Bryman, 2008), where initial ideas were developed as more data was gathered, and this early stage of analysis and code refinement mutually shaped the fieldwork and data collection process.

When I had collected a large amount of data I began a more formalised process of analysis: spending more time reading, repeatedly, through my interview transcripts and field notes. It was at this point that I began to tentatively code my data, using coloured pens initially to highlight loose thematic codes across the transcripts and drawing mind maps on paper to maintain an overall picture of my incipient analysis. I was still in contact with certain individuals within the field at this point and continued to collect information that I felt was relevant. Eventually I reached a point where I felt I needed to distance myself from the participants to allow myself sufficient space to engage in analysis and to think critically about what I had gathered.

My approach to this process of initial coding was predominantly, and as much as is ever possible, inductive, in that I allowed the data to serve as my guide to coding. I do acknowledge though that certain themes within the data did make sense and 'jump out' at me because they resonated with areas of the

masculinities and violence literature that I was already familiar with and I cannot deny that my familiarity with this literature did inevitably shape to some extent the frame of interpretation that I brought to the data (see Braun and Clarke's (2006) discussion of this). I also found that my own personal experiences entered into this process to an extent, as certain experiences the men described within the data resonated with my own biographical experiences and awoke feelings and emotions within me that are connected to my own personal reflections on these events (see discussion earlier). I strived to remain detached and as 'objective' as is possible during this process but cannot deny the schemes of interpretation that I brought to this process.

Once a broad set of codes had been established on paper, I used the software package NVIVO to code the data more thoroughly and completely. This resulted in several broad nodes with a large number of smaller relevant sub-nodes connected to these. Collectively these formulated a network of tree nodes, which is illustrated diagrammatically below using one of the overarching analytical nodes 'Using Violence'[6]:

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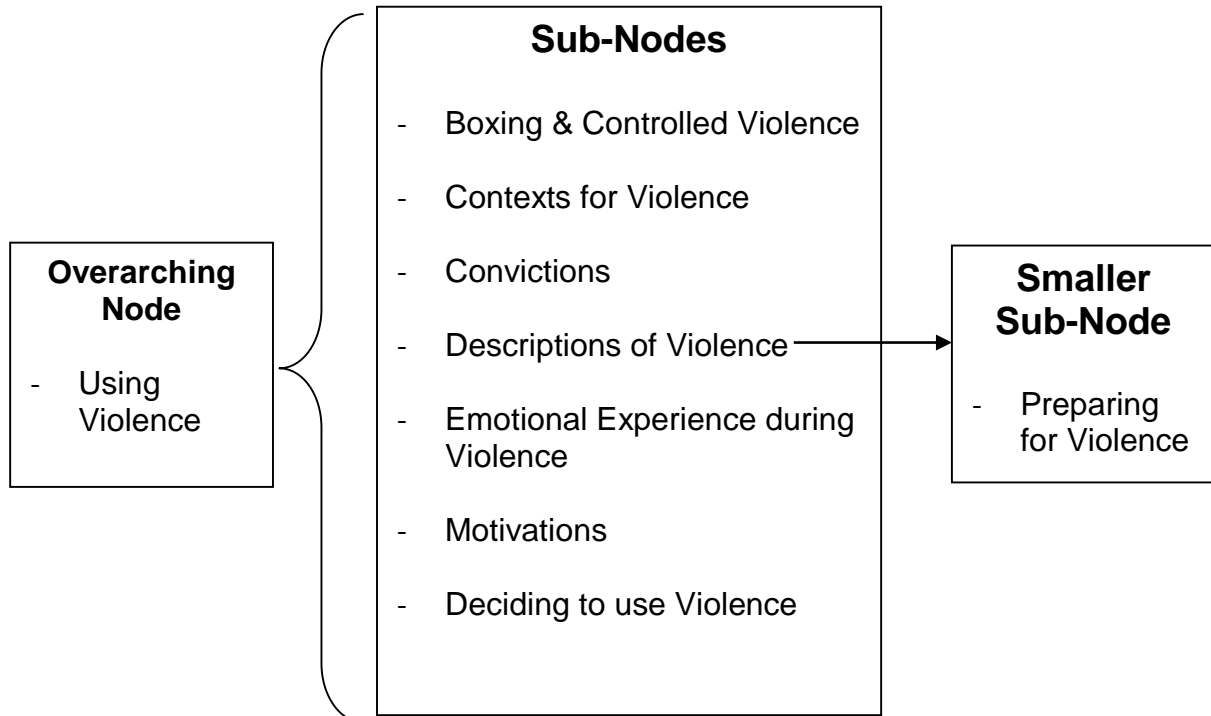
[6] Diagrams of the other overarching nodes and their accompanying sub-nodes are available in appendix two.

Once coding in NVIVO was complete and the data organised into more manageable thematic nodes, I was able to better transcend the individual case study structure which prevailed when the data was read and analysed initially straight from the transcripts and field notes. By fragmenting the data thematically in this way, I was able to conduct more in-depth analysis that focused upon the intricacies and complexities present in particular data themes. This process further enabled me to focus upon those thematic areas that were similar across the participants' accounts of their lives and violence, rather than being caught in an analysis of the individual and their life as had been the case at the initial analysis stage. This was also a helpful process for organising the chapter structure of the thesis, which is divided into three broad thematic areas reflected in chapters 5-7: childhood and youth; being violent with others; reflections on violence, morality and identity.

Despite this, I did experience some considerable tensions and difficulties with the data and the analysis process, not least because I had gathered a huge amount of information on individual life histories and experiences, which pertained to psycho-subjective experience and perception. This data did provide a window into cultural expectations around men, masculinities and how violence was related to this. The observational data gathered in the course of spending time with these men added an additional layer of complexity to the life history/interview data, which made its interpretation and analysis complicated and difficult. As I have already intimated above, one of the acute tensions I encountered was how to abstract from individuals and think in a broader collective sense about this sample of men – essentially going from rich detail on individual lives, perception and experience, and then situating this within a broader analysis of contemporary working class masculinities and male violence. I felt insecure about removing aspects of the data from the life histories within which they are embedded, and was concerned that they and their narratives would be devoid of context as a result. I found myself caught in a trap between highly detailed case studies of individuals and their biographies and providing an analytical narrative of the men's lives as whole and what was similar about them. My analysis was thus straddled between narrative and thematic methods of analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2008).

Discussion

At the beginning of this chapter I situated my research within a methodological context of ethnographies of crime and violence and pro feminism/critical men's studies. I attempted to incorporate aspects of both of these into my methodology and during the process of data collection to ensure that I adopted a critical realist approach to the men and communities that I studied. I described the evolution of the research process and the attendant practical and ethical issues that emerged out of it; using a critical reflexivity to engage with my role and conduct as a – gendered – researcher and those who I worked with during fieldwork. Through this I emphasised the importance of building rapport and trust, thinking diligently about the ethical ramifications beforehand, but also displaying a willingness to engage in situated ethics to deal with the pressures of studying potentially dangerous groups and settings. Thus, I argued that a blasé attitude and approach to what you inevitably will face is sometimes a useful and necessary tool while in the field. However, as Cowburn (2007) argues, this must be matched with a willingness, post-fieldwork, to engage in a project of transparency and critical reflexivity. I feel that my reflexive discussion in this chapter has demonstrated my commitment to such a project.

I have also discussed throughout this chapter the suitability and uniqueness of the methodology, which is suitable for several important reasons. Firstly, it enabled me to gather the data required to answer the research questions and aims I set out in chapter one. Ethnographic life history interviews with these men combined with observations of them in their everyday contexts provides data pertaining to both psycho/subjective aspects of masculinity and violence, as well as the socio-cultural dimensions to these. Gathering data pertaining to both of these dimensions is necessary to provide sufficient rigorous evidence to transcend the historical tendency to approach masculinities and violence theoretically by focusing upon the individual or the social/structural in isolation, rather than at the nexus of the psycho and social together.

Secondly, it is unique in that it is a qualitative ethnographic study focused predominantly upon interpersonal/subjective violence. Whereas the other ethnographic studies discussed in this chapter have a dual focus on both the violence of their participants but also their involvement in other criminality.

Although some of the men who feature in this thesis have been/are involved in various forms of other criminality, my study attempts to deal first and foremost with their use of interpersonal violence – something which is often tangential to another set of issues in most qualitative studies (Winlow, 2012).

Chapter Four

Top Lad: Case Study of a Violent Biography

"Come on Tony, get yer sen outside, you might want to watch this"

After imploring me to join him Darren walks to the exit of The Fox, a pub famous for being the 'roughest' in town and a regular haunt for the large group of men who identify with the local professional football team's 'firm'. Previously Darren, having recently become a father for the first time, had told me that he was trying to avoid the *"bovver"* that occasionally occurs on match days. Now, standing on the pavement outside The Fox with around ten other young men clad in Stone Island jackets and jumpers who are bouncing up and down in nervous anticipation of potential violence with men from the pub next door, Darren is showing little evidence of hesitancy. This is his story…

Introduction

In the previous chapter I described my methodology and the data collection process, which was broadly similar for each of the ten individual men that participated in in-depth life history interviews. As discussed at the end of the previous chapter, such an approach made qualitative analysis difficult, especially when attempting to look more broadly across the participants as a whole. Nonetheless, given the biographical dimension to my research and the importance of this for understanding why *some* men become involved in violence and crime (see discussion by Goodey, 2000), I felt it was important and necessary to show, using one complete life history, the kinds of 'stories' and experiences the men articulated to me.

This chapter explores in detail the life history of one of the participants, who, as I introduced him above, I refer to as Darren. Darren has a long history of violence and has also been involved in acquisitive criminality. The case study of Darren presented in this chapter explores in detail his relationship with physical violence, why and how he came to value violence, and how this continues to inform his self-identity. I use Darren's life as described here, as an important signpost to the varied analytical themes that emerged from the analysis of the data that I gathered on the lives and experiences of men who are violent. These

varied analytical themes fall under three much broader umbrella themes which structure the next three chapters and are as follows: *childhood and youth*, which addresses early experiences of violence, as well as how and why some men come to value violence; *being violent*, explores when men are violent and aggressive towards others and the motivations/emotions that lie behind this; and, *reflection*, which addresses how morality informs men's violence and underpins their self-identities and notions of 'maleness'. My use of Darren's case study in this way reflects how other authors have used detailed ethnographic life histories to flesh out important aspects of their overall analysis and theoretical arguments (see Treadwell, 2010; Winlow, 2001).

This chapter also serves a methodological function, as it draws on taped interviews with Darren, informal conversations with him, and observational data I gathered during fieldwork. This gives the reader examples of the ethnographic research process in action: how that was conducted, as well as the 'kinds' of milieus I entered and spent time in to gather data.

Meeting the Man

Darren looks hard. That was the first thought to enter my head when I clapped eyes on him for the first time in a pub when we were introduced by a mutual friend. It was nice to put a face to a name. A name that I had seen in newspaper print and that I had heard mentioned in the local rumour mill. Darren is aged in his early 30s and stands 6 feet in height. His physique is stocky and heavy-set. One of his arms is intricately tattooed from the wrist up to the shoulder and his wife's name is tattooed onto his chest. Darren possesses the physique of a man who looks more than capable of handling himself during physical confrontation; and this physical appearance certainly does not lie. Since his late teens he has cultivated a fierce reputation for violence in the large town where he grew up and currently lives. For well over a decade he has been a committed member of a football hooligan crew. His violent exploits at home, and abroad, have secured him a respected place and an almost celebrity-like status amongst some of his friends and a wider network of male peers. In the parlance of the football hooligan subculture Darren is known for his 'gameness' during confrontations with rivals. And despite a reduction in his involvement during recent years, he is still

recognised and respected by many of the other men involved as one of the 'top lads' (Treadwell, 2010).

Young Rogue

Darren was born and spent the early years of his life with his parents in a pit village that lies in a large, de-industrialised urban conurbation where he now lives with his wife and their young child. When the first of Darren's two younger brothers was born, the family moved to a new housing development nearby where Darren lived until his late teens. Darren described himself as *"a bit of a rogue"* during his childhood and youth. He was first arrested during his mid-teens for vandalism. He began using drugs during his mid-teens and was able to acquire enough quantities of amphetamine and ecstasy to begin supplying to his close friends on a regular basis; providing him with sufficient funds to cover his own personal use. Darren developed a reputation for violence early in his life course – school provided him with a context in which to flex and cultivate this incipient reputation:

> *I was always known as a rogue, always in trouble at school, just got into fights, just enjoyed the buzz of a fight really...a lot of me family have got younger kids and they all say "Oh such and such is a right bastard, he's just got expelled from school" and they still use me to this day as an example, saying "Oh god he's not as bad as Darren though"... But I just saw everything as a bit of a challenge…babysitters were a challenge, know what I mean? I had the best of the best babysitters coming to look after me, and I saw it as a challenge to get rid of 'em. I remember this one lass, she was the daughter of me mum and dad's long friends, known 'em years, and apparently she were some sort of ice maiden they called her, and me mum guz "Oh you've had it na, she's coming to babysit you" and all I did was up me game. Think she lasted two visits and she ended up having some sort of breakdown or summat, and I felt brilliant do you know at the time*

Several babysitters later Darren finally met his match in a woman from the housing estate where he lived:

> *…there was only one that stuck with it like…And I used to just push her and push her, I remember like it wa yesterday…I once called her fat. And obviously you don't call women fat do you? ...and she absolutely hammered me, like really hammered me…proper punched me, like the lot, booted me. I can remember being really, I mean that were the first hammering I'd ever had, and I can remember crying, I was 14 summat like that, crying to me mum and dad, and they were just like "no" kind of thing.*

And I was going "no she really beat me up", and they just said "well serves you right"

At 16 years of age Darren left school and spent several years completing a paid work-based apprenticeship at a local college. He currently works in the skilled manufacturing sector and has done so since completing his apprenticeship. Several years ago he was promoted to a supervisory position. Darren was keen to point out his commitment to work and evidently takes a huge amount of pride in his occupation, and the talent and skill he possesses within this particular trade. He spoke proudly about how he had always been in employment since leaving school and emphasised quite strongly the normality of his familial background and upbringing; contrasting this with some of the highly negative media depictions of men who are involved in football violence:

> *...no broken home really, no crappy school story, no stereotypical kind of bloke you know...I'm not that at all. Always been in work, never claimed a penny off the state ever...I do smile to myself how the papers usually say "these drunken thuggish", I mean sometimes, a lot of times I've never even been drunk at a match, do you know what I mean? It's never been about that, broken home all this lot, me mum and dad were married, do you know what I mean? Just like a normal other family...never judge a book by its cover, cos I've got an ONC from college, and it's pretty hard to get, well certainly difficult for someone who messed about all the time at school...*

Although Darren had been regularly involved in fights during his teens, particularly in school, he remembers quite vividly an early encounter with serious violence in the area's night time economy, during which he was seriously assaulted:

> **Darren:** *When I was about 17 I got done over by a group of lads from (council estate). And after that it just changed everything for me around dealing with confrontations and feyting. I mean I'd had fights a lot in school but they tend to just be a few punches, a bit of a scuffle, nothing more don't they? But yeah, basically I'd been out in town…this kid comes up to me and sez "what you been saying to me bird?" And I put me hands up like saying "Wo wo alright mate, take it easy, who's your bird like? I don't know what you are on about". And next thing I know he just cracked me in the face, so I grabbed him and got him up against window of the takeaway and started hitting him, giving him a good hiding like, all his fuckin mates were in the takeaway weren't they, so they come straight out, about 5 or 6 of 'em, and just started laying into me. Got me on the floor and started booting me in the ribs and that...*

> **AE:** *How did that make you feel, getting an hiding like that?*

Darren: *Just reyt angry, fuckin reyt pissed off, cos I'd not even done owt. I mean I were never one of these fuckin pervy lads who hangs round other blokes' girlfriends or owt. But after that I learnt, don't bother wi this putting your hands up and that* (puts his hands up in a submissive, non-threatening manner)*, protesting your innocence, if someone comes at you like that just fuckin hit 'em. And that's what I have done. It meks me laugh cos a couple of the lads who were with 'em at the time, I know 'em na and they are proper reyt up me ass, I mean these lads didn't actually hit me like but they were there part of that group. And I always wonder if they know that I know they were there, cos at that time I was a nobody...*

Darren was unfortunate enough to experience the random violence that so often characterises contemporary urban night time economies and which can erupt with minimal provocation and forewarning (see Hobbs et al, 2003; Tomsen, 1997; Winlow and Hall, 2006). As his narrative recollections suggest, Darren attached great significance to this event and focused particularly upon its transformative impact: both in terms of how he would approach subsequent threatening encounters, but also how he viewed himself, at that time in his life, as *"a nobody"*, implying he became 'somebody' in the aftermath.

I Don't Fear Dying

When Darren reached his late teens his father became seriously ill. Darren had left the family home by this point and had bought a house with his then girlfriend. Despite some initial improvements in his father's condition following treatment, he then suddenly and unexpectedly worsened; and despite being re-admitted to hospital he passed away before Darren's 20th birthday:

Darren: *...it were just horrible, I still think about him every day...we always do stuff and kind of remember him, all me birthdays and every Christmas we go up to the cemetery where he is buried. But yeah just horrible...*

AE: *What sort of a relationship did you have with your dad before he passed away? Were you quite close?*

Darren: *Yeah we were very close like, but erm, I didn't, I don't think I took the illness, I mean I'd got a huge chip on my shoulder abaat it at the time. I were going out wi a lass from daan south at the time, and I wa travelling to and from hers every weekend or she'd be coming up 'ere. Wrapped up in me own little world really… I didn't take it seriously enough I don't think,*

well no I didn't tek it seriously enough cos if I did, if I knew he wouldn't be here I would have spent every single fuckin day with him...that's a huge regret that I've got, is not spending more time wi him...it's alright in hindsight isn't it looking back, but yeah that's abaat it just a normal relationship, more like matey than owt. Cos at that age, 18, 19, your dad starts being cool again doesn't he? And it's like he's your hero like til you're 13, then you don't want nowt to do wi him til you're ready for an ale, and then it's kind of stuff like that. So then he starts being more of your mate kind of thing...

Darren had begun attending football matches with his father. His father, during his youth, was a member of a gang of skinheads that hailed from a deprived council estate and was himself regularly involved in football violence as a young man. He was well-known and respected within the club's hooligan crew that was the early forerunner to the 'firm' that Darren is now involved with:

> **Darren:***...he used to go to the football matches and get involved in the bovver when it wa boot boys kind of thing, skin heads, he were one of the first skin heads round 'ere and that...He were from a rough background, school and that, but he med himself…he were intelligent, he got a good job, did well for the family, we weren't wealthy but we didn't go without much. But he were the same, I used to listen to stories, they were my bedtime stories as I got older...like I remember being mesmerised by stories, he didn't used to glorify 'em, but he told me about when they went to Tottenham and they had this fight, do you know what I mean? So I used to get hooked on it, I used to love all that...And he's well known amongst other fans in fact I have beers wi blokes who were his mates, who knocked about wi him*
>
> **AE:** *What do they always say about him like?*
>
> **Darren:** *Brilliant like, brilliant bloke, one in a million. Even na everybody who sez it, they can kind of see me in him kind of thing, just stuff like that.*

The trauma of losing his father had a significant impact on Darren's life and as his narrative above suggests, he was struggling with intense feelings of grief, regret, and loss. His memory of this period was blurred and Darren often found it difficult to recall specific details concerning this particular phase of his life course. It was in the wake of his father's death that Darren strongly sensed that there had been a significant shift and transformation within himself: from the young *"rogue"* and its connotations of a youthful, rebellious flirtation with deviance, into something far more *"sinister"*:

> **Darren:** *I were always a rogue at school…had trouble with the police more than a 13, 14 year old kid should have…I think at that time when I was, when that happened with my dad it took a more sinister kind of path...*
>
> **AE:** *What did you mean when you said it was a more sinister turn?*
>
> **Darren:** *Just the way I deal with things, the way I started dealing with things like... just them capabilities that everybody's got kind of thing of going that step further, but actually carrying it out...sort of like no fear... so maybe it was just laying beneath the surface, that sinister no fear kind of thing, and then that brought it on…way I can only describe it is erm, I didn't have any fear of dying, cos I thought, in my opinion I'll get to meet me dad again, know what I mean?*

Darren's relationship with his then girlfriend ended and she moved out of the home they had bought together. Darren sold the house and moved into a council flat with a friend. He began using illicit drugs more regularly and heavily, and following a series of tense arguments with his mother, became estranged from her and his two younger brothers having limited contact with them over a period of several years. Although Darren possesses a naturally large physique, he put considerably more effort into building this physicality, bulking up through weight training and steroids. He was also becoming more regularly involved in serious violence; particularly with the football firm. Prior to becoming involved in football violence, Darren already had a penchant for the casual clothing fashions that dominate the contemporary hooligan 'scene' (see Treadwell, 2008; 2010). Earning a regular wage from the age of 16, he had sufficient disposable income to adorn himself in expensive, designer clothing, which had begun to get him noticed at the matches:

> *I know a lot of people na wear Stone Island just cos of the Football Factory film, but I used to be into the clothes anyway. I started working straight from school, so I got into my clothes straightaway, used to go to other cities shopping for me Stone Island gear. And at that time it was only ever football lads that wore it, and I wore it cos I liked it, it wa good clobber. And obviously I used to stand out and I'd get kids, local lads who I recognised going "you from around ere?" And it just developed from there, you know on first name terms and all that lot...*

Darren travelled to an away match with some members of the firm and became involved in a violent altercation which caught the eye of some of the more established and older men involved:

...after the match I remember a big feyt happening wi a load of fans who'd travelled to feyt us lot and it went off in the train station. I were actually out on the station platform on me own and I ended up fighting with these rival lads, other lads from our firm were watching from the window, I laid one out and I were scrapping with the other one before the police arrived and chucked me on the train. I come onto the train just like a hero...I were obviously young, always been a biggish lad, and they just loved it, I were getting drinks bought and that were it then it just progressed from there, they wanted me. They wanted me to come wi 'em and that, and I did...

Knock Out

The socio-economic transformations that characterised the latter end of the 20th Century had a profound impact on criminal opportunities and cultures, which men with sufficient entrepreneurial acumen and reputations for violence were able to exploit (Hobbs, 1995; Winlow, 2001). Treadwell's (2010) ethnographic research with men involved in football violence and criminality, found that some men who have forged their reputations on the terraces are increasingly able to utilise and orientate this towards the more instrumental requirements of criminal markets, particularly drug supply. Having supplied small quantities of drugs to his close friends for some time, Darren found there was a growing demand in the night time economy for his services, where his reputation was getting him noticed:

Darren: ...I started dealing quite a bit*

AE: *So were you actually starting to mek money out of it at that point?*

Darren: *Yeah, but it was still mainly to my mates, like mainly with pills. And I remember I was going downtown and all me night were kind of took up by going to the toilets, and eventually it was mates of mates, then mates of those mates, and before I knew it, it was too easy money. And it were alreyt...I was always fighting, always, I started mingling a lot more with the football firm, and just feyting, every single week, every time I went out. And obviously it coincided with me making enemies, they obviously knew what I was doing...*

In a local nightclub where Darren and several of his friends had been regularly supplying drugs, tensions had been mounting with a number of the bouncers who looked after the doors. One busy evening a fight ensued and several of the door staff were hospitalised:

…It had been building up for a while, we had uz little corner and there were a few of us doing little bits of dealing…we were always scrapping,

never got chucked out cos the bouncers were wary of us. And this particular night they felt pretty confident, and we were out wi the women, me missus was there…they actually started it that night for summat very little. And it just went into a massive big riot, lights come on, club were full…we gid 'em a right hiding…as we came out some of the bouncers were begging us to stop…

Darren had been on bail at the time for a separate violent offence, but avoided arrest as he left the scene. His continued involvement in violence and his growing reputation within the town began to attract attention, and he was arrested one evening on suspicion of possessing Class A drugs with intent to supply. Fortunately, for Darren, he had decided not to take any drugs out with him on this particular night having just started seeing his girlfriend, now his wife, who had asked him not to bring any with him.

We were going out, trying to get to know each other, and she never saw me cos I was always in the toilets knocking things out. And she'd said "just this once don't go out wi anything on you". So I thought fuck it, yeah, I like her, like her a lot, I'll do it I'll prove to her...my girlfriend saying that to me at the time, it's like she's probably saved me, well she has. Cos usually I would go out with 20 or 30 [Ecstasy pills] *easily...they stripped searched me and everything and I didn't have owt on me...and because they didn't find anything on me they couldn't search me house. So that obviously would have been a big jail sentence for that...*

Darren suspected that it was one of his newly acquired *"enemies"* who had informed the police that he was dealing. Feeling increasingly paranoid and not wishing to push his luck, Darren sold the remaining several hundred pills he had stashed at his house and ended his stint as a regular drug dealer:

...I just thought no this is too much of a risk. So once I'd done that lot that was it. And from that just dabbled a bit, I learnt a big lesson from that, I mean I never really trusted anyone then, but never tell anybody owt as regards to stuff like that. And also I were just sorting my mates out again...It weren't hard to stop doing it, it were hard missing out on the money. I were never loaded with it, it just got me out kind of thing and that was it really...I was making enough money to go out and I never wanted to pack in work or owt like that because I always knew that would be the actual, well me downfall...

The Firm Lad

Despite possessing many of the crucial ingredients that would be necessary for a successful career in criminality - violent potential and repute, respect, contacts, and knowledge of local criminality - Darren retracted his own involvement and resumed his small-scale supply operation to just a small circle of his trusted friends. The highly coveted cultural and material benefits that one can accrue from a career in serious criminality (Hall et al, 2008; Hobbs, 1995) did not seem to hold much allure for Darren, who is committed to his employment and is evidently far more attracted to the excitement, thrills, and the seductive aspects (see Katz, 1988) of the football hooligan subculture and identity:

> *I was obsessed with been a hooligan, I were absolutely obsessed with it...if they could bottle that up, what you get, the buzz you get at a football match, actually fighting wi the other lads, if you could bottle that up it would be worth ten times more than coke, there's no feeling like it ever...*

Apart from these surface level pleasures and attractions to committing violence, Darren described the pleasure and enjoyment he derived from being part of a fraternity of other men who fought together. Particularly the strong sense of camaraderie and the recognition he received from the older men involved:

> *...I don't actually fuckin fight for nowt in my eyes, even though most people say "Oh football is a load of bollocks, there's nowt to fight over football for", but it's not about that it's about like the whole mentality, the whole fuckin bravado, the whole fuckin, that little town mentality thing, come to football, come to here and try and tek piss if you want but you're gunna fuckin get it. And the same when you go away, little old us in your big city…and we're fuckin tearing the place up, do you know what I mean?...I'm no psychologist but maybe, like I wa obviously a young lad and most of the lads part of the hooligan element at that time were older lads, and maybe there is summat in it somewhere that I was looking for that father figure kind of thing, do you know what I mean? Or not looking for a father figure, but I liked being around older blokes...*

Football firms serve as contexts for the formation of collective and individual masculine identities through mutual involvement in violence and particular forms of conspicuous consumption (Ayres and Treadwell, 2012). By virtue of their established reputations and extensive experience of violence, older members can become approximations of iconic role models for younger members (Ayres and Treadwell, 2012). When pressed further on the subject of seeking an

approximation of a father figure or male role model, Darren was ambivalent; initially suggesting that this was not the case. Later when relaying a series of amusing anecdotes about a close friend of his, the issue of a father figure re-surfaced, unprompted, in Darren's narrative:

> **Darren:** *...my best mate at the time* (says name) *don't know if you've heard of him? Absolute fuckin' psychopath...*
>
> **AE:** *Yeah I've heard that name before. So you and him were pretty good mates like?*
>
> **Darren:** *Yeah...he's done it all mate…there's not many whose done more than him to be honest, he wa just a fuckin' fruit bowl like. And we bounced off each other and that were funny like cos we were always trying to outdo each other all time. And at that period in time, I would say, just before I met me wife, I would say it was the best time of me life. Cos if anything, going back to that father figure, that's probably the one I did cling to. He's only 7 or 8 years older than me, but when I wa younger I'd heard loads of stories abaat him. He wasn't like, it's hard to say, if you think of somebody like err, to say that they're a top lad, football lad, normal people would just think the hardest lad, but I know hard lads, really hard lads, who have lost their bottle before. And I've known lads who can't really fight, fuckin never go anywhere like, know what I mean? Might be 9 stone wet through, but never go anywhere and will stand and fight all day long. So to me, a top lad is a mixture of both, and he were game as fuck, he never ever gi up anywhere…*

Darren himself was rapidly gaining respect and becoming popular within the firm for his 'bottle' – the willingness to get involved in violence even in the face of strong opposition, which is highly valued within the football hooligan subculture (Armstrong, 1998). But more than this, it was his evident fighting skill, physical prowess, and his uncompromising ferocity and unrestrained rage during violent encounters that fuelled the general aura of menace that surrounded him:

> **Darren:** *… I get to a point where you can't return kind of thing where I get all that nervous energy and start like laughing to me sen and then that's it you're gone…in a fight I don't ever think to myself…oh best gi ore* (stop) *now or owt, it's just fuckin go and do as much damage until you get pulled off or whatever…That's my style of fighting, I just keep going. Even though I'm a big lad and I am powerful wi me fists…I don't just think to myself just punch them…I just go for it, I've bitten people before and all sorts…I've hit people with stools, chairs…ash trays*
>
> **AE:** *…do you ever feel any kind of sympathy for 'em* (victims)*…?*
>
> **Darren:** *No, I never have actually…that's probably where I'm wrong wi it, cos a lot of people who I know…they do feel sorry for somethings, but I*

don't…I've never started a fight wi anybody who ant deserved, who I don't think has deserved it

It was immediately after an away match that Darren's enthusiasm and his appetite for violence led him into dangerous territory:

We were walking up and there were loads of their lads coming over the road at us, and there were only two policemen wi us. Police were trying to beat them back wi batons. Meanwhile I'm walking daan towards 'em [rival lads] *saying "Come on come on" like, and they were piling out of this boozer which I didn't see. My mates are further up and shouting "get up 'ere, stick together", I were away from our lot, still hell bent on getting these to come over and then next minute police cordoned them lot off, cordoned our lot off...and within a split second I was on me own, trapped down this street at the side of a bridge, and I got done over... I had some reyt bovver down that side...From what I can remember they were coming at me, I was just feytin' like fuck, I put one on the floor, and then another one I were havin' a good feyt wi him...then one just come flying in wi a kick in the side, and then that were it, that's what did it. And I were just powerless to, I can't really remember, I didn't black out or owt but I can't really remember what happened then, it just seemed like it were going forever. I still remember what they were saying na, what were they callin' me na, err, woolly back? Were it woolly back? Or sheep shagger or summat* (laughs) *summat like that...*

Prior to this incident, Darren had enjoyed some *"good results"* during confrontations with rival lads. Through a combination of his own evident skill as a fighter and the protection of large numbers of older and more experienced men, he had managed to avoid being seriously assaulted. Darren's narrative above, and further below, reveals the psychological and emotional traumas that can haunt the memories of men who have experienced, directly, the utter powerlessness and passivity experienced during physical domination. His inability to remember in much detail what happened to him is symptomatic of the traumatic nature of the event and his own psyche's inability to accept and memorise fully an event that threatens to shatter his ideal ego (Zizek, 2002; 2006) – his internalised ideal image of himself:

...I felt that down afterwards that I'd, not so much got an hiding, but my pride took an hammering. Cos, well I was always in bother anyway, but, put it this way I don't lose many [fights]*, especially at that time. So my pride took more of a hammering than anything else. Bruises heal after a few days, it were a pride thing*

Like the night he was assaulted outside the takeaway during his late teens, Darren found himself, once again, powerless in the face of a numerically advantaged enemy and tried doggedly to salvage a sense of dignity from the incident by fighting back. The aim here was to retrieve what little one can from a highly traumatising and humiliating situation through a display of stoic resistance and fortitude in the face of what are unassailable opponents (see Winlow and Hall, 2006).

> **Darren:** *...that changed me as regards to me actual doings on a football day*
>
> **AE:** *In what way did it change you after that?*
>
> **Darren:** *Just mainly making sure that I was, I used me brain more kind of thing. Knowing when not to kick off...knowing that I'm not invincible for a start. But I sound a bit of a hypocrite because after that, I feel, there's times when I feel that confident and that, I feel like I can tek on anyone. But it took something to mek me feel invincible, not invincible sorry, you know what I mean?*
>
> **AE:** *Yeah*
>
> **Darren:** *It's a weird kind of feeling, I'm not sure I understand what I'm trying to say, but its, yeah it took that to knock me daan a peg or two, but in other ways it's probably med me as better hooligan as I'd ever be, do you know what I mean? If that had happened I might have just been one of these that went and did little bits and bobs when numbers were in the favour, rather than actually doing stuff, and not been the main man in the firm kind of thing, but been certainly one of them up there that meks decisions. I know it sounds a bit petty in a way, but there is decisions to be med...*

Rather than serving as deterrents that may have induced passivity within him and a reluctance to experience those traumatic emotions again, his memories of experiencing powerlessness in such acutely undignified circumstances made Darren more determined than ever to be a competent fighter and football hooligan. For Darren, the humiliation of being badly beaten represented a learning process on the journey towards becoming the man that he became, and is, today:

> *...there's been times since then* (since being violently assaulted) *where I've had a confrontation and I've just fronted 'em and it's worked. Like I've had lads start shit with me, and I've said "reyt get outside away from the cameras, cos what I'm going to do to you I don't want no fuckin cameras watching it" and they've gone, "Oh fuck yer then" and they've backed off. But that's how you've got to be wi people. At a match once I dove head*

first into opposition lads and I got escorted out of the ground by the stewards and about 12 or 15 of their lads come out after me. Gates got locked behind me and I'd got a load of their lads waiting, now I had nowhere to run, and if you run you'll only get done over worse down some fuckin back alley, so I just bounced up to 'em going "come on then, lets fuckin have it then" and they didn't do owt at first cos they must have been thinking, he's on his own, why is he so confident? There must be other lads wi him, and there weren't, and a riot van pulls up couple of seconds later, police get out and grab me to put me in the van, and I were laughing at 'em all (their lads) *and coppers were laughing at 'em too cos just me, one lad had fronted 'em all*

Darren's exploits, both home and away, continued to fuel his budding reputation, and not just locally. He began attending England international matches, meeting other men involved in football violence and acquiring contacts in other firms from across the country, which enabled him to play an increasing role in organising pre-arranged 'meet ups' and 'offs' with his club's rivals.

Went to England matches...Meeting other lads from other firms, meeting for drinks, going daan meeting for fights and all that lot, and there were a time when...most football firms had heard of me. I've got a mate who goes to watch [local team]*, he knows some lads from their firm...Well he was trying to get me to go with them, cos he'd heard stuff, cos you do hear stuff on the grapevine. And obviously internet were a big thing, and it giz you that buzz, that buzz of going somewhere else and knowing* [you are known amongst rivals]*...*

Darren embraced whole heartedly the football casuals' identity and culture, revelling in the notoriety and reputation that he was gaining. Living in a large urban conurbation with several rival firms in close proximity, the threat of violence remained a constant, and something that Darren had to manage strategically even when he wasn't 'looking for it':

Darren: *It's all the lifestyle kind of thing, it alters all your way of thinking and everything*

AE: *…have you ever had trouble when you've been out wi your missus and that? Maybe off lads who recognise your face?*

Darren: *Yeah I've had quite a bit…We* (Darren, his wife, and another couple) *went up* (nearby city)*…and I said to me mate "don't wear Stone Island or owt…" I know it's not important what we are wearing like but we had to think abaat it, cos we are going wi the girlfriends…So we dressed down a bit, gets to the bar and it's just absolutely full wall to wall with* (local firm) *lads. Looked at me mate and I thought fuckin hell.*

Darren was acquainted with several members of this firm who approached him while he was in the bar and engaged in friendly conversation with him. However, one individual took exception to Darren and his friend, and attempted to escalate the situation into violence. After Darren, his wife and their friends had left the bar, at the behest of the door staff that had intervened in the developing confrontation, several men from the bar pursued them and a fight broke out in the middle of the street:

> *Gets round the corner from the bar, and abaat 20 of 'em come daan, and it just kicked off in the middle of the street, we were feyting like fuck…I couldn't concentrate on fighting cos I were worried about our lass…me mate got hit ore head wi a, they put pool balls in a sock, and thing wi me is I don't mind* (football team the men represented), *I mean I don't like 'em, I'm glad when they lose. But their lads wise, I just thought leave 'em too it like. And they've always had a grudging respect for us cos we hate their main rivals probably more than they do in a way…Tried to get hold of this kid's name, I did get hold of his name* (lad who started the fight), *but couldn't get hold of him. I put word out to his mates saying like I wanna fuckin meet yer like one on one…And I'm not saying he refused to, but it never materialised. So after that I just took it upon me sen that any lads down here who were* (members of that firm) *we just turned 'em over, week after week…every single week we were hammering lads just for revenge…Just to show like, cos they were coming down here* (before) *and they got left alone…*

Darren's persistent involvement in violence eventually resulted in him receiving a custodial sentence after he was involved in a fight between two large groups of men outside a city centre pub:

> *...it* (prison) *didn't do owt, went back to me old job* (upon release)*, it just upset our lass. It wouldn't have upset our lass if I'd just got hours on a Sunday, give up me Sunday football I would have fuckin hated it, but it wouldn't have interfered wi owt she did, know what I mean?...at that time she were only part time* (working) *cos she were studying at college. And you don't get benefits when your bloke's in jail, well you shouldn't anyway*

Despite the limited impact that prison had on reforming his views of violence, Darren's prison term was the catalyst for helping to re-build relationships with his brothers and his mother, who he had not seen regularly for some time. It wasn't until I had got to know Darren a little better that he opened up more about some of the difficulties he and his family faced after his father had passed away:

> *...me and her* (Darren's mother) *are very alike, and like we clash. I wouldn't say I'm quick tempered but we can be if it's the slightest little thing, it could be a little thing that winds us both up and that was it really.*

And obviously me mood swings were, I wa really caning the drugs at the time, unbeknown to me, only looking back now at it that it could have been that, but at the time you don't really realise that you've got bad moods or whatever...every time I went down to the house, me mum's house, we'd be arguing, so then obviously with me brothers, she'd be saying "I don't want you coming round to the house again" and all this lot. And I'd be like "alreyt I'm not fuckin bothered anyway" but obviously me brothers were daan there...so, yeah I didn't see much of 'em...

Darren was unable to say exactly for how long he did not see his family, but over a period of roughly four years it seems there had only been minimal contact.

Darren: *...see my brother always says to me that, erm, I wrote him a letter when I was in jail, I can remember writing a letter...And it was just saying like, I love you and all this lot*

AE: *Yeah*

Darren: *Sorry we've not been, but I can't, I can't actually remember not getting on, so like it being that long, cos me dad died...and I remember it been about a year after that is when me and my mum fell out and I didn't see my brothers properly, erm, for about, I don't know (sighs) I can't remember to be honest...but it was a while, I mean I'd certainly not been to the house for a good 18 months anyway... And then, my brother seems to remember, he says he read this letter and he was crying when he read this letter and that's what med him, and since then we're like best mates, we're inseparable. And obviously I am like that father figure to my youngest brother. But yeah everyone sez we're proper close, we are really close we do most things together. But I'm...surprised it was that long kind of thing. Whether he thought that I weren't really bothered about him, do you know what I mean? In them few years after. It just seems if you look back at it from like when I fell out (with his mum)...them four years, I wouldn't say I fell out with them or didn't have much to do with them for that four years, but it sounds like I have...Cos he sez it was that letter that changed things like*

AE: *So did he write to you first?*

Darren: *No, I wrote to him first. My mum came to see me in prison and my brother came, but I didn't want my youngest brother to come, how old was he? He'd have been 12, 13, but I didn't want him to come*

AE: *Was it just the thought of him coming to see you while you were inside? Was that quite difficult?*

Darren: *No I just didn't want him to go through that like, know what I mean? Ideally I wouldn't want anyone to have to go through, getting searched and all that bollocks. But obviously I wouldn't want our lass having to do it, but I obviously wanted to see her. So it's not reyt nice, especially for a woman*

to be searched and that. So no I just didn't want him bothered, he was still at school and that

AE: *Yeah. So you actually did have some contact during that time but it just didn't feel like you'd seen each other?*

Darren: *Yeah that's what it must have been, must have been just little or nothing kind of thing. Cos I can't like, I just remember it being about 18 months when I like really didn't have much to do with 'em like cos of me mum, but they must have seen it as a bit longer period of time. Because when I got with my wife, she changed my opinions, well not changed my opinions…she encouraged me to go and sort things out with my mum, I mean we still fall out now me and me mum, but not like we did*

During the past several years Darren has been less involved in football violence for a variety of reasons: marriage, work commitments, and the recent birth of his first child, have reduced his time and opportunities. Serving a custodial sentence and the financial and emotional strains this placed upon his wife has also shackled Darren with a sense of guilt and regret. Being well-known to local police, Darren has genuine reason to be cautious. The distinct lack of recent on-the-field success for the team that Darren follows and fights for, has also contributed to a reduction in his and several others' involvement. Occasionally the fixtures throw up a derby against one of the club's many local rivals, or a cup tie with a big club presents a 'tasty' prospect for Darren, which brings him and many of the other older lads back in their droves. Match days for Darren now tend to consist of putting on some 'decent clobber', having a few beers and a few lines of 'sniff' (cocaine) with the other lads. Gone are the days of Darren going from pub-to-pub actively looking for rival lads. But if he happens to find himself in a potentially violent situation he certainly won't hesitate, as the opening to this chapter indicated.

A new generation of enthusiastic, youthful hooligans have begun to step in and adopt the collective identity of the firm. Many of whom clearly idolise Darren, as one of his close friends joked with me and some of the other lads while we travelled to an away match on a train:

"Alright lads, form an orderly queue to shake Darren's hand!"

Darren is rarely without an entourage on match days: later that evening while we stood congregated in a nightclub, Darren, clad in a brightly coloured Stone Island

coat with a bottle of beer in his hand, was constantly surrounded by groups of young men eager to talk to and to be seen with him. In the contemporary context, where many of the historical sources of working class masculinity – heavy industry, manual work and unionised politics – have become increasingly less relevant for young men, personal reputation remains a 'surviving facet of masculine credibility...that can attain male respect' (Armstrong, 1998, p.156). Despite his more intermittent involvement in the football hooligan 'scene', Darren still values violence immensely and maintains a strong attachment to the celebrity-like status that his violent reputation have bestowed upon him:

> …a lot of people know who I am in town, and not wanting to sound big headed or anything, they tend to stay away from me…I've always been quite loud, but as I've got older I've got not quieter, but I like to assess situations you know what I mean? And I just go into me own little world…Cos that's what me mates say, they say when I'm about to start fighting I start smiling at people, smiling at 'em and I'll just be sat there wi me drink…And I know for a fact that they know my name, do you know what I mean? But they don't know that it's me, that's what's fuckin funny…that's why I laugh about stuff, I'm quite smug abaat stuff, I mean they're all 9, 10 stone wet through and I just think fuckin hell, I don't even want to do it (use violence) cos it would be embarrassing like. Whereas they'll just see this biggish…lad, who's a bit quiet…but if I said "I'm Darren", which I wouldn't say…In fact I probably have said it before, or dropped it in conversation. Like if someone comes in and they're acting a bit clever, saying "What's up wi your like?" "Where you from?" I'll tell 'em like, they'll say "Do you know such and such?" I'll go "yeah yeah". They'll ask "What's your name?" I'll tell 'em me name and they'll go "Oh hey up mate, you alreyt? I've heard loads abaat you" Or they'll know me brothers...But that does mek me laugh.

Darren has recently re-acquainted himself with boxing having trained regularly during his youth. I saw him about a week after a fight - one of his eyes was still bruised and heavily bloodshot, and an old injury had re-surfaced in one of his hands:

> **Darren:** I'll definitely do it again, it were brilliant…he come out and all he wanted to do was knock me head off…My trainer said I was trying to box him now and again, but it's hard to box someone when they're fuckin windmilling you, so I just windmilled back. And the first two rounds are just like a street brawl outside a fuckin' night club in town
>
> **AE:** (start laughing) Yeah
>
> **Darren:** (laughs) yeah but it were fuckin brilliant though cos that's what I do, know what I mean?...my trainer rung me few days later obviously when

it had all calmed down, he sez "are you happy?" And I said I was a bit pissed off I didn't like box as well as I could have. But he just said he thought I was brilliant like, he said he'd been doing it for 30 years and he's never known anyone have bigger balls than me, to come back like I did, that second round I took some big shots…Everyone said it was the fight of the night and it wa, but yeah it were really good, reyt enjoyed it. All my family came, family travelled from other parts of the country to see it like, my granddad was there, he were reyt proud like. Like I say I loved it, I'll definitely do it again…I love the buzz out of it and I think you've got to get that aggression out. I have to get aggression out somehow …I do enjoy boxing. Love watching it, enjoy doing it and at end of the day I might be able to get a lot of aggression out in that way as well…

Stand and Trade

Torrential rain falls steadily against the car windscreen. I wipe away some of the condensation that has begun to form on the windows with the back of my hand and stare out into the gloom, which is penetrated only by the sombre yellow and red lights from the other cars on the motorway. The conversation veers between the day's football results, one of the lad's recent trips to Ibiza, and Darren's fight that is taking place later in the evening. A large bottle of Peroni lager gets passed around; I take a swig and pass it on. We exit the motorway, following the Sat Nav to the working men's club. We park the car down the street from the club, jump out, and walk briskly through the rain; dodging the various puddles that are scattered along the street. Turning down an alleyway towards the entrance we are met by large groups of smokers huddled together either side of the entrance underneath the little shelter that is available from the downpour. Three middle-aged women stand just inside the main entrance exchanging tickets for wristbands; I handover my ticket to one of the women who promptly slaps a luminous green band around my wrist. I step past the imposing figures of the three muscular and heavily tattooed bouncers that guard the door to the main hall. Several hundred people are stood around the ring, which is situated towards the back of the hall; the aptly chosen Rocky 4 soundtrack plays in the background. I head to the bar and buy a round of drinks, which are handed to me in plastic cups – the management clearly aren't taking any chances with tonight's clientele. We stand towards the rear of the hall with our drinks and survey the room, some of which is populated by football hooligans, drug dealers, and other men with violent reputations. Occasionally I see lads I recognise from the football matches, who come over to us; shaking hands and exchanging brief pleasantries.

The compere announces that Darren's fight is imminent, which is followed by a chorus of cheers from the audience. We jostle for a good spot near the ring to watch the action. His opponent comes to the ring first with his trainer and is given a frosty reception with a few boos and jeers. Darren emerges from the back of the hall where we came in earlier, draped in the replica shirt of the football team he, and most of the other lads, support. The noise level in the hall cranks up a decibel, as his following of almost a hundred people make themselves heard. He struts towards his corner of the ring, weaving through the crowds flanked by his trainer and assistant. He steps into the ring and salutes his large following by raising his fist in the air. He and his opponent come to the centre of the ring for the referee to give his instructions; their gloves meet and they return to their respective corners in anticipation of the bell. It rings and both fighters meet in the middle, guards raised, and begin to trade punches. Darren starts cautiously, maintaining his high guard, trying to catch his opponent with his jab. The early stages of the round are fairly even, but it isn't long before Darren starts to encounter difficulty. His opponent has a longer reach and he begins to land punches to Darren's head. Darren tries to get in close to his opponent, keeping his guard up and trying to land punches of his own, but he is kept at bay. The punches become more intense, and following an exchange of blows between the two at close quarters, Darren drops to the canvas on one knee after being hit several times. Groans rise up from the crowd and Darren's disappointment and frustration is evident - he swears to himself while shaking his head in anger. The referee checks Darren is okay; he is. His head and chest are now red from the impact of the blows. The round resumes. His opponent continues to keep his distance and Darren struggles to get near him.

The fighters come out for the second round and Darren appears to be gathering momentum in the early stages, landing a few punches to his opponent's head, each blow bringing loud cheers and more enthusiastic encouragement from the crowd:

> *"Go on Darren", "come on lad"* emanate constantly from various sections of the crowd.

However, Darren is unable to capitalise, as his opponent is clearly a skilled boxer and quickly moves out of Darren's reach before more blows can be landed. In a brief melee of punches Darren's nose is left bloodied; he runs his glove along his nostrils to wipe the blood away, which is left smeared across his face. Darren catches his opponent with a blow to the head much to the delight of the crowd;

his opponent retorts with his own brand of sarcasm, wobbling his knees together and rotating his head to feign being 'punch drunk'. A roar of boos erupt from the crowd in response to his unsportsmanlike behaviour. The lads stood in Darren's corner shout abuse and threats at his opponent.

The round comes to a close and Darren is breathing heavily and is very red faced from the physical exertion and the impact of the blows. The 3rd round starts with both fighters continuing in a similar vein to the previous two. The skill of his opponent begins to show and he lands a few punches to Darren's head which forces Darren into the corner; his opponent advances, reining blows on Darren who raises his guard to defend himself. Darren's gum shield is knocked from his mouth during the melee and the referee temporarily stops the fight. Consultation takes place between Darren's trainer and the referee, and his trainer takes the decision to retire Darren from the fight. Darren's frustration and disappointment is obvious; he shakes his head and is clearly keen for the fight to continue despite the amount of punches he has taken. After the decision is announced his opponent walks over to Darren's corner, they embrace and he holds Darren's arm aloft. Sections of the crowd, particularly the lads around Darren's corner, continue to boo and shout abuse at his opponent.

The music is turned back on as preparations begin for the final fight of the evening. The lads I'm with talk amongst themselves about the fight; much of the conversation is dominated by the context of the encounter, as one of the lads feels that had the fight been outside the ring the other fighter's boxing skills wouldn't have counted for much:

> *Darren's a brawler, not a boxer. If it was a feyt in a pub or a street brawl that kid's skill wouldn't have meant owt, cos Darren is the sort of lad that doesn't give a fuck and will just physically dominate you, jump on you, and bite your face or fuckin ear off*

As I stand amidst the incessant chatter of the crowd, listening to the lads' conversations about the fight while sipping my beer, I try to imagine how Darren must be feeling about this defeat – his first defeat as an amateur boxer. I am reminded of previous conversations where Darren described occasions when he had taken a beating (outside the ring) and how important it seemed to him to be able to take something away from an encounter which seriously undermines the self-image he projects to others. He had reiterated to me that even in the face of superior opposition you cannot show fear, and it is better to keep fighting: to, as he put it, *stand* in front of them and *trade* punches with them, even if you know you cannot win. From Darren's perspective he did this tonight; but I doubt

whether that will be enough for him. And I wonder if Darren too is reminding himself of the controlled context of tonight's fight and that when you are outside the ring where there are no referees, no trainers with white towels, no ropes, and no 'rules', it's how far you are prepared to go, rather than skill, that matters most. (Fieldwork notes)

Discussion

Through exploring Darren's life history we can detect several reasons for his persistent involvement in violence, which are permeated by varying motivations: desire for thrills, excitement and the *"buzz"* feature strongly, as does a sense of collective solidarity and identity from associating with like-minded men. But violence also represents a means for Darren to elevate himself above others.

It is clear that his varied motivations and the life history within which these are embedded do not fit into many of the conventional explanatory frameworks for violent behaviour which tend to dominate criminology's theoretical repertoire. Particularly those that have at their centre the rational, calculated subject (Wieviorka, 2009); or the unfortunate, misunderstood impoverished subject – a product of a draconian state, and media induced moral panics, whose violence represents a slightly misguided form of resistance (Hall and Winlow, 2012). Despite evidence of performativity in Darren's masculinity through his physical appearance and occasional bravado, neither does his violence appear to represent an alternative means for him to 'do' masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993). Being employed, married, a father, and financially stable, Darren possesses many of the means necessary to 'be' masculine legitimately. Nor does his violence seem to represent a subjugated 'protest' that enforces the structured relations of patriarchy and allows him to reap the 're-worked dividend' spoils that benefit him and his male counterparts (Connell, 2005a). Rather, masculinity and subjectivity in the case of Darren is far more nuanced, complex, and is informed through biographical experience, memory, and their interaction with broader culture and economy (see also Gadd and Jefferson, 2007; Hall, 2012).

Importantly, this case study reveals how violence *emerged* during Darren's childhood and youth as something that fascinated, excited, and, importantly, *made sense* to him: the sense of awe and wonderment he possessed for his reputed and respected late father, the exhilaration Darren experienced during

confrontations, and the early fledgling reputation he gained amongst his peer group for his willingness to fight. All of which confirmed to him that violence is a potentially useful resource which 'can be adopted and made one's own' (Winlow, 2012, p.209) – and violence representing something for 'one's own' is an important analytical point here. Darren attached great significance to several incredibly traumatic events that occurred during the latter stages of his youth. These appeared to signal a subsequent transformation and shift within him and his positioning within his immediate milieu, towards extreme volatility, a 'nothing to lose' mentality, and an intense desire to be recognised and feared as 'somebody' within his community and beyond. Violence, and the ability to wield it competently, gradually became a defining feature of his self-identity and something to which he could make recourse with little restraint and a minimal amount of genuine critical reflection.

Clearly, from simply observing him, Darren identifies strongly, and has done since his youth, with a masculinity that is embodied in powerful, virile physicality and violent potential. These are traits and qualities that had been possessed by his late father and the other 'hard men' that Darren admires, and that are associated with the durable 'visceral cultures' (Hall, 1997) that linger in the economically defunct ex-industrial community that he has emerged from. Darren has striven to emulate this iconic image of the respected and feared hard man, who wields violence in return for a particular form of cultural capital that is granted to those few men who are successfully violent (Hobbs, 1995; Winlow, 2001). We can detect in Darren's narrative the melding of this 'archaic' masculine imagery and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) with wider hegemonic cultural currents under neo-liberal consumer capitalism, which increasingly promotes and inspires individuality, social distinction, narcissism and interpersonal envy (see Hall et al, 2008). Certainly Darren's biography is indicative of the changing life and identity trajectories of some working class men in post-industrial Britain, where work, violence, crime, entrepreneurialism and consumerism can meld into new hybridised identities (Hobbs, 2012; Treadwell, 2010; Winlow, 2001).

Yet, this exterior image of intimidating, powerful, dominant masculinity is ambivalent, as it belies the catalogue of evident vulnerabilities and insecurities that co-exist with this potential dangerousness: the violent victimisation he has experienced, as well as the emotional difficulties and traumas that Darren has

grappled with during his adult life. Indeed, trauma, anger, bitterness, and resentment seem to drive his uncompromising rage and violent potential, which seems to be a crucial prop in a façade that conceals this background static of troubling emotions. Certainly, such insecurities are dominant themes in Darren's life course - in a very *real* sense through the threat of violence from others present in his immediate environment. Although a desire for dominance and self-elevation can be detected, his violence has evidently been stimulated by an intense desire to avoid the terrifying abyss of insignificance, indignity, and humiliation that he believes awaits those men who will stand by passively while others attempt to dominate them – men who won't *stand and trade.*

In sum then, this chapter presents a highly complex picture of one man's biography, identity and his relationship to interpersonal violence across his life course. The themes that emerge from Darren's case study provide a broad range of analytical hooks upon which to hang and explore the experiences and stories of the other men involved in the ethnographic fieldwork. This will now be the focus of the next three chapters.

Chapter Five

Violent Beginnings: Childhood, Youth and Violence

The previous chapter used the life history of one participant to reveal some of the analytical themes that emerged from studying - using in-depth ethnographic methods - the lives of several men involved in violence. These I argue, are significant in the formation of violent masculinities. The next three chapters will focus on data gathered from the other men involved in the research and explores these analytical themes in more depth. Beginning with a focus upon childhood and youth in this chapter, to address the question of how and why it is that some men come to value physical violence.

As was the case with Darren, each participant is referred to using their pseudonym. There are short 'pen portraits' of the men who participated, providing brief biographical information arranged in alphabetical order by pseudonym, in Appendix 1. I encourage the reader to look at these before reading on. These are a useful guide that the reader can regularly refer back to as required, to enable them to follow each participant's life history and to contextualise their specific experiences of violence.

The relatively small amount of literature reviewed in chapter two that has explored in detail the early biographical histories and childhoods of violent men, alludes to a number of significant influencing factors that are confined to individual psycho-subjective experiences (abusive childhoods; familial experiences and relationships; issues of trauma, humiliation, shame etc.) and the broader social world and context (peer groups; neighbourhood and community; culture and political economy). With only a few recent, notable exceptions (see Jones, 2008; 2012; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007; Ray, 2011; Treadwell and Garland, 2011; Winlow and Hall, 2009; Winlow, 2012), very few studies have attempted to integrate these psychological and social factors into their overall analysis. What follows in this chapter, is an exploration of several psycho-subjective and socio-cultural related themes present in these men's narratives of

their early lives that revolve around notions of developing masculinity and its connections with violence and dominance.

Fathers to Sons: Defence and Dominance

The role and influence of their father as a symbolic representation of powerful, dominant masculinity was a theme discussed extensively by some of the men. Exploring Darren's life history previously, revealed the significance of his father's reputation locally and the way in which Darren interpreted this and described its impact upon his own identity. Winlow (2012) discusses the role and presence of 'a domineering and violent father' (p.206) and the significance of this within the context of violent men's biographies. Although as Winlow points out, and I too concur, a domineering and violent father does not need to be present to orientate an individual towards violence, and some of the other participants' fathers were neither violent nor domineering. An emphasis is given in this section of the chapter to those men who experienced this and how they engaged with the presence of domineering father figures who embodied violent potential and volatility.

Stand Up for Yourselves

Brothers Gary and Paul are not what criminologists might call 'persistent' or 'dangerous' violent offenders. Their biographies are not characterised by the frequent and often serious forms of violence that some of the other men in this study have been involved in; particularly those that have come into contact with criminal markets. Although Gary and Paul have experience of violence and are adept at deploying it, they do not actively seek notoriety for this. Nor are they particularly interested 'in riding the waves of dread and sycophancy that excessively violent men can generate in their locales' (Winlow and Hall, 2006, p.143). Although amongst small localised networks of male peers the brothers are known to be competent fighters to such an extent that most of those who know, or are aware of them, will not actively seek to challenge or offend them.

They grew up together with their parents on a small housing estate in a large town and early in their childhoods were encouraged by their father to 'stand

up for themselves' and to not hesitate to resort to violence if the situation required it:

> **Gary:** *I think it goes back to how we were both brought up...me dad told us to like stick up for ourselves. Like, don't be afraid to get involved if someone is in your face giving you some shit and you can't get out of it, don't be afraid to deal with it. And from then on…me and Paul have always had a good handle on those kind of situations...obviously me and my brother have both been in our fair share of scrapes* (fights and threatening situations)*, and I think it's just the way we've both been brought up...not like a tough upbringing but kind of like a straight one. So like if someone's in your face, someone is bullying you, pushing you around, shit like that, don't be afraid to stand up for yourself. And if it means you have to get involved then don't hesitate…*

The use of the word *"straight"* by Gary is interesting and hints at the value he feels of his father's influence in his early life and the psychosomatic abilities this has endowed him with. A point which I will return to in more detail below after hearing from Paul, who discusses in more depth the influence of their father:

> **Paul:** *Me dad always used to say, if you are getting bullied or anything like that it's like, me dad would never have condoned me for hitting anyone, me dad always used to say* (impersonates his dad's voice) *"Well if they deserved it then they deserved it" and that would be it, that's all you would get out of him. Na he would never sort of say "I want you to go and hit people", but he would never say, surely there's a better way of solving it. He'd say "well if you hit 'em they'll not come and do it again" sort of thing, that was always me dad's approach. Me mum was always the exact opposite she'd say to me dad "You shouldn't be telling them this, you shouldn't encourage that kind of behaviour" know what I mean? So very different schools of thought from me mum and dad…I just felt like I didn't want people to get away with like wronging me or pushing me about. So that's what I would do, I would lash out. And then if I got into trouble for it like at school or anything like that, what I would do is I would tell me dad first…Cos I know he would then say "Well if they had it coming then they had it coming" sort of thing. And it was like a protector from me mum's bollocking then, cos I know me dad agrees with that…*

Gary and Paul's discussions of their father and his advice to them are somewhat ambivalent and underscored by a strong air of ambiguity, with him seeming to neither strictly encourage nor entirely discourage violence. Rather, their memories of his advice are woven into a set of injunctions and personal sentiments that have at their core vague notions of deservingness, as well as self-defence, self-preservation and protection when faced with threats of violence. Some readers may find the injunctions instilled in Gary and Paul by their father

during their formative years somewhat perverse, and, as some scholars have suggested, potentially a form of violence in itself (see Hearn, 2003). However, it is important to acknowledge the complexities of these cultural injunctions and their grounding in the pragmatic, habitual day-to-day lives of working class males, where violence is occasionally a visible and potential feature (see Hobbs, 1988, p.124).

Gary and Paul's discussions relate strongly to issues of pride, self-dignity, self-worth, and their recognition by others. What they are attempting to convey is both theirs, and their father's, intense desire to not be dominated and to ensure that those aspects of the self, which are a source of pride and dignity, are not threatened or denigrated by others. In their accounts, self-dignity and self-worth are strongly connected to their ability to react appropriately to those individuals who attempt to dominate and impose themselves. Their father's exhortations to physically defend yourself and to use violence if the situation requires it, emanate from his own fears for his sons' personal safety and an intensely felt need to adequately *prepare* them for an outside world that is potentially dangerous. His exhortations were/are not the result of entirely paranoid imaginings or nihilistic cultures of thuggery. They are considered to be pragmatic *necessities* that possess genuine utility in the immediate locality in which him, and they, are situated. That is, a marginalised locality that contains a number of men who are willing to use violence.

Such injunctions around dealing adequately with dominant, aggressive individuals are elevated in significance within working class and marginalised communities (see Winlow and Hall, 2009) where large tracts of the localised environment can be threatening and insecure (Willis, 1990). Violence represents a masculine resource in working class communities and a means with which to defend oneself, but it is also a means to exercise power (Hobbs, 1994). The violence and criminality that is often found in marginalised communities can feed into general atmospheres of mistrust, insecurity, and interpersonal competitiveness that manifest in value systems that reflect what Anderson (1999) calls a 'code of the street'. Even members of what Anderson refers to as 'decent' families are, in certain circumstances, forced to commit to such value systems to protect themselves.

As Paul's humorous impersonations of his father above and below suggest, his, Gary's, and their father's logic is based upon an assumption that a demonstrable willingness to defend oneself, or a competent display of physical prowess and power, will inspire respect and fear in equal measure in the eyes of others. Therefore deterring anyone who might attempt to become unduly dominant, humiliate, denigrate, or wrestle from others the essences of self-dignity. Some of Gary and Paul's abiding memories from their childhood are of their father's potential volatility and his willingness to defend both himself and them:

> **Gary:** *…I remember when I were young and he came home once with a black eye* (Gary laughs). *I think he'd been out in the pub, got drunk, gobbed off and got hit…*

> **Paul:** *He wouldn't tek no shit off anyone from the estate…one time we were playing football in our back garden and the bloke from next door said summat. And I were reyt cheeky wi him and he starts gobbing off at me saying he were going to give me a clip and that, so dad comes out and sez "what you been saying to my lads?" And this bloke started shitting himself and me dad walked round and went into his garden…And this bloke like ran in his house and locked the door and* (Paul starts laughing) *me dad were proper banging on the door* (imitates banging on a door) *going "Come on, get yer sen out here now" and this bloke's wife come t' door and were telling me dad to go away and saying she were going to call the police, and me dad just wouldn't let it drop going "tell your bloke to be a man and stop hiding behind his wife and get him sen out here". But he just wouldn't let things drop though…And when he went off on one he were proper intimidating…*

That Gary and Paul were raised in a family unit with a father that possessed a domineering aura is quite evident. His teachings and advice to his sons reinforced the utility of violence as a potential *defensive* mechanism. The emphasis was upon defence and ensuring his sons would be well-equipped to survive what he perceived to be the dangers of the outside world. Equally though, his aggression witnessed by the brothers was ambivalent, as it provided examples of the benefits that can be accrued from being dominant and being known as someone who will use violence. Their father was not abusive towards Gary and Paul or their mother, but there have been occasional tensions between him and his sons that appear to have been rooted, somewhat ironically, in these durable injunctions – an unwillingness to back down and allow anyone else to dominate:

> **Gary:** *…one time me dad were arguing with me mum, and me mum were right and I were just saying "listen you're wrong" and he wouldn't have it. And he were stood on t' door step in kitchen and he took a step towards me, so I just pushed him out of the front door and I sez "you don't take another step towards me, fuck off". So he just went for a drive somewhere to cool off and then he came back. He were reyt enough, but like I say we're all in a similar vein all three of us…*

I learned that on a separate occasion an argument between Paul and his father had turned violent and Gary had threatened their father with a kitchen knife, bringing the fight to an abrupt end.

Volatile Fathers

Brett doesn't get many visitors; it's two days until Christmas Day and I'm the first visitor he's had for some time. When he reaches the table where I am sat he extends his hand warmly and greets me. Wearing a black t-shirt, tracksuit bottoms, Nike trainers, and a beaming smile, he takes the seat opposite me. I ask him if he would like a drink:

> **Brett:** *Pop please*
>
> **AE:** *What kind of pop?*
>
> **Brett:** *Owt mate, any kind of pop will do*

I head to the back of the busy visitors' hall and join the queue for the canteen. I buy Brett a bottle of Pepsi and a packet of Werther's Original for us to share and then make my way back to our seats. Brett thanks me and immediately proceeds to take several large gulps of the sweet, fizzy brown liquid before we begin talking.

Brett's large body tells its own story: the bridge of his nose is distorted and has clearly been broken several times; a thick line of scar tissue runs across his stomach from a machete and there is scarring on his rib cage from knife wounds. Brett has spent much of his adult life involved in serious criminality. Since his childhood, violence has been a frequent feature of his life:

> **Brett:** *I were adopted when I was kid. I never met me real father like. Me adopted mum told me when I was about 7 year old like that I'd been adopted. And I remember me foster fatha got right angry about it, that I'd found out. I told all me mates like, the little gang of mates I knocked about*

wi, and they didn't believe me. They were going like, "na fuck off tha's not adopted" so I took 'em to me house, opened the door and shouted to me mum like "tell 'em I'm adopted like, I'm adopted aren't I mum?". And I just remember me fatha went mental like, saying "oh tha's fuckin told him na ant tha" and all this…

Brett spoke fondly of his adoptive mother, but had a poor relationship with his adoptive father who would occasionally physically abuse Brett:

> **Brett:** …*I weren't about when me adopted mum died actually, I missed it, so never got to thank her for everything she did for me like. For years he* (adopted father) *just used to knock me about and I just took it. I remember one time when I was about 9 I was eating my dinner and I was scraping the gravy off my plate with a knife instead of a spoon and me dad took his knife and stuck it through my cheek and it knocked one of me teeth out and he just sez "don't lick yer knife"…*
>
> **AE:** *Why was your dad like that with you?*
>
> **Brett:** *I don't know really, he just was, he was just a bastard, he was a complete fuckin bastard. We moved away when I was young and we'd not been there long and my mum's parents and family started interfering like telling her to come home, not letting her settle properly, so we ended up coming back and I think he was pissed off about that…that's why I've ended up here* (prison) *and living the life that I have*

Brett explained that he had not really 'opened up' to anyone about his abusive childhood, but he talked openly about the abuse he suffered and with an element of analytical reflection and insight that I did not expect. As Stein (2007) has suggested, experiencing horrific abuse at the hands of a parent or carer is so alien and 'unreal', it becomes difficult for the traumatised subject to symbolise or recognise it as genuine experience; the ramifications of which are potentially catastrophic:

> What is "really" happening during toxic interactions with caregivers defies articulation. It is unsymbolizable…The inability to symbolise has grave implications for the way that traumatised persons draw inferences and construct meaning from situational cues and ultimately respond to perceived threats, injustices, or entreaties (p.24)

In contrast to Gary and Paul, Brett's memories of his childhood are focused upon what his adoptive father *did* to him, rather than *for* him. For Brett, his potential for extreme violence was not transmitted from father to son in a durable set of *useful* and *beneficial* psychosomatic dispositions that emphasised he be able to 'take care of himself' in a hostile and dangerous world. Instead it was through a series

of brutal, cruel, intensely overwhelming beatings which are remembered through a lens of regret, rueful impotence and humiliation. His anger and resentment at his weakness and powerlessness to stand up for and defend himself from his step-father's beatings seems to have remained with him. The beatings and abuses of his dominant and violent adoptive father represent the terrifying spectre that haunts and resurfaces within his memory: the image of his persecutory tormentor and his humiliating failure to *act* against this (see Winlow and Hall, 2009).

Liam's childhood also featured a father who was, at times, volatile and dominant; but one whose abuse was targeted towards Liam's mother, rather than *directly* at Liam. Until he was around 11 years of age, Liam had lived with his parents and his younger brother only a short distance from the deprived council estate where he currently resides with his girlfriend and their son. Liam's account of his early life contained a quite striking ambivalence. He initially spoke quite positively about this period, describing himself as happy, and as having many friends. Yet this contrasted with, and belied, what appears to have been a difficult domestic situation during this period, characterised by his mother and father's tumultuous relationship:

> **Liam:** *My earliest memories of violence, thinking really is me dad hitting me mum obviously…Cos that used to kill you as a kid…Horrible.* (I) *Remember sitting at top of the stairs listening to 'em arguing and smashing things, it's awful…*

> **AE:** *Did you ever witness any violence taking place between your parents?*

> **Liam:** *No, not that I can remember, I just remember hearing it all…I don't think I'd ever actually seen it. I possibly have to be honest, I know he did have a temper, think it wa the drink that used to do it. Quite mean as well. I remember he came into the kitchen once and me and my mum were watching TV, cos they'd been arguing or summat…Think me mum were doing a bit of cooking…and me dad came in and cut the plug off* (off the TV) *and walked back out…He's not like that now, he has changed, but that's what he was like…*

Liam's parents divorced when he was around 11 years of age. He moved with his mother and younger brother to a large council estate to live with his maternal grandmother.

> **Liam:** *Really difficult age looking back and I hated it, hated it. Always hoping you know that they might get back together, living in hope…when*

we moved there it wa like me world had just ended. Cos I had no local friends, I wa travelling all way up to school on the bus, which wa a major mess about. And when I wa coming home…I'd got no friends there...we used to go up and see me dad and he'd have another bird in there, other kids playing wi me toys. Honestly, terrible time it where, honestly…When you are young like that it does affect you and you do need someone strong in your life. I mean my dad, he's a good man don't get me wrong, decent bloke, but no father material. Played no father role wi me whatsoever…Cos I know that when you're a child, you want a strong relationship with your dad don't you? Especially a male, any male, cos if your dad is not there, what I'm saying is your kind of uncles sometimes step in don't they? Grandads…So you've got a male figure in your life. But I didn't, so that has 100% contributed towards why I've ended up wi a criminal record. Definitely…

Liam emphasised the distress and anger he felt at being vaguely aware of the regular tensions between his parents and the potential volatility and cruelty of his father. Their separation and divorce had a significant impact upon Liam and was something that he returned to repeatedly during interviews. Their divorce was the beginning of a gradual deterioration, as Liam intimates, in his relationship with his father; which still persists contemporarily. Despite this, and somewhat contradictorily and confusingly, he described his father as a *"good man"* and intimated strongly a wish for his parents to have remained together despite their tumultuous relationship and the occasional cruelty of his father.

The data that I have presented in this section outlines how notions of masculinity and violence are implicated in the relationship between father and son. Importantly, masculinity is connected here to defence of the self, yet this notion of defence must be seen and understood in dialectical relation to dominance. With data gathered from both Gary and Paul, the tension between acting in a defensive way and becoming dominant over others was evident and informed their quite ambivalent injunctions around violence. This presents a clear paradox: as in the act of preserving one's own sense of self-dignity through violence, the other must be subjected to a more dominant will. Brett and Liam's experiences of fathers who could be particularly dominant and cruel revealed some difficult, traumatic memories, which both felt had left significant legacies in relation to their own identities. Importantly, these relationships were significant for these men, because witnessing and experiencing their fathers' violence inspired a sense of both fear and insecurity (see Winlow, 2012). Violence was

nevertheless retained and appreciated for its genuine utility within these men's immediate milieus and communities, as I will now go on to discuss in more detail in the next section.

'I Wanted To Be Like Them': Peers, Community and Culture

This section shifts the emphasis slightly away from the immediacy of the familial home and explores these men's narratives of their peer groups and local communities during childhood and youth. Another set of discursive themes present within the data and that have often been discussed as significant within the literature, which suggests that exposure to violent peer groups and marginalised communities where violence and crime are present, can have significant impacts upon masculine identity, performance and expression (see Collison, 1996; Hobbs, 1988; Messerschmidt, 1993; Winlow, 2001; 2012). This section then, explores the men's relationships with their peers (some of whom were violent), the experience of growing up in marginalised, economically defunct, former industrial communities, and the violence and crime they often encountered there.

The Wrong Crowd: Awe, Desire and Envy

Despite some difficulty adjusting initially in the wake of his parents' divorce, Liam became friendly with an older male from the estate who lived close by and who came to represent, for a period, an approximation of a mature role model to Liam. Liam spent periods of his youth living with him and began associating with a group of young men from his estate who were well reputed and feared locally:

> **Liam:** *I wa living wi this bloke who lived a couple of doors up from me mum's. I used to stop there a lot, cos he wa an older guy, I looked up to him not as a dad but like just as a good friend really. But he used to let me get away with all sorts, like drive his car when I wa only like 15, he gid me money to buy a motorbike, tek me out on bike wi the trailer. So everything got a lot better once I'd got used to the situation…And then my downfall was, you know* (says name of several local criminals)*?*

> **AE:** *Don't recognise the names…*

> **Liam:** *These guys were proper nutters, everyone wa scared of 'em and looked up to 'em. These were like my new batch of friends*

Liam's new friends were occasionally violent, habitual shoplifters and drug users, who regularly went "grafting" in large retail outlets and shopping centres across the region. Liam left school at 16 with few formal qualifications. For around a year he held several jobs for brief periods: predominantly low-paid, low-skilled, manual forms of employment. By his own admission, he struggled to commit himself to the routine of full-time employment and found he was unable to last more than several months in any of the jobs he held during this period. Not unexpectedly, Liam gravitated towards "grafting" and habitual drug use with the men from his estate. Liam received his first criminal conviction when he reached 16 years of age. The older male who had befriended him, had become embroiled in a dispute with some local men and following an altercation, Liam and several others chased them in a car armed with baseball bats. The police intervened during the chase and following his arrest Liam was convicted of affray and given community service. Liam consistently failed to attend his community service and following a court summons he was given a short custodial sentence in a Young Offenders' Institute.

> **Liam:** *I got sent to prison…a proper shock let me tell you, I didn't think I wa going to prison that day. Never been before…four months, had to do two months. It were like a lifetime mate. Did me time, got out…started back smoking heroin. Soon as I got out it wa like, I don't know like a magnet just pulls you towards it. You just don't see no hope, you've lost everything, you've just got out so you want to celebrate, so I just started buying heroin again…But I got out that first time and that's when the rollercoaster started properly, with heroin, you know thieving to support your habit.*

Like Liam, Neil also spent the early years of his life on a deprived housing estate close to what had once been one of the local area's major economic arteries, but which has gradually become an industrial wasteland of a few functional, now mostly abandoned or demolished, steel mills, forgeries, workshops and warehouses:

> **Neil:** *I'm from a working class family, typical sort of working class upbringing really. You know fuck all to do when you are young, nowhere to go, so I just hung around on the streets wi all me mates, inevitably got into trouble, feyting with people and that… where I lived up until I was about 10 was proper fuckin rough…Most of the kids round there were into all sorts,*

> *always in trouble, taking drugs and that, in and out of prison all the time. To be honest I reckon I would have ended up that way if we hadn't moved when we did, probably best thing that happened to me getting out of there*

Neil and his mother moved a short distance away to where they now currently reside. However, as he indicates above, although the move distanced him somewhat from the drugs and crime that plagued the estate, this did not extricate him from encountering violence during his youth and now during adulthood:

> **Neil:** *They were feytin up our end only t' other day, this kid from our end had a feyt with this paki kid from* (housing estate) *in the* (local pub) *car park, me and me mates were watching from the window and the lad from up our end was beating him, so this paki lad ran to his car, pulled out a gun and fired it in the air. We were all shitting ourselves in the pub, all fuckin getting under the tables and that* (laughs)*…I was out in town other week up near Top Bar, and this lad I know got into a feyt with this kid, got him up against the wall outside this bar and was stabbing him with a drill bit* (Neil performs a stabbing action)*…*

Such frequent exposure to violence, both actualised and threatened, can leave a significant legacy upon the young male. Charlesworth (2000) discusses in-depth the internalisation of such a way of 'being' in the world when living in threatening and marginalised circumstances:

> …it may be necessary to walk in a certain way, a way that exudes strength and a capacity for violence… one comes to know how to comport oneself in urban space so as to efface the threat of actual physical harm. (p.21)

The presence and possibility of violence continues to inspire feelings of fear and dread within the individual. This can become to a large extent mundane drudgery that, to a degree, is 'normalised' (see Winlow and Hall, 2006) and manifests in a way of 'being' that seeks to deal with such threats in a stoic manner - as Neil indicates above with his juxtaposition of both genuine fear and amusement at having to hide under the table from a volatile individual wielding a firearm. Sharing an immediate environment with such potentially dangerous and highly unpredictable men is incredibly unnerving and only serves to reinforce the general atmosphere of threat and insecurity. Despite the fear and trepidation that such men are able to inspire in others, as Winlow (2012) has suggested, they become symbolic of the benefits and rewards that can be accrued from being successfully violent. As Neil and another young male involved in football violence

explained to me, while we sat drinking in The Fox - a favourite haunt for those who associate with the football 'firm' - there is an overwhelming sense of awe and desire felt in the presence of such powerful, feared and respected men:

> **Neil:** *I started going to the matches at 15, 16. Me and him* (Neil's mate) *started going together with a few other lads. We used to see the older lads like Darren and that, and I remember when I saw 'em like I thought I want to be like them, I wanna be just like them, didn't we? That's how we were weren't it?*

> **Neil's mate:** *Oh yeah definitely* (smiles and nods his head enthusiastically)

'Everybody takes a beating sometime'[7]

The first few months of Vince's life were spent in a block of high rise flats, before his family moved to a large council estate where he spent his childhood and now lives. This estate became a new home for many families that were relocated during the post-war clearances of the dilapidated slum housing that had mushroomed up around the city's industrial arteries. Vince was raised by his mother – his father left the family when Vince was very young – along with his five other siblings:

> **Vince:** *...we used to have this policeman who worked our community. Little fat cunt he were, but I respected him. Me and me best mate used to be fuckin bad uns you know, getting in trouble and that on the estate all the time, and this copper used to come round and gi uz a reyt hiding though. He'd see us and he'd shout over "Na then your two, what you been fuckin doing?" He used to mek us stand to attention an all, hands by sides and lot, and if we'd been misbehaving he used to gi us a reyt belting. Then he'd tek me home, tell me mother what I'd been doing then I'd get a clip off her an all* (laughs)*. I were terrified of him...But if you were good he'd tek you to the shop and buy you a piece of fruit...I believe that if it hadn't been for him I wouldn't be where I am now, I'd probably either be dead, a drug addict, or doing life…*

Vince's narrative of his early life was replete with nostalgic, and somewhat romanticised, references to the solidity of working class culture and the loss of this in the wake of social and economic transformation. He was one of the few

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[7] This section discusses some of the men's experiences of being violently victimised within their community setting. I acknowledge the similarities here with my earlier discussion of those men who had experienced violence within the familial home; but given the differing context for this victimisation, I felt this section would be more appropriate within the more general discussion of the participants' local communities and neighbourhood.

participants who possessed the language capable of articulating so strongly the sense of change and transformation within his community and native city, and the politico-economic driving forces behind them (see Charlesworth, 2000):

> **Vince:** …*thing is na, it's not like that round on the estate anymore, its changed loads. There's no community, you know what I mean? It's like everywhere na across this whole country, there's no community anymore. Everyone's suspicious and fearful of each other.*
>
> **AE:** *So what was it like to live on the estate back then?*
>
> **Vince:** *It wa good, sound like. Everybody knew each other, my family knew everybody on our street and it wa proper safe. Na days you only know people who live next door to you, back then, we knew people who lived 10 doors down from us. We had pubs and working men's clubs back then and everybody used to go there. All the blokes would go there after they'd finished work, have a few pints and go home. In summer all the family would go down. Problem is they've all closed na, and there is nothing to replace them…*

Vince is attempting to communicate through such rhetoric the profound sense of change that he has lived through and the palpable sense of uncertainty that such changes have generated in his immediate environment. The degradation evident on his estate in the shape of boarded-up pubs, broken windows and run-down communal areas, is the visible evidence of this change and the slow decline of what had previously been a more unified and thriving community. Ironically though, Vince is very much the epitome of mutating forms of working class masculinity that meld the residue of 'hard' industrial physicality (Hall, 1997) with the same market conditions that hollowed out the institutional and symbolic structures he bemoans the loss of (see Winlow, 2001).

Vince began working on a fairground when he was 11 years of age, neglecting his formal education. He was not born into affluence and the material comforts this brings. Growing up in a large, single parent family, he had possessed little in the way of material goods and took his opportunity to earn money from an early age while most of his peers attended school. By his own admission, Vince held an acute fascination with money and fashionable clothing during his youth, especially the symbolic capital imbued in these material products (Hall et al, 2008). By 13 years of age he had left home, living and working on the fair as it travelled around the UK. During his early youth Vince

was thrust into a communal life of physically demanding manual work, autonomy and independence. He learned quickly to look after himself and developed a keen entrepreneurial acumen (Hobbs, 1988) while living within a transient working community that is often vilified, has little contact with the state, and maintains an active presence in the informal economy (Okely, 1983).

> **Vince:** *We had to look after ourselves. The traveller community is a proper community, you know, together. Like it used to be on my estate when I wa growing up. You look out for each other. And the traveller community sorts its own problems out, they don't go to the police, not like normal people…when I was about 11, 12 years old the fair was using a local racecourse...and we allowed this gypsy bloke who had some donkeys to give donkey rides around the outside of the fair. Problem was a load of other gypsies turned up, wanting to park their caravans on the site and offer their services to the fair users...Thing is we didn't want them there, cos once they are there that's it, you can't fuckin get rid of 'em. So we ended up having to fight all these big fuckin' gypsy blokes, proper big fuckin' gypos man. I got battered all over, but I didn't have a choice, had to fight 'em, cos we couldn't let them camp on the site*

From a very early age Vince was exposed to environments which severely threatened his physical and emotional well-being. His description of having to defend himself against more experienced and physically superior attackers is enveloped by a strong sense of fatalistic fortitude and stoicism in the face of genuine and unavoidable physical danger (see also Winlow and Hall, 2006). It is devoid of any sense of agency or potential for choice – in essence he was forced to be violent by a dangerous and unforgiving milieu. Yet, Vince was never resentful or bitter about his upbringing whenever I discussed it with him. On the contrary, Vince believed the physical discipline, violence and communal values he was subjected to have made him the man he is now. Something he tried to explain to me and to his close friend Lewis who occasionally works the doors at one of the bars Vince protects:

> **Vince:** *I was brought up properly. I was taught manners, respect, that's why I'm okay. I got hit with the slipper, the belt, never did me no harm. It fuckin hurt, especially leather belt wi metal buckle on it, fuck me…Come on Lewis, tha's had a few good hidings and it never did thee no harm did it? Tha mother gid thee a few beatings when you were younger. I'm reyt though aren't I?*

> Lewis seems undecided on whether he agrees with Vince's assertions and pauses for a moment in consideration before replying:

Lewis: *Yeah I've had a few beatings at home when I mis-behaved*

Vince: *Wi t' belt though, tha must have had an hiding wi belt?*

Lewis: *Not been hit with the belt but I've had beatings before. Thing you have to remember Vince is a lot of people who are really violent and involved in crime have had a difficult upbringing, you know, they've come from broken families and that*

Vince: *That's bollocks. What about me then? I didn't have a fatha* (father) *growing up, I'm alreyt though. It's this generation that's the problem, they know the law better than the police do, they know what they can get away with. All these fuckin do gooders have come along and med laws so parents can't touch their kids no more, they've never been beaten, they don't have any respect or manners.*

Vince's description of corporal punishment and victimisation during his childhood at the hands of those within his immediate communal setting is characterised by a powerful sense of fatalism and stoical fortitude, which he felt has moulded him into a morally rounded and respectful individual. However, Paul's experiences were described by him with a far more traumatic language that emphasised the painful legacy left by physical domination.

Paul: *…there used to be this guy who lived across the street, we all used to play out together and that…he had this older brother and he were a bit strange, he didn't have any friends or anything. And I just remember this one day he came out and we were playing football, and he started playing, and he got reyt angry, I don't remember why, I just remember I was trying to go home and he was, he like kicked me in the chest and wouldn't let me go home…*

AE: *Did you retaliate to that?*

Paul: *No he was a lot older than me, I just sort of got reyt upset and went home*

AE: *How old were you then?*

Paul: *I guess I would have been about 13 maybe, young, really young. And he would have been 17, summat like that, so pretty distressful. I didn't do anything back cos I just thought, it were quite frightening do you know what I mean? Cos he were like a bloke to me…*

Although Paul's inferior physicality in comparison to his more mature attacker is acknowledged and he accepts there was nothing he could do to defend himself,

this does nothing to alleviate the anger he felt and the concomitant bitter resentment and persecutory torment:

AE: *…What was that like?*

Paul: *Well it were obviously upsetting when it happened. The worst thing about it is that you felt like you couldn't do owt back, do you know what I mean? It's more that you couldn't get your own back that bothered me more than anything else…it doesn't bother me so much now that I'm older, but it's always been that you feel like someone's got one over you and you are like, oh I can't leave that, I can't just let it be like that, do you know what I mean? So the worst thing about that is that you felt helpless to do owt back about it cos you couldn't win cos he was older, do you know what I mean? So that was the worst thing for me with that, just that I couldn't get my own back…Yeah that was the worst thing that you could never do anything with your anger about it, do you know what I mean? Cos he were a lot older than me*

AE: *Were you angry about that for a long time then?*

Paul: *Yeah I used to hate him, used to always think I'm going to, I don't know, hide behind his shed and just throw a brick at him or summat like that when he comes out of his garden, but I never really had the bottle to do that*

AE: *You imagined yourself doing that?*

Paul: *Yeah yeah, that would be summat I would think like, I hate him I really hate him I'm going to do him one day just when he comes out of his garden or something. But even that's a bit extreme for me, do you know what I mean? I would imagine it and toy with it, but I never would have done it really*

The initial trauma and shock Paul experienced eventually gave way to persecutory humiliation, rueful resentment, bitterness and intense anger – emotions that have been identified by other researchers studying men's experiences of being violently victimised (Stanko and Hobdell, 1994; Winlow and Hall, 2009). On this specific occasion, the young Paul had been unable to fulfil the requirements of the habitus and the accompanying injunctions instilled and preached by his father to meet violence and threats from others with his own violence. Despite being the unfortunate victim of an aggressive male who was mature enough to overpower and dominate him, the anger and resentment remained. Winlow and Hall (2009) discuss how the violent men they have interviewed focus upon an imagined, idealised scenario of a past beating they

had received, which is often too traumatic and humiliating to remember accurately. As Paul explains, he ruminated over the event, re-imagining and fantasising an alternative scenario in which he alleviates his suffering through a brutal act of retribution that is more commensurate with his socio-cultural inheritance.

My findings here suggest that the experience of being badly assaulted is somewhat ambivalent in nature. Evidently, encounters with *real* violence are incredibly traumatic in their physical, but more importantly, their psychological consequences. Winlow (2012) emphasises the point by arguing that following such abuse children 'learn something that is withheld from those children raised in more secure environments' (p.206). Indeed, as Darren intimated in the previous chapter, he attached great significance to such traumatic experiences early in his life and the resultant transformative effect he felt this had; a convention that is also evident in these other men's narratives. Although these experiences are highly traumatising, during their retrospective re-construction, they are not viewed wholly negatively; but are constructed as arduous experiences, yet nevertheless, important transformative junctures within these men's life courses.

'Turning Point'

Experiences similar to those that have been described so far resonate in the early lives of brothers Shane and Carl, who spent their early years living in a small village located in a town that lies on the periphery of a sprawling urban conurbation. The family then relocated to a town further north. In their new community, Shane and Carl's parents were employed to provide care and accommodation to young people recently released from prison and the state care system. Growing up and sharing a home with young men, and a few young women, who were regularly involved in crime and serious violence, was described by Shane as a significant *"turning point"* in his youth:

> **Shane:** *…they were all kind of like fostered and all this weird crap. But yeah we used to sit and watch TV and mingle with like armed robbers, fuckin thugs, burglars, you name it. And invariably it rubs off on you doesn't it? ...I think that was the catalyst for what happened. I mean I'm not blaming anyone cos you make your own choices don't you? But at that age you are impressionable aren't you? So, up until that point I'd never*

met someone who'd hit someone, and so that's when things started to change…

AE: *And you said that you felt that was a turning point, what did you mean?*

Shane: *I think so personally yeah, I mean you think about it going from being a quiet lad who to a degree had been pushed around at school, and bullied, tried to fit in and stuff. And all of a sudden you find yourself in a house full of people who would rather knock somebody out than talk to them, know what I mean? You start to think, well it's alright this, I like this idea of being in control of everything, you know the way they were. And you start being like that don't you? You start feeling like that…*

Following the family's relocation, Shane had struggled initially to adapt to his new lifestyle and described how he quickly found himself isolated and bullied in his new school by other pupils who poked fun at him for not being local and for his accent. Carl was also a frequent target for bullying by groups of young males that attended his school:

> **Carl:** *…*(I had) *Pretty much half the year* (school year) *coming up to me every day and kicking the crap out of me. I mean it didn't bother me really, cos they never hit that hard anyway…And I think me dad was in hospital* (at the time)*…And they started taking the piss and I just couldn't think straight, and I went for 'em, but got someone else, you know they got in front, and then they started then…*

We can detect in Shane's narrative above the sense of disdain and revulsion he feels at his weakness and vulnerability during those early formative years. Yet, the sudden presence of young men who were the antithesis of meek submissiveness catalysed his orientation towards violence as a potential strategy and means of exerting dominance and control over others. As Jefferson (1996) has argued, the hard man discourse can be highly appealing to some marginalised men, particularly for those whose immersion in it represents a potential means of vanquishing the indignities and humiliations of previous victimisation at the hands of others. Shane described his first experience of committing violence during secondary school and the epiphany-like feeling this invoked within him (see Goodey, 2000):

> **Shane:** *…the first time I ever did anything was when somebody had had a go at our sister on the bus on the way home from school…I would have been about 13 or 14. And I went in the next day and battered him…it was the first time I'd ever done anything, ever in my life. Know what I mean? And that was*

His brother Carl interjects to reinforce the point:

> **Carl:** *The turning point wasn't it?*
>
> **Shane:** *That was it, that's when you think to yourself*
>
> **Carl:** *Once you've done something like that you tend to think, well I quite like this feeling, and you know, it's weird*

Early Encounters: Rage and Subjective Transformations

So far in this chapter, I have focused upon the men's relationships to significant, violent, others, their experiences of growing up in insecure and dangerous communities and their concomitant micro-cultural contexts, and the impact of abuse and victimisation. As Winlow (2012) has argued, the young male who is exposed to such socio-cultural contexts where violence is present and perhaps encouraged by significant individuals 'will eventually reach a point at which he tries out violence' (p.209) for himself. As Shane's descriptions above attest, such an experience is likely to remain powerfully memorable as the individual experiences for the first time an intoxicating feeling of domination and control, and the sense of power this can evoke (see Katz, 1988). These experiences have been described within the literature as akin to a rite of passage – the beginning of a path towards *becoming* (see Winlow, 2012). In this final section I will explore this notion of *transformation* with reference to these men's first significant experiences of perpetrating violence against others.

Many of Gary and Paul's early experiences of being violent were with each other and, on occasions, would rapidly escalate into quite pernicious violence:

> **Paul:** *...me and our Gary have always been like best friends, more than brothers. It were strange cos…I think we've got a really good relationship for brothers, but we did have some really bad fights when we were younger...and it would start up over the most ridiculous of things…one particular instance we were playing snooker...we started fighting and I remember Gary hit me with a snooker cue, it split my head open, I had to go to hospital and get it glued, anyway so he hit me with it and he ran off cos he saw me head bleeding, he ran upstairs. I chased after him and I got him in the bathroom, and I had him in a headlock that hard that it burst the blood vessels in his eyes, cos me mum were trying to split us up and I remember all his eyes went red…I don't really understand why, cos we never hated each other, we were always like best mates…I can't explain it.*

I guess we are both pretty intense individuals and nobody wanted to back down

Gary elaborates, with a distinct air of fatalism, on the violence that occurred between them during childhood:

Gary: *I stabbed him in the knee with a fork once and he stabbed me in the neck with a pen. He bust my nose in the bathroom before. So we had a lot of fights and, they were just like childish squabbles. But obviously with us both being the way we were, it escalated really quickly and we just fought. But, there were never, kind of any real animosity to it, but we fought (laughs)*

AE: *You said the way you both were, what do you mean like?*

Gary: *We were both the same kind of, quick to flare people, quick to lose our tempers and unfortunately we both had the same kind of reaction. Like, he'd push me, I'd push him, I'd push him harder, he'd hit me, I'd hit him back and that were it. That was just kind of the way it went. It weren't kind of like rooted in anything, it weren't like we got beat up as kids or anything like that, I think it just goes back to how we were both taught to defend ourselves…*

Gary and Paul's descriptions of the occasionally extreme manifestations of their sibling rivalry are accompanied by a mutual bemusement at the frequency and sheer intensity of the violence they inflicted upon each other. Despite an awareness of the occasional excessive gratuity of their violence, Gary believes it was simply a normal part of a gendered life course (see Hobbs, 1994) and felt the violence had been, to an extent, beneficial:

Gary: *…I've always thought it's just what brothers do. If someone told me they didn't fight with their brother, I'd be like "What? Why?" I just thought it was what was supposed to happen…It* (fighting) *kind of breeds a bit of a mutual respect, cos it's like you think, yeah he's a decent lad, he can handle himself…It's just what we are supposed to do, what lads do innit? Growing up getting into scrapes with each other…it don't mean you don't like each other, it just means we are brothers…*

Gary was also able to recall quite vividly an early experience of using violence against another male while in primary school, reinforcing the point about his volatile temperament and his willingness to resort to violence as he had done so frequently at the family home with Paul.

Gary: *…when I were younger I had a really bad temper, like I would be really quick to boil. And I just kind of lose it a bit and that got me in trouble.*

First time in junior school, probably like, my last year before Comp (Comprehensive School)…Just one of my friends…it got a bit carried away like, just pushing and shoving. And I thought, this is getting a bit out of hand, I best deal with it. So I just chinned[8] him (Gary laughs)…it was just a flash and I just kind of lost it for a second

AE: *Can you remember what it was like?*

Gary: *Trying to think of a response without glorifying it…a bit of an adrenaline rush isn't it? It's kind of like flight or fight response. You either like leg it (runaway) or you think reyt let's deal with it and I obviously chose to deal with it. So I got a bit of an adrenaline rush. And at the time I didn't think I had done anything wrong. In retrospect when I had time to calm down I thought, shouldn't have done that, probably didn't deal with that in the best way, but it's past now*

Physical confrontation is experienced as 'the incomprehensible buzz of the momentary disappearance of all meaning' (Willis, 1990, p.106). Driven by fear and adrenaline as it courses through the subject's veins impelling them to act, reality appears suspended as the individual loses themselves momentarily. Gary communicates this by describing how he *"just lost it"*, and during this passage of Gary's narrative he repeated this on several occasions. What is interesting is that Gary is suggesting that in order to *"deal with"* the ensuing confrontation, to feel like he is in control of it, he had to *"lose it"* – lose control of his body and use this 'feeling of reckless strength' (Willis, 1990, p.106) to impose his physical dominance and superiority over his opponent. This feeling of *"losing it"*, becoming lost in the force of one's rage and anger, is present in Neil's narrative of his first encounter with violence. Although he doesn't use the terminology 'losing it', his description of his violence hints strongly at unrestrained rage, volatility, and his inability to control himself:

Neil: *I can remember me first feyt actually…It wa with this kid who lived on the same street as me. When I was growing up I was best mates with this lass who lived next door to me, we were about same age. And this kid had hit her, so I hit him. I fuckin pushed him off a wall that were about 5ft high, gid him a reyt beating, I had to be dragged off him. That were thing with me when I was younger I used to be so angry, just wanting to feyt all the time with anyone, and I never understood why*

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[8] The term 'chinned' means to punch someone on the chin, but it is often used in a more generic sense to describe punching someone in the face.

Carl described his first experience of committing violence in a very similar way, utilising the commonly used phrase *seeing red* to communicate the sense of losing control of his body. Carl emphasises his loyalty to a friend who he perceived to be weak and in need of his protection, and like Neil, required physical intervention from someone else to actually restrain him:

> **Carl:** *I stuck up for someone at school. The kid who I was mates with at the time was diabetic like I am now, but he was a lot worse than me, and the school bully took his insulin off him…So I walked over to this kid, asked him for it, and he wouldn't give it me so I just saw red and I thought my friend could die here… I just saw red and just knocked him out basically and got dragged off him… I just saw me friend getting picked on and that's what triggers me, if someone's getting picked on and he's a close friend who can't do anything about it, then I'll try and get something off 'em first, but when you start getting pushed and punched yourself, I just snapped basically. I've got a very short temper*

Brett captured this theme most powerfully when he attempted to explain his potential for extreme violence. He describes below the ease with which he can slip into states of uncontrollable rage and describes this as being rooted in the severe early trauma he suffered at the hands of his physically abusive adoptive father. His narrative hints at the parasitic nature of this trauma, which seems to have remained with him, gnawing away at him over time, and framing his interpretation of some of his other relationships during adulthood:

> **Brett:** *…I just flip out, just flip out and I can't control myself, that's it like. I mean throughout my life I've had people walk all over me, you know and I wouldn't do anything about it, I'd just let them get away with it, and so I'd just flip out, lose control and fuckin do people in…*

Brett's account is Janus-like: presenting a down-trodden, dominated, pathetic, weak, loathsome individual, who has consistently failed to prevent his own humiliation. Yet, simultaneously, Brett describes himself as an incredibly visceral and uncontrollable force capable of extreme destruction. And such incredible rage potential, Brett asserts, has been cultivated as a pragmatic response to the deleterious and dangerous circumstances of his immediate milieu.

Bourgois et al's (2012) excellent ethnographic work on marginalised violent masculinities explores the early formation of the violent, rage habitus, which operates both consciously and pre-consciously within men as a hyper-vigilant defence mechanism within broader social and communal contexts that

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are dangerous and threatening. The young men they encountered during their research reported experiencing 'black outs' during violence and described the benefits they felt this granted them in terms of their ability to then dominate their opponents. Bourgois et al suggest that the capacity to lose control in fits of rage, where the ability to restrain oneself is briefly absent, becomes inculcated and instilled within these young men early on in their lives and represents a valued aspect of the habitus. The accounts from the men outlined above certainly mirror this process of slipping into an unrestrained, blind rage when the vigilant masculine self feels threatened, is being, or is about to be, humiliated. A feeling that Darren described extensively in the previous chapter, where he felt a sense of being released from inhibition and would resort to whatever means available to him (biting, weapons) to ensure he dominated the encounter. What my research and data adds in light of Bourgois et al's (2012) analysis, is an important psycho-historical dimension to the vigilant, rage habitus. My data suggests this is a product of not just the internalisation of a marginalised and violent social context, but also the coalescence of traumatic, humiliating events and victimisation located within marginalised masculine biographies.

As Stein (2007) argues, traumatic experiences of violence can affect an individual's on-going attempts to symbolise experience, construct identity and interpret interactions with others. Many of the participants, as they discuss here, are incredibly sensitive to attempts by others to dominate and humiliate them out of fear of the shame, indignity and humiliation that would follow. Although the occasional gravity of their violent responses to such situations seemed to perplex them and explanations for such un-restrained rage were, as the data cited above indicates, occasionally elusive. Thus, there was a poverty of language to explain motivation beyond the immediacy of the circumstances and stimulus, as particular aspects of terrifying violent traumas that lie in the recesses of memory, cannot be fully articulated nor incorporated into one's identity for fear of disintegration; they are thus disavowed and remain partially inaccessible (see Hall, 2012; Stein, 2007). It is such haunting and persecutory memories that shape subjective engagement, perception and are significant drivers behind outbursts of violence (see Winlow and Hall, 2009), and the relevance of this analytical point will be returned to in forthcoming chapters.

Although the accounts above of using violence evoke images of a subject who is impelled to use violence by a sense of uncontrollable inner rage, Liam's experiences of entering secondary school allude to the external pressures that come to bear upon the subject who finds themselves in a situation where violence is expected, however reluctant they are to engage in it:

> **Liam:** *…you always get these little trouble causers don't you? And they were all going round all different groups of lads who'd come from various junior schools finding out who were cock[9] like, that's what they called it. "Whose cock er your school then?" "Oh it's him". "Whose cock er that school?" "Him". "Right all cocks fight and let's find out whose cock er first year". And I thought oh god I'm not cock, don't anyone tell 'em it's me. Everyone just presumed it wa me from my school, don't know why…*

The school had arranged a disco to welcome its new cohort of pupils and it was after this event that the fight to decide 'cock' of the school year had been arranged by the older pupils:

> **Liam:** *So yeah, they arranged a fight…I've gone up t' disco scared to death, heart going, adrenaline going cos it's mad that adrenaline rush you get when you are fearful. I know it's only nature really to mek you prepared for the worst, so I wa scared stiff. Gone to the disco, disco's finished…started fighting with this kid, before I knew it he'd gid in* (given up)*.*
>
> **AE:** *So after you had had your first fight after the disco, how did you find people reacted around you?*
>
> **Liam:** *Oh brilliant, oh ah they think it's fantastic don't they? That's why all t' older ones were saying "Come on na do Jones in next, let's go and get him", they love it don't they? As long as it's not them doing it, or things like that, I mean you don't know if you are dealing with a grudge they've got against this person. Yeah reactions were probably good, suppose it med you feel good in a way.*

Liam alludes to the 'peer pressure' and cultural expectations, which can weigh heavily upon the individual who is *expected* to use violence in particular situations, even if they are reluctant to do so themselves. But also upon the sudden feeling of transformation experienced by the individual after using violence and the way

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[9] 'Cock' is often used as a term of endearment within the community where Liam grew up and lives; it will sometimes be used by an older male to address a younger male. The term is also employed to describe an individual male who is regarded to be the best fighter, or the 'hardest' individual within a particular geographical area or institution, such as a particular housing estate or a school.

this is reflected in, and acknowledged by, the sudden change in behaviour and conduct of those around them.

Discussion

In this chapter I have discussed several significant themes that emerged during the men's narratives of their early lives. The data presented here describes a set of complex early experiences and relationships with violence, as well as varying childhood experiences.

The significance of abuse, victimisation, deprivation, marginality, and cultures of masculinity, have all been alluded to within the existing literature as important for understanding men's violence. Yet, very few theorists have attempted to weave these various factors together into an integrated approach, whilst simultaneously, anchoring this approach within an analysis of in-depth empirical data gathered from men that have committed violence against others. This chapter has done this, and strongly suggests that valuing violence and being willing to use it, must be understood at the nexus of these various psycho-subjective and socio-cultural issues.

Speaking at a broader macro level, these men grew up in marginalised, former industrial communities that still remain partially connected to the visceral cultures of the industrial period of capitalism, which as Hall (1997) has argued, value and cling desperately to a particular set of enclassed psychosomatic values that reflect an idealised, archaic image of the resourceful, stoical, invulnerable, 'hard' male. At a familial, communal micro-level, the men's early lives were shaped by the immediate presence of individuals (fathers, brothers, peers, significant individuals within communities) that embodied these specific 'durable' masculine qualities, and in particular contexts, encouraged violence and aggression. As Jones (2008) has argued:

> Men are likely to resort to violence as a way of warding off feelings of shame if they have been socialised into a 'typical' male gender role, that places emphasis on physical strength and violence as a means to solve problems and from which men can derive esteem (p.193)

These significant individuals provided evidence of the cultural benefits that can be accrued by those who are willing to be violent; and, they encouraged these men to not 'walk away' or 'turn the other cheek', when threatened, insulted,

slighted or humiliated by another. The messages and specific injunctions that the men interviewed here received during childhood and youth, conjure an apocalyptic-like image of a dangerous and ultra-competitive social world where the individual is constantly under threat and must always be prepared to *defend* themselves; a theme that Winlow (2012) has also identified in violent men's biographical narratives. Certainly there exists, at particular times, an incredibly primal, almost atavistic, logic to forms of sociality between males in the local community contexts where these men were raised and continue to live. One must remain constantly vigilant and be ready to use violence, because if not, as is indicated in the data, one will be dominated by those that share the immediate social space. Persecution, contempt, humiliation and self-loathing await those who do not obey or abide by this logic and confront this atmosphere of interpersonal competitiveness with a violence that ensures recognition of the self by others and the retention of self-dignity. This is something which has been documented within the literature (see Anderson, 1999; Bourgois et al, 2012; Winlow and Hall, 2009; Winlow, 2012).

Importantly, this general social climate of potential threat, competitiveness, paranoia and insecurity, rather than remaining a mere apparitional background static, actually ruptured the early lives of these men. Their childhoods contain a series of significant *offender* and *victim* 'epiphanal' moments (Goodey, 2000), which, collectively, stimulated within these men a sense of subjective transformation in how they viewed not just themselves, but the external world around them (see Stein, 2007). As Winlow and Hall's (2006) research suggests, violence shapes the marginalised male habitus as an external pragmatic effect upon it and violence is also inculcated within it as a resource. My data suggests that a potential for violence has been garnered during these men's early lives through the gradual 'toughening up' of their psychosomatic dispositions (see also Winlow, 2012). The data strongly suggests this occurs through teachings and advisory injunctions from significant others; witnessing violence, and partaking in regular fights and confrontations with other young males; and, for some, through experiencing traumatic and humiliating abuse at the hands of physically superior individuals, usually mature men. Confronting this context of aggression, insecurity and competitiveness with one's own violence gradually, through a process of subjective transformation, comes to be perceived as the only means of

responding to these threats that exist in a brutal social world. These memories of trauma and humiliation from the formative years of the life course continue to re-surface and seemed to function as sources of bitterness and anger that drive outbursts of rage when particular external stimuli are present. The next chapter will develop these analytical threads in more detail, by exploring these men's use of violence against others.

Chapter Six

Masculinity, Subjectivity and Violence

In chapter four I introduced Darren who talked at length about the emotional and subjective experience of committing violence against others. He emphasised in particular the thrilling, exhilarating aspects of confrontation (see Katz, 1988), but also a sense of desperation, humiliation, and the uninhibited, unrestrained rage that must be summoned in order to attack. In the previous chapter, I discussed some of the other participants' early lives and experiences to outline how interpersonal violence emerges as a valued resource and aspect of the habitus. This chapter now explores in-depth their experiences of actually committing violence against others, and also of being victimised themselves. It is comprised of two main substantive sections.

The first substantive section of the chapter explores men's views on how they approach and deal with potentially violent and threatening situations; part of this discussion draws on data relating to how men use personal reputations and corporeal 'performances' to intimidate opponents without actually having to use physical violence.

The second substantive section of the chapter explores when men have been violent through rich, detailed descriptions of their violence against others. This section is comprised of three detailed 'case studies' of particular contextualised violence committed by men; although, as will be discussed, these are not mutually exclusive categories that comprise a 'typology of violence'. These case studies illuminate violence the participants have been involved in and begin to excavate the motivations and emotions that lie behind violence and the subjectivities that perpetrate it.

'Let's Get Ready to Rumble': Negotiating the Semiotics of Threat

There was remarkable consistency from the men when they described reacting to confrontational and threatening situations, both real and hypothetical. Their views

were underscored by a powerful sense of fatalism and cynicism about the motives and intentions of others. They were both firm and unmoveable in their convictions that violence is inevitable and unavoidable in particular situations. They felt that it was better to learn and accept this *fact* and to be prepared to use violence against an opponent first before they had the opportunity to do so. Hesitancy, attempting to negotiate or placate, backing down, walking or running away, were simply not viable options:

> **Liam:** *…sometimes you get into a situation where you know damn well he's going to swing for you...So I always get in there first me and headbutt 'em straight in face and it proper fuckin knocks 'em for six, you know it gives you a bit of time, it's quick and swift you know what I mean? They don't see it coming, they never see it coming...I always think that you have to get them first...Cos if you think abaat it, it might be too late. So yeah, if you're in a confrontational situation where someone is pushing yer, things like that, you ant really got time to assess the situation sometimes...*

> **AE**: *What are the consequences if you don't get in first?*

> **Liam:** *They might get you*

Shane and Carl were equally unanimous in the view that a swift, but powerful first blow is vital in any confrontation; as is bodily stance, positioning and an awareness of the surrounding environment:

> **Shane**: *I know exactly how to stand and where to stand, how far away to stand, and always expect the worst...the way I look at it is if something starts in the street, or in a pub or whatever, you've got one punch really before it turns into what you don't want it to turn into, and that's a wrestling match. Know what I mean? And if you don't make your first punch count then more fool you, cos people do not stand toe to toe with each other in pubs and box* (starts laughing) *know what I mean? You are going to get a chair or a bottle or a glass aren't you? So you've basically got one punch to put them down and then decide either to stand there or get off* (run away)*, and after that its anyone's innit? That's how I've always looked at it...*

> **Carl**: *if your balance isn't right you won't get your power in, and if you lose your balance on your first punch you'll lose your power and your first punch is most important in a pub fight. Cos if he's with a load of his mates and you can guarantee if you don't hit him hard enough they'll jump straight up, it all kicks off and you are going to get a good hiding*

> **AE:** *…always hit them first?*

> **Shane:** *Oh yeah, don't stand there arguing with them, fuck that. Cos you know where it's going anyway... Nobody has an argument and then goes "shit I'm sorry mate I shouldn't have said that" know what I mean? No chance*
>
> **Carl:** *that never happens*
>
> **Shane**: *It's going off one way or another innit?*

Vince elaborates further on the semiotics of imminent violence by focusing upon the corporeal signals that one must be aware of and be able to read in order to react appropriately:

> **Vince:** *…the split second before someone hits you they will always look down at the hand they are going to hit you with. It's a natural reaction. So you've got a split second to get in there and fuckin bang 'em* (Vince thrusts his left fist into the open palm of his right hand to emphasise the point)*. If you don't, you are getting hit. So I know if someone is invading my personal space then they are threatening me. If I extend my arms out like this* (extends his arms out fully to indicate the boundary of his personal space)*, that is the edge of my personal space. Anyone comes within that area they are trying to threaten me and are intending to hurt me. So I'm going to react.*

Such sentiments emerge from extensive pragmatic experiences and understandings of violent and confrontational situations. These men are aware that in most cases confrontations and fights are short, swift interactions, and that the individual who lands a competent and powerful enough first blow stands a good chance of being victorious (see Collins, 2008). They are also acutely aware of, and accustomed to, the tense, fearful emotions elicited during confrontations and that the vast majority of people in such circumstances will seek a non-violent resolution (Collins, 2008; see also Winlow, 2012). What you say and how you act are important in determining the eventual outcome of a confrontation.

Although, such fatalistic and cynical accounts given by the men above should not lead to conclusions that every confrontational situation these men encounter will inevitably descend into violence. What these accounts reveal, is a partial representation of the idealised images these men harbour of themselves; the ideal ego, which reflects how the subject wishes to be and desires to be seen in the eyes of others (Zizek, 2006). These men see themselves, and wish to be recognised by others, as competent seasoned fighters, who will react to any

personal slight made against them. These internalised self-conceptions are moulded by a wider socio-cultural environment and its injunctions that connect notions of self-worth and dignity with an ability and willingness to confront such threats with competent displays of physical aggression, stoicism and fortitude (see Winlow and Hall, 2006 and discussions in previous chapter). They also emerge out of acute pragmatism – experiencing first-hand the physical pains of being violently assaulted and the psychological pain that can remain long afterwards.

During the ethnographic fieldwork, I observed the strategic and corporeal manoeuvres men undertake during confrontations. On several occasions during the fieldwork confrontational situations arose involving the men I was observing that did not result in actual violence, but instead in elaborate displays which ensured recourse to violence was not required. Such displays and posturing, I would argue based on my data, are operationalised within the broader cultural context of 'saving face' and narcissistic interpersonal dominance that characterises male to male violence. Below I provide two examples taken from my fieldwork to illustrate this.

Flexing Reputation…

In this first example, I use data to illustrate how a reputation for violence is used in a symbolic attack to humiliate and denigrate another in order to elevate the self.

> It's early on a Saturday evening; I am sat at a table with several of the lads who associate with the football 'crew' outside the back of a busy city centre bar. Having spent most of the day drinking a cocktail of Newcastle Brown, John Smiths and Lager, unwisely on an empty stomach, I'm now feeling pretty drunk. I've already had a slight altercation with the bar manager who threatened to kick me out after an argument over a drinks order. With most of us dressed in casual attire associated with the hooligan subculture we stand out amongst the bar's regular clientele, who appear to largely be students of the local University. The lads are taking the piss out of each other and focusing much of their piss taking on each lad's fighting skills. Wayne is instigating much of the mockery. It is the first time I've met Wayne and I don't know much about him, but he seems to be well-liked by some of the lads. Full of alcohol and growing in confidence throughout the day, I feel relaxed and comfortable enough to join in the banter;

but being new to the group I remain careful not to offend. I make a veiled comment to Wayne about my fighting skills, which is clearly self-mocking. Wayne smiles and seems to appreciate the joke, the other lads laugh too, and I am pleased that I am becoming more accepted by the group. The mood remains quite jovial, until Wayne suddenly, and unexpectedly, takes exception to a joke Billy makes at his expense. Staring intently at Billy from directly across the table he says:

> *"You've been playing at been t' fuckin big un all day Billy, giving me some reyt shit and I'm fuckin pissed off wi it. So we'll fuckin sort it na if tha wants?"*

Silence descends on the group and everyone averts their eyes towards Billy. Billy's body language becomes immediately submissive: hands stuffed in his coat pockets, shoulders drawn slightly forward and inward, he drops his head slightly and tries to apologise:

> *"I'm sorry Wayne, I didn't mean to offend yer like, I wa just havin a laugh"*

Wayne replies aggressively, at no moment does he break eye-contact with Billy:

> *"Well you've been doing it all day and it's doing my fuckin head in. You got a fuckin problem wi me or what Billy? Cos I'll fuckin lay you out pal, no trouble"*

The rest of the lads remain silent and I begin to feel sorry for Billy, who looks genuinely in fear as he squirms under Wayne's unflinching stare and accusations. Despite this I know that being new to the group and occupying a covert role it is better to not intervene on Billy's behalf or say anything, as my personal experience of such situations is that you yourself are likely to become the target if you intervene and appear to be taking sides; particularly if you do not possess sufficient influence to placate the aggressor. I keep quiet and avert my gaze towards Jez, one of the main lads in the group, who places his hand on Wayne's arm to draw his gaze temporarily away from Billy. Having momentarily interrupted the escalating situation, Jez attempts to placate Wayne:

> **Jez:** *"Alreyt Wayne, leave off him pal, he's only fuckin abaat wi yer"*

Seizing this moment of brief respite following Jez's intervention, Billy reiterates the apology:

> *"Honestly Wayne I'm sorry mate, I wouldn't do that to you pal, you know I wouldn't"*

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Wayne appears fairly content with the apology and Billy's quite evident submission. The atmosphere gradually becomes less intense and the laughter and banter quickly returns to the group, who quickly finish their drinks in preparation for the next bar.

(Fieldwork notes)

Conscious of not attracting attention and knowing the time to ask questions about this incident was inappropriate; I waited several weeks before raising it again. During a more relaxed evening at one of the lad's houses, when large quantities of alcohol and several lines of cocaine had lubricated their cogs of sociability, I used the opportunity to find out more about Wayne and Billy's confrontation:

With loud music blaring from the speakers and Billy not in earshot, I ask Jez more about Wayne as I am curious to know about his past and reputation:

AE: *So what's Wayne into then mate? Cos I remember when we were in* (city) *and he started having a pop at Billy, Billy proper backed down, and I mean Billy looks like a kid who can handle himself*

Jez: *Billy is an hard lad, I've seen him lay out some pretty hard lads before in town, no problem. But Wayne can be a bit of an headcase. He's a proper sound guy, got a good heart and that, but he's been involved in some proper serious shit. He's been to prison a few times*

AE: *For violence?*

Jez: *Yeah and for other stuff as well, he got caught in possession of a shitload of blow* (Cannabis)*, and he's been into dealing and that. Thing with Wayne and Darren, and a lot of the other lads we know who come from that end of town, they just don't give a fuck, know what I mean? I mean they are good lads, but if you piss them off or fuck with 'em that's it, they don't care, they don't have any remorse. And it's that pure capacity for violence which meks them different from us lads who are in here now.* (Fieldwork notes).

Squaring Up…

In this second example, I focus on a confrontation involving Gary while we were in a night club. Like in the example of Wayne discussed above, Gary did not use actual violence during this incident. In contrast though, he did not resort to personal reputation, but instead a dramatic bodily performance that showed

perfectly the art of executing effective physical intimidation when challenged by another.

It's late on a mid-week evening at the end of December. I've journeyed with Gary, Paul and a few other lads to a large city in the North of England. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to shake off an illness that developed over Christmas. With a headache, blocked nose and aching limbs, a night spent wandering from bar to bar in single figure temperatures is something I could do without. Not wanting to attract mockery or dampen the jovial mood I keep quiet, throwing pint after pint of John Smiths down my neck to try and ease the pain as much as possible. Being a mid-week night and so close to the New Year, the city isn't particularly busy, with some pubs and bars not open for business. After frequenting several pubs it's approaching midnight as we walk through the streets seeking a livelier venue, with some of the lads in the group hopeful it will contain some young attractive women. The piercing December winds feel like knives stabbing me as they cut through my thin jumper. We arrive at a busy venue with loud music and a large contingent of people standing outside smoking. We make our way in; pushing through the crowds to find a space where we can congregate. A few of the lads go to the bar to fetch drinks. One returns with two plastic cups containing a red liquid and gives one to me.

"What's this?" I ask.
"Treble vodka and Vimto" he replies.

I give a wry smile and take a sip from the cup. I get the sickly sweet taste of the Vimto first before the burning intensity of the vodka hits the back of my throat. My face contorts as I strain to hold back the contents of my dinner, which feels like it is preparing to make a swift exit from my mouth. One of the lads laughs at me and says:

"It'll get you fuckin battered this mate"

We stand around for several minutes making superficial conversation as the music and atmosphere aren't conducive to anything more than that. Shortly we are joined by Gary, Paul, and the rest of the lads, who also seem to have gone for the vodka with a splash of Vimto. We stay in the same spot for a while, drinking and surveying the room. Suddenly a drunken young lad walks past and bumps into the back of Gary. Walking away the lad doesn't offer an apology and Gary shouts after him:

"Watch what you are doing mate"

The lad isn't apologetic and, in what is a clear show of defiance, grins and sniggers at Gary. Furious, Gary shouts at him:

"You what? Bump into me you little cunt? I'll knock you the fuck out"

With a drink still in each hand, Gary walks the few feet that stand between him and his opponent and squares up to him. Gary towers over him and is clearly physically superior. Lowering his head to engage some eye contact, the fore of Gary's shaven head is almost touching that of his opponent's as he attempts to invade and colonise as much of his personal space as possible. Gary's tightly fitted t-shirt displays his tense muscular physique and heavily tattooed arms. Sensing that the dynamics of the situation have now altered, the young lad's facial expression visibly changes; his previous defiant grin is replaced by a look of fear and foreboding. He tries to turn away from Gary in what is clearly a submissive manoeuvre, but Gary is in no mood to let it go, as he continues to bark threats in the lad's ear remaining only ever a few inches from the lad's face. In that moment, Gary had the chance to let his opponent walk away, in a means that would not be construed as undignified; but he did not. I've witnessed Gary's physical power and rage before and it is utterly uncompromising. I now know violence is imminent. Physical intervention is the only means of preventing it. Seemingly sensing this too, Paul suddenly intervenes, putting his body between Gary and his opponent. Before Gary can protest at his brother's attempt to placate him, Paul turns to Gary's opponent and says to him:

"Fuckin do one" (go away)

The young lad obliges without a moment's hesitation and heads for the exit. Gary mutters something to himself along the lines of:

"Little fuckin prick"

I ask him what happened:

Gary: *Little nobhead just banged into me and kicked the back of my feet. It wouldn't have been a problem if he had just apologised, but he just fuckin laughed at me.*

Paul turns to me, laughs, and says:

"Fuckin hell, did that lad a right favour there didn't I?"

As we are talking about the incident we notice the young lad is now stood by the door looking at us. With a relatively safe distance between us and him it seems he has regained some composure, and possibly some of his earlier audacity. Paul turns to me:

> **Paul:** *What the fuck is he doing? Does he actually want to get banged out or what?*
> **AE:** *Don't know mate, he must be fuckin daft*
> **Paul:** *Might have some lads wi 'im though. What do you reckon?*
> **AE:** *He might do, we'll just keep uz eye on 'im in case he tries owt*

Fortunately, after about 30 seconds, the young lad exits the bar and, wisely, doesn't return. (Fieldwork notes).

Showing Restraint? Aggressive Displays and Effective Intimidation

These two examples from my fieldwork demonstrate the volatility and unpredictability of men prepared to use violence and the rapidity with which seemingly innocuous interactions and occasions can descend into aggression. Personal reputations and corporeal displays are powerful weapons which can negate the requirement to revert to actual physical violence.

Data gathered during my ethnographic fieldwork suggests that resorting to violence is not inevitable, even for those who value violence, as Collins (2008) has discussed at considerable length. Yet, Collins' work does not situate confrontations within a requisite analytical and theoretical framework that explores underlying motivation and subjectivity – the combination of life history and observational data gathered for this thesis offers an opportunity to situate these incidents within such a framework.

A personal reputation for violence and the cultural capital that accompanies this have been discussed at length within the literature (see Winlow, 2001). However, what has not been discussed, but which my research sheds considerable light on, is the way in which reputation and masculine corporeality can be used as symbolic weaponry during the immediacy of an actual confrontation. It is my assertion, based on the data gathered, that escalating situations to *actual* violence is the result of a complex exchange, during which individuals will attempt to manoeuvre themselves into positions of dominance that

ensure the maintenance of their own self-dignity, and crucially, the avoidance of terrifying humiliation (see Winlow and Hall, 2009). As Willis (1990) explains:

> Respect is gained by negotiating with an antagonist. This is part of 'standing your ground' and is preferable to fighting. None of this works, however, unless you are prepared to fight *in extremis*…There is a tight moral and dramatic economy here. But it can easily break down. It is not easy to judge the line where giving someone 'the chance to walk away' becomes undignified appeasement. It is not easy to maintain both dignity and safety (p.105)

In each of these incidents that I observed, both Wayne and Gary quickly manoeuvred themselves into positions of dominance. Wayne immediately pointed to Billy's distinct lack of respect, citing this as justifiable reason to use violence. By phrasing his initial threat as a question, rather than a statement or description of his intent, Wayne imposed upon Billy the *illusion* of agency. This gave Billy, ostensibly, the option to escalate matters or back down. Yet, in reality, it left him in an unenviable and impossible situation facing a dangerous, volatile individual with a fierce reputation, whom Billy knew it was unwise to challenge despite his own skill as a fighter. All of which unfolded under the watchful gaze of a judging audience of male peers. It was blatantly obvious given Billy's body language and verbal responses that he was not going to retaliate and had immediately submitted. Yet, Wayne continued to issue threats, in a manner which continued to reinforce his utter moral and physical supremacy. This act was rich in symbolic power and domination. It quickly became incredibly uncomfortable and humiliating for Billy, as Wayne prolonged Billy's discomfort for his own narcissistic gratification and to re-affirm his interpersonal dominance over the encounter and amongst the other men present.

Gary meanwhile, was unable to make recourse to his reputation with a complete stranger, in an unfamiliar city. In such a situation he gesticulated aggressively and assumed the standard position of 'squaring up' face to face with his opponent to indicate a willingness to make the confrontation physical. This display, like Wayne's verbal threats, left his opponent with the same options that Billy had. This was a more risky strategy on Gary's part however, as he had no knowledge of his opponent's reputation or fighting prowess. The initial impetus here was to secure an advantaged position over the encounter. Under pressure and clearly physically inferior to Gary, either by getting a severe beating or

walking away, Gary's opponent had to accept the indignity of defeat and surrender to a clearly superior opponent.

Men well versed in confrontational situations and in the art of intimidation will immediately seek to secure a position for themselves during an ensuing confrontation where they minimise the possibility of experiencing indignity and humiliation. If possible, they will project onto and incite such internal suffering within their opponent who threatens their physical integrity and symbolic identity. It is this incredibly powerful drive (Hall, 2012) behind the strategic behaviour in each incident, which reflects a clear and highly conversant understanding of working class masculine culture. This analysis is broadly commensurate with Winlow and Hall's (2009) injunction to *retaliate first* to avoid humiliation. Whereas Winlow and Hall focus upon retaliating in a physical sense, my data and analysis adds to their framework the potential symbolic form retaliation can take through utilising personal reputation and bodily comportment. Wayne and Gary could walk away fairly satisfied, dignity intact, having successfully intimidated and deterred their opponent in front of an audience of male peers, without having to take the confrontation to a physical stage. Men prepared to use physical violence then, are able to, and do, harness symbolic power and violence, which violates the other's identity through non-physical means by deliberately targeting those aspects of masculine subjectivity that are connected to aspects of pride, dignity and self-worth. As I discussed in the previous chapter, these men have been socialised in climates that equate dignity with one's ability to react appropriately to those who attempt to dominate and denigrate. As these examples show, Wayne and Gary's opponents' failure to respond placed them in an undesirable position as the dominated individual, in all likelihood invoking feelings of personal inadequacy, failure and humiliation. While for Wayne and Gary the momentary possibility of humiliation and shame detected in these perceived threats, was swiftly transformed through an aggressive reaction; returning them, for a time, to a state of pride and personal aggrandizement.

Exploring Contexts and Subjectivities

This second, and the final, substantive section of this chapter presents a selection of violent incidents from some of the men who participated. Three 'case studies' of violence are presented, each occurring in different 'contexts'. The first focuses upon violence within the context of the night time economy, which often takes place between young men who don't know each other (although not always) and tends to occur within highly public settings (see Hobbs et al, 2003; Tomsen, 1997; Winlow and Hall, 2006). The second focuses on violence committed within communal, localised networks, consisting of acquaintances, peers and family members, which, as a result, is much less exposed/public than the violence explored in case study one. The third case explores violence within the context of the serious crime community, which for obvious reasons is highly clandestine to avoid police disruption of market activities and is often motivated by financial reasons. I do not present here a 'typology' of violence. Although there are some contextual differences between the three case studies, they overlap and converge in some respects and are therefore not mutually exclusive. The intention here rather, is to excavate the subjective convergences between these examples despite their contextualised differences, particularly when explored from the perspectives of the perpetrators. It is at the nexus of the motivations and emotions that lie behind violence that this section begins to explore in more depth the subjectivities of men willing to use violence.

A Decent War Story

> **Paul:** *…We were all waiting for a taxi…And I remember this young lad trying to push in the queue so one of me mates guz to him like "don't push in we've all been waiting ages". Anyway turns out there were quite a few of 'em all in different areas of the queue so it dawned on me mate that he had started with the wrong person, and it weren't that me mate were being aggressive to this kid he were just saying "look you're not pushing in we're all waiting", fair enough. And they all got round me mate and I thought that's the kind of situation that he's going to struggle with, so I went in, not to start anything, but this kid were squaring up to him so I went in and pushed this kid and sez " look leave it". Then they all started surrounding me and it were pretty bad cos I thought I'm definitely going to get hit here, you know when it's sort of dawning on you? And there's loads of 'em and*

you think this is going to be pretty bad now, and I remember there was this kid in front of me, I was talking to him, and I thought if anyone is going to hit me it will be him, but somebody sneaked around the back and bottled me on the side of the head, I went down I couldn't do anything and I just remember our Gary shouting "Paul do one" so I just got up and ran off cos I couldn't see anything really…

Gary: *…Paul went down…(I) just started hitting people around me…I just started leathering them…I can remember connecting with people cos I could feel my hands hitting stuff and then I got hit from behind, fell to the floor, got kicked for a little bit on my ribs, but kind of just covered my head…and I managed to pull myself up and then I just started hitting, kind of swinging, little bit wildly to be fair, but I know I connected with some of them cos you know if you hit someone, you know if you've hit them good cos you can just kind of feel it…One of the funny things I remember is one of the kids I hit I think I might have broken his jaw. I hit him so hard on the side of his face his jaw was just like wobbling…He couldn't say owt he was just making reyt strange noises…*

AE: *…was his jaw actually hanging off then?*

Gary: *Yeah, it was just loose, you could flick it with your finger and it would have just wobbled…*

The bottle that Paul was hit with broke his nose and scratched the cornea in one of his eyes. As he ran away from the scene, partially and temporarily blinded, he phoned their father; who immediately drove to the scene armed with a baseball bat. However, the fight had finished and their assailants had disappeared by the time he arrived.

Gary: *…at the time it were quite a scary situation cos you never know what's going to happen. You never know what people have got on em, knives and what not, you hear about all kinds of shit don't you? And at that time, it were just kinda like a reaction, like a powder keg it just kicked off. One minute I were stood there, next minute just hitting people…after it, I was just again quite excited actually. Cos like I got beat up a little bit, but it was still a big rush, like, not like getting into that situation, but when it's forced upon you, there isn't anything you can do about it. You either get beat up or you stand up for yourself. So it were quite an adrenaline rush, quite exciting at the time, cos again it just goes back to that flight or fight response and I just thought fuck it, get stuck in…in retrospect, I can kind of laugh about it now, now that everyone is alright, people have got a couple of scars from it and stuff like that but it's a decent war story…*

Gary was pleased with how he had conducted himself. The rapidity with which this incident descended into serious violence might have induced an immobilising sense of fear and shock; but not in Gary. His hyper-vigilance and readiness for violence allowed him to react immediately to defend himself and his brother. Drawing on the heroic metaphor of war, this event plunged Gary into adversity, against a dangerous numerically advantaged enemy that he refused to back down from and faced stoically. As he explains, Gary reacted in accordance with the cultural injunctions of the marginalised male habitus; and therefore, from his perspective, admirably.

Despite attempting to do what he considered to be the 'right' thing by standing up for and defending someone weaker than him, Paul's feelings in the aftermath were anger and bitter resentment at having been victimised and the acute sense of helplessness that his attackers had subjected him to and had induced within him. These feelings persisted for some time until several months after the attack when Paul was on a night out with a friend and, by pure coincidence, spotted one of his assailants:

> **Paul:** *… waiting for a taxi and this bunch of kids walked past and you know like a double take, where you look at 'em and then look at 'em again? And I thought that's that kid that done me in, well it weren't the one that hit me, but remember I was talking to one of 'em? …Well it was him, and it definitely 100% was him. So I was stood waiting for a taxi and I said to me mate "I'm sure that's that kid that were involved". Cos me mate knew about it cos we'd talked about it, and he said "do you want to go do him in?"And I said "No it was ages ago" so we were stood waiting and I just saw him walking further and further off and then I thought hang on a minute, these fuckers did me in, so I turned round and sez "Yeah lets sort him out". So we walked after him and I remember I said "Oi" he turned around and I went 'crack' (imitates punching the lad in the face) just banged him. I was furious with him cos he'd been involved in this situation where I'd got jumped basically, so I hit him and he went down, my mate was like jumping on his hands and stuff, kicking him, and I gid him a boot as well, and we just left him on the floor. They must have all split up cos he was on his own, so I thought no you can fuckin have it now, like I did…*

> **AE:** *How did you feel after you had done it?*

> **Paul:** *I felt like reyt shaky, like full of adrenaline, almost like I can't believe I've done that, it's really bad, at first I regretted it instantly I thought that's bad that. But afterwards, say a few days after, I thought no he probably deserves that cos they did me, but me initial thing were I felt bad about it. But now I still think he deserved it, I don't condone like jumping people, but he did it to me and he got what he deserved, I do believe that…I hated that*

they had got away with doing me in, I hated it. I hated that I didn't know who they were, I hated that I never saw them anywhere, and that it were just like "oh I got done in by these lads" and I felt like they had one over me and then when we saw him that night it seemed like, too good of a chance to turn down really, so I do feel like we are even yeah…

There are clear resonances here with the event earlier in Paul's childhood when he was physically assaulted by an older male (see previous chapter pages 117-119) and left feeling bitter, helpless and physically unable to extinguish these feelings. This more recent event returned him to that state. What is interesting about the data presented in this case study, is the vicious return of repressed humiliation and a sense of failure that is connected to a previous similar event within the biography: in essence history repeats itself, in a cruel and uncompromising fashion. As Paul watched his attacker walk slowly into the night, the window of opportunity closing agonisingly, it was as if his sense of dignity was leaving with his attacker. In that moment, Paul envisaged the persistence of his own humiliation and regret at having failed, once again, to react and seize the opportunity by remaining passive. Determined to not 'fail' again, Paul decided to react and dished out a beating of tremendous personal significance that seeks to re-orientate himself onto 'a different historical path' (Hall, 2012, p.196). Recognising various traumas and victimisations scattered throughout a biography as *interconnected* and their humiliating effects as potentially cumulative is vital, and something that I will return to later in chapter eight.

Bonded By Blood

Shane keeps a pick axe by his front door:

"…just in case anybody comes round" he tells me.

His brother Carl, who is sat next to him on the sofa dressed in biker leathers, laughs to himself and shakes his head.

By the end of his teens Shane had been stabbed with a screwdriver, stabbed with a flick knife, and had received his first criminal conviction for breaking someone's jaw. Carl's youth had followed a similar trajectory: before he reached his 20th birthday, he received his first conviction and was ordered to have weekly sessions with a psychologist to address his anger:

> **Carl:** *…it's got to be something that annoys you* (to use violence)*. Like bullies, I detest bullies, because I got bullied at school…*
>
> **Shane:** *...the trigger for me is betrayal, humiliation, bullies, it's them things. Nothing else, never has been anything else…*

Both Shane and Carl had been the victims of bullying while in school (see previous chapter) and their narratives were upheld by a sense of the moral sanctity of their violence, which was rich in reactionary and defensive tones. The incident with the screwdriver had arisen out of an abusive relationship Shane experienced during his late teens with a violent, yet clearly vulnerable, young woman who was adopted, for a time, by his mother and step-father:

> **Shane:** *...you aint talking about your average girl here. She was over 6 feet tall, I've seen her knock out lads, she was hard. You wouldn't think she was a girl, she didn't look like a girl. Hard as nails, proper, lads were terrified of her. She'd fight with her fists, know what I mean? She was a proper hard girl...*

Despite getting along well initially, their adopted sister developed what Shane described as a *"weird infatuation"* with him, which eventually became abusive when Shane refused to acknowledge her affections:

> **Shane:** …(she) *started wrecking my clothes first, then she got a lad to stab me…Yeah she terrorised me, and then she left, moved out of our house, and then the windows were getting broke…And all kinds of stuff for about 12 months after, until we found out who did it and sorted him out. And then that stopped.*

Several years later she confronted Shane one evening:

> **Shane:** *…she was always going to have a go at me when she saw me, it was inevitable …she just started gobbing off about this that and the other, can't even remember in detail. And I just started thinking about all this shit she'd put me through, and put me family through. So I just smacked her, cos I thought I'm not listening to this crap, cos if I hadn't she'd have hit me anyway, cos she was tapped…*

Shane's account of committing what is considered within masculine culture to be an incredibly shameful and 'unmanly' act (see also Gadd and Jefferson, 2007; Jefferson, 2002), was primed with justificatory allusions to her (masculine) physique and aggressive behaviour, which had transgressed expectations around appropriate traditional femininity. In the quote above repressed humiliation and shame emerges strongly, and was something that permeated

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Shane and Carl's biographical narratives. These appear to be traumatic emotions that both men have struggled to cope with during social interactions where they are likely to re-surface:

> **Shane:** *I broke a lad's jaw when I was 17 cos he was laughing at me…in front of all me mates…Just taking the piss…calling me a dickhead and everything, so I got into a rage cos I was embarrassed…when me and me first wife split up and she ran off with the kids and I didn't know where the kids were…I lost the plot then for about 2 years. Beat up the new lad she was with, who was quite a lot older than me…I beat him and his brother up in a pub…*

Later, Shane's ex-wife met a new partner and they moved away from the area. Upon finding out her new partner had been physically abusive towards Shane's children, Shane swiftly intervened:

> **Shane:** *…Me and my mate went over there and I had a gun* (starts laughing). *Had this gun and went over there in the night, she* (ex-wife) *let me in cos she was scared of him. I went upstairs cos he was in bed, I sat on the bed and pointed this gun at his head and then I just shouted his name, and I said "wake up". He woke up and I had the gun pointed at his head…it was a real gun but it only had blanks, there was nothing in it, know what I mean? I threatened him about the kids and he was sat in bed crying. I went and got in the car and me mate was pouring sweat* (starts laughing) *shitting himself cos he thought I was going to do something…then he left the next day, left her like…*

Shane has recently retired from amateur boxing having trained regularly and fought amateur bouts since his early 20s. Carl also attended the same gym. Not that many of the other men who trained there would get in the ring with either of them, especially Shane:

> **Carl:** *…I was the only one that would spar with him. No one else would spar with Shane.*

> **Shane:** *…it's hard to hold back I think you know if you are doing something like that. For me it's all or nothing, I can't do none of this soft contact shit it has to be proper…I used to get, and no one's ever properly got their head around it, I used to get like a mad adrenaline rush if somebody hit me, I used to buzz off it…just like someone just switching a switch, it would be like bingo, and that's it I would go then and that was it. And I wouldn't be arsed, you could hit me all you wanted and it wouldn't even phase me, I'd just get more and more pumped off it*

As one might expect given their early lives (see chapter five pages 119-121), 'bullies' became a frequent target for Shane and Carl's violence. When a friend of

Carl's was being extorted by a local man who he had purchased a motorbike from, Carl felt obliged to intervene on his friend's behalf. The intervention quickly escalated to violence when the man became verbally abusive:

> **Carl:** *…he'd put the price up after he'd* (Carl's friend) *already paid him…And I just, he was picking on him, and I just, again I can't stand bullies, I hate them and so that's how all that started…I got out the car to go and speak to him to basically tell him to lay off, but then he started mouthing off at me, from inside his car. And I just couldn't cope with it…I put my hand through his window, dragged him out, knocked the living crap out of him…and smashed his car up…*

In the aftermath of this assault, friends of Carl's victim had been attempting to intimidate and goad Carl into further violence knowing that the police were keeping a close eye on him:

> **Carl:** *…I kept me nose clean, started to walk away from fights…But everything was still going on anyway between the lad I'd had the fight with and his mates trying…to goad me into doing it, but it didn't work…*

The threats and intimidation came to an abrupt halt when Shane attacked and beat up one of the ringleaders in a car park.

With his willingness to use uncompromising and often extreme violence, Shane's reputation as a local hard man grew to such an extent individuals would request his help. A friend of Shane's who had been working for him, was being intimidated and extorted by his landlord: Shane hospitalised the landlord after attacking him with an iron bar. Later, Shane discovered that this same friend had then stolen money from him while they were working together:

> **Shane:** *…this mate who I'd helped out, he stole money off me, cos he'd been doing a bit of work for me at the time…And I put his hand in the vice and asked him if he trusted me, he said "yeah", so I tightened the vice around his hand and I said "yeah I used to fuckin' trust you as well" and I broke all his fingers…*

As he had done previously, Shane would not hesitate to use violence against those who threatened his family; but, as Shane explains below, his volatility and rage was often so unrestrained, it had unintended consequences:

> **Shane:** *…My youngest son, when his mum was pregnant with him she sold a TV to some guy, supposed to be one of the dead hard guys in the town. And he went round complaining about this TV wanting his money back, and she was heavily pregnant, and he pushed her over…we went round to this guy's house, knocked on the door, soon as he opened the*

door me mate punched him…And I'll never forget, his wife was in the kitchen and his kid, was only a little boy, he started screaming "mummy mummy they're killing daddy". And that was the most horrific thing. It played over and over in my head for weeks and weeks afterwards

AE: *…did you stop? Or did you carry on?*

Shane: *No stopped like, instantly stopped…and there was a moment where everything starts being like slow motion and that weird distant, everything's a background noise and that strange shit going on in your head, where everything, the world stops turning. And then I remember me mate pulling up in the car saying "get in the fuckin car now". And I remember just getting in the car and we went straight to the pub, and I remember just getting absolutely wasted. Cos I just felt like shit honestly…But, you know, you can't do stuff like that, can you? You can't behave like that, he shouldn't have done what he'd done is my point. Had he not done that, that situation would never have arisen. I was just enjoying a normal day and then that happened, and as far as I'm concerned you've got to deal with it. Cos otherwise you just give people licence to take the piss, don't you?*

Recently, Carl's daughter had begun seeing an older male who she worked with. Carl was enraged upon finding out about the relationship and threatened violence against the man. At the behest of his wife and threats from his daughter to never speak to him again, Carl refrained. Despite my questioning and further probing, Carl and Shane were unable to explain to me the specific nature of the pair's relationship. There was a vague ambiguity to their responses, and instead the focus of their discussion was upon the inappropriateness of the age gap, the man's rumoured predatory and perverted sexual intentions, and the need to protect Carl's daughter from this with violence:

Shane: *…I kidnapped a lad who was taking the piss out of my niece, Carl's daughter…well he wasn't taking the piss, he was just too old to be going out with her wasn't he? So me and me mate kidnapped him…*

Carl: *…I promised me daughter I wouldn't hit him, she begged me not to hit him, she said "if you hit him I won't speak to you"…And I couldn't go back on me word with my daughter. But she didn't say anything about Shane speaking to him. Said as long as I didn't hit him, but she said if anyone hits him, she won't speak to me, and I didn't want to risk losing my daughter…It bugs me to hell that I couldn't do anything, but at the end of the day I still see me daughter every week.*

AE: *…She was dating this bloke?*

Carl: *No they weren't dating*

Shane: *He was just a sicko and he was trying to get into her*

AE: *Was he trying to groom her?*

Shane: *Yeah*

Carl: *That's what he did he was grooming her, but he was turning her against me and her mum… Anything that we said about him, was wrong*

Shane: *But we got rid of him*

Carl: *It was just weird, he was grooming her and it annoyed me that I promised her I wouldn't do anything. But I wished to god I had done. And if I do see him I will do it now, now I speak to my daughter and he's gone, cos he shouldn't have done that to my daughter*

AE: *So it was a bit of a like friendship then?*

Carl: *…he kept giving her lifts home and he'd finish work at 10pm, but she wouldn't get home until 1am*

AE: *Did you ever have an idea where they went during that time?*

Carl: *No idea, she won't speak to me about it*

Shane: *I don't think anything happened*

Carl: *I don't think, no, she said to me, she's always been close to my wife and she swears that nothing ever happened. And my wife believes her, and my wife can tell when she's lying, she won't speak to me about it. I mean she's going out with someone now in his 20s, but she won't tell me, I'm not allowed to know. But my wife knows about everything, so as long as someone knows what's going on I don't mind…if anything does happen, my wife will tell me and I'll step in then. But until then I'm going to leave it, as long as she doesn't get hurt I don't mind*

AE: *So what happened with this kid then? When you said you sorted it out, what did you do to him? Kidnapped him wasn't it?*

Shane: *Yeah, only a bit of fun wasn't it?*

Carl: *Well it wasn't for him* (laughs)

Shane: *…we locked him in the house and wouldn't let him go…Took his phone off him and that, just me and one of me mates. Didn't hit him or nothing, just roughed him up a bit, made him realise what would happen if he went near her again. And then he packed his job in …moved away from the area…*

Case study one demonstrated how spontaneous random violence between strangers can invoke and connect with previous humiliations and experiences within the individual's life course. Yet, quite evidently, these previous observations are applicable here in the shape of a similar legacy of repressed humiliation, insecurity, and fear of weakness that shines brightly throughout the life courses and violence of Shane and Carl.

Shane and Carl's violence is underscored by a strong sense of 'masculine proprietary', possessiveness (Gregory, 2012) and an almost paranoid desire to protect and defend those closest to them, often with extremely violent consequences. Interestingly, with the exception of an occasional crude tendency to resort to women-blaming (see Ellis et al, 2013; Wykes and Welsh, 2009), male to male violence and masculinity more generally, has often been discussed and theorised in homo-social terms with little requisite discussion of men's relationships with women (Collier, 1998). Yet quite clearly, my data suggests themes of protection, care and, as subterfuge, possession of women, features quite strongly in Shane and Carl's violence towards men. Their sentiments of protection, paternalism, and desire for children, partners, wives, friends, and wider family to be safe are understandable and to be expected; an absence of these would be concerning. Yet, the willingness to resort to sometimes extreme violence in the name of 'defence' and 'protection' hints at the presence of brooding, paranoid insecurities and fears around imminent loss and the rupturing intrusion of existential threats. The motivations for their violence have not always arisen out of direct threats to them per se, but Shane and Carl view those close to them, particularly women and dependents, as extensions of themselves (see Gregory, 2012) – an attack on these, is an attack on them, and a challenge that must be confronted without hesitation. Walking away is not a viable option for Shane or Carl. To them this means weakness, and showing weakness is simply not possible or acceptable. They are terrified of weakness, because within the context of their biographical histories and pragmatic experiences, weakness will be exploited without mercy.

Primal Markets – Predators and Prey

"And there's been another goal!" cries the Sky Sports presenter Jeff Stelling on the cinematic 50 inch flat screen TV mounted on the wall in front of me. As the clock approaches 4:45 on a Saturday afternoon, the tension in the living room is palpable. The owner of the house, Derrick, is a drug dealer. He fetches me a cup of tea and shows me a brand new pair of designer jeans he recently purchased:

> *"Alright them Tony aren't they? Good mek as well aren't they? Brand new jeans, £100 in t' shop they were, only cost me a tenner".*
> *"Aah they look well smart them pal. Who did you get them off then?"* I ask curiously.
> *"Mate of mine who's a shoplifter"* he replies.

Derrick jokes with me asking if I reckon a mutual acquaintance, who is rather large around the waist and currently in prison, would fit into the jeans. I laugh and reply:

> *"He could probably get a leg in".*

Ian, Derrick's mate, is sat across from me; perched on the edge of the sofa, staring intently at the TV screen while the drama of the afternoon's football fixtures begin to reach their climax. With the score in his team's game finely poised at 1-1, Ian is hoping that Jeff will suddenly announce that his side have scored what would surely prove to be the winner in what has been a tough away assignment for them. I too am sat forward in my chair as I monitor my own team's progress, sipping my cup of tea while (passively) inhaling the smoke that emanates from the joint nestled between Ian's index and middle fingers. Now and then Ian shoots me a glance with his dark eyes as we talk about the contrasting fortunes of our respective teams. The several mobile phones on the coffee table that lie next to packets of Drum tobacco, Rizla, marijuana, and unopened letters, ring at more regular intervals, as Ian and Derrick's punters begin to place their orders for the evening. Suddenly Ian leaps to his feet, thrusting his fist into the air he shouts "Fuckin get in there!", as Jeff brings the news Ian was praying for – an added time goal for his side which proves to be the winner. Apart from this highly animated reaction, that I've found tends to happen when Ian watches football, he generally speaks quietly and calmly. Ian does not possess the imposing muscularity and physical stature that defines some of the other men involved in this study. He is of average height and medium build. At times he looks tired, a little weary; even fragile. A superficial glance reveals nothing remarkable or

threatening, no outward signs of menace; only banality that belies Ian's potential for violence. The only visible signs of his extremely violent history are the little, inconspicuous, scars on his hands. Hands which shake slightly from time to time as he drinks from his cup, or when he brings the joint to his lips. (Fieldwork notes).

Ian was quite vague with details concerning his early life, despite my attempts to gather information on this during our regular conversations. I sensed from his reticence that this was an aspect of his biography that he wasn't too comfortable discussing. I followed my instincts and did not pursue this line of questioning too much, focusing more on his criminal career and his experiences with violence, which he was more willing to divulge.

Several years ago Ian was nearly murdered by a local gangster who attempted to rob him of drugs and money:

> **Ian:** *It happened at my house, this bird I was with at the time was with me and there was a knock at the door. I knew that something was going to happen, you always do. I didn't have much money on me at the time and not much gear* (heroin) *either...You're always vulnerable...so you need to make sure you move your money and gear around, and don't have loads on you at any one time. I had a look through the door window and saw these lads on the doorstep; they weren't my regular buyers so I was suspicious. I had a knife and my gun wedged in the back of my trousers, opened the door slightly and says "Alright, what do you want?" This kid says to me "We wanna buy some gear mate" I didn't wanna open my door anymore than it was open already, so I just said "I'm sorry mate I think you've got the wrong house, I've no idea what you're talking about"; as I'm shutting the door he threw himself against it to push it open. I'd got my shoulder behind it so he didn't manage to push it open very far… his arm was coming through the gap and he had a gun in his hand and was trying to hit me with it. I was trying to reach for my knife with my other hand so I could slash him and he ended up firing the gun during the struggle. The bullet shaved the top of my head, it didn't go in far, but it left a bit of a mark... I fell on the floor and this kid brushed past me and into the house...in the struggle his mates had run off and left him so I grabbed my knife and gun and ran into the living room. He'd got my missus by the hair on her knees and was pointing the gun at her head saying "Give me the fuckin gear and money or she's dead". I put my hands up and backed out of the room into the hallway and said to him "Look fella, there isn't no gear or money here, your mates have fucked off and left you, so you're on your own, it's just you and me now"….*

In the struggle that followed, as Ian attempted to wrestle the gun from his attacker, Ian suffered further gunshot wounds and spent several weeks recovering in hospital.

Undeterred by his flirtation with death, Ian continued to supply Class A drugs and gradually, with the assistance of a group of established and feared local criminals, began to expand his activities. Armed with better quality 'product' and muscle, small time drug dealers were, literally, brushed aside as Ian began to attain a large segment of the localised drug market.

> **Ian:** *...slowly we began to establish a presence. It was a great opportunity for us, cos there was only a couple of guys selling gear…and it was pretty shit quality. I'd…been gettin' some good quality gear from my suppliers... word got round to all the smackheads that we were sellin' gear and it was fuckin good quality, better than the shit they had been gettin' anyway…as you can imagine they* (other dealers) *weren't very happy about it, but they didn't have a say in it, cos there wasn't really anyone with much of a rep* (reputation for violence)*…so what could they do?*

For a while business was good, but when Ian was betrayed by a local criminal, events quickly escalated. Ian and several associates went looking for his rival and when they found him, mercilessly beat him to within an inch of his life.

> **Ian:** *This kid who I sold to regularly told me he had seen him* (rival) *going into this house…I burst into the room, grabbed him and dragged him down the stairs. I gid him a few cracks to the face as I was dragging him out, and we dumped him in the boot of the car…his head was like a fuckin' basketball* (after the beating)*. To be honest I don't know why we gave him such a beating, he was terrified of us and realised that he'd made a big mistake. I don't know if it was cos some of the other lads were there, and that's what made me keep beating him, you know like egging me on to do it… Everyone knew what a dishonest little cunt he* (victim) *was, he couldn't be trusted, he was the type of lad who would rob your house if he knew you were on holiday or out, know what I mean?*

In case studies one and two above, issues of morality and justification began to emerge, and Ian's narrative account is rich in a narcissistic self-righteousness. In it there is an inverted morality that disavows the harsh, totally excessive brutality of his violence and it elevates his own suffering, indignity and humiliation over his victim's. It represented a narrative of arduousness, victimisation and *struggle*, at the lengths he had to go to ensure that 'justice' was done (see Arendt, 2006). Such brutal and uninhibited violence should not surprise us. On those occasions when violence within criminal and drug markets does erupt, it is very rarely restrained (see Hall et al, 2008; Pearson and Hobbs, 2003; Winlow, 2001).

Like Ian, Brett's vulnerability within primal markets was exposed when he became embroiled in a dispute with several other criminals, one of whom had attempted to rob him of drugs and money. Brett was convinced this group of individuals wanted him *"out of the way"* and they began to target something they knew would goad Brett:

> **Brett:** *…I trusted a woman. Honestly mate, never fall in love with a woman…never trust a woman…*

As was present in the previous case study, discourses of love and protection, but also an accompanying sense of insecurity and vulnerability that emerges from sexual relationships and being responsible for dependents, abounds here as a background static to Brett's description of his eruption into rage. It took some considerable time before Brett would open up to me about the intricacies of this relationship, which undoubtedly is a source of tremendous insecurity and threat to his exterior appearance and projected identity of 'hard' impenetrability.

The woman in question was Brett's ex-partner, who he had begun seeing again after a period of separation. When they first met she had worked as a sex worker, but stopped when they began a relationship. It seemed she had returned to the trade during their separation, or was perhaps coerced by some of the men involved in the feud, as Brett suspected:

> **Brett:** *Yeah, we'd been together previously…and then started seeing each other again. And I fell in love with her and I shouldn't have done, it was stupid. I mean she would lie to me all the time, and it took me ages to figure out what was wrong. We'd be together and she would get phone calls and she'd be upset but wouldn't tell me what was going on, she'd say it was nothing and don't worry. But I could tell it wasn't right. I was determined to figure it out and I mean sometimes she would tell me the truth, but she would lie as well, so it took me about 3 months to piece it altogether and eventually I realised what was going on. I think she was in on it though, I can't be sure, but I think she was part of it all. She used to be on the game* (prostitution) *years ago and when she met me she stopped and while we were apart I think she'd gone back on it, I don't know really…*

As was discussed in the previous chapter, this relationship resonates with the betrayed, humiliated, dominated *"walked all over"* individual that emerged from Brett's dualistic description of his traumatised biography (see page 124). Brett remains unsure whether the woman had actually colluded with his rivals, but when he *"figured out"* what was going on extreme violence followed:

> **Brett:** *…I think she was kind of part of it, but I think they forced her into it as well and I think she did want help... I mean I did three people in over that. Shoved a shooter* (firearm) *in one of the lad's faces for threatening her, told him to like fuckin stay away, coshed another kid, like beat him up…*

Brett's violence ended with him attacking another individual associated with this 'firm':

> **Brett:** *…these lads are proper fuckin scumbags mate…we were arguing and he was giving me shit, so I just thought fuck you like your fuckin having it…*

When this individual pulled out a knife, Brett described, as alluded to in the previous chapter (see page 124), how he *"flipped out"* and momentarily lost control of himself as he descended into what he described was an uncontrollable rage. Brett attacked his opponent with a hammer. Afterwards he described *"coming round"* to find himself covered in blood and his opponent lying on the floor. Upon leaving the scene Brett assumed his opponent was dead, but later found out he had survived the attack.

Liam was more than willing to exploit the vulnerabilities of men like Ian and Brett, who trade in the post-industrial 'underworld' (see Jacobs, 2000). With his occasional voracious appetite for drugs, Liam would use intimidation and if necessary violence to 'rip off' or 'tax' drug dealers and other vulnerable drug users:

> **Liam:** *…if they've just got their drugs then people were probably rattling* (experiencing withdrawal)*, not feeling up to it, can't be bothered with it, they're wimps, summat like that. Don't forget I weren't pickin' on big lads. I'd be pickin' on all the small fry, all the vulnerable ones. That's what a predator does isn't it? ...But it's a dangerous game cos owt can go wrong...*

Liam, aware of who he was actually robbing but seemingly indifferent to the potential consequences, targeted a small-time female drug dealer who was selling crack cocaine on behalf of several violent gangsters:

> **Liam:** *…I wa wi another girl who grabbed this lass who were selling, and she guz "Here tek it, tek it". Gid uz £50 and a little bit of crack, that were it. But I didn't want to get caught in that flat by them gangsters, believe me my heart were going reyt fast. I wanted to get in and go to reduce the chance of getting trapped in there, cos there was only one way in and one way out, and the windows didn't open properly in there, didn't fancy jumping through a double glazed window* (laughs)*. So this girl I was with were saying to me*

"No I want to tek her in the bathroom, she's got it in her knickers". And I were going "No no, don't, forget it, we've got some cash and some gear, we are sorted". Cos obviously you are desperate if you are going to do that, you know you haven't got anyone to sort you out wi drugs. So we'd got a few quid, I had a quick blast on a pipe they'd already got out, I grabbed this pipe, stuck the crack on and smoked it (laughs) *fuckin crazy man. So this lass I was with wanted to tek her into the bathroom and strip her like, cos she wa saying "She's got to have more than this". And being the total idiot I am said "forget that, we are going". And all the time she had 4 grand down her pants*

AE: *What would you have done then if you'd found the 4 grand?*

Liam: *Oh Tony, I might have been dead*

AE: *Would you have took it?*

Liam: *Yeah course I would have, fuckin hell it's not nice thinking back to that. So what she did then, clever bitch, blew all the money didn't she, blew all the gear and told 'em* [gangsters] *that I took the lot...couple of days later we are in this drug house… front room were packed out wi people, all temazed up, smokin' heroin and what not. And then slowly but surely, there was no one in the room, it just emptied the room, they'd all just gone into the kitchen, and there was this lass sat at side of me and she guz to me "Liam, get out of this house now, it's a set up", I guz "What you on about?" She guz "just get out of the house quick". So I stood up and room were totally empty... Guy* [gangster] *with the claw hammer came through from the kitchen... So I just dove for the door as quick as possible, grabbed the door handle, opened it, and there was the other bloke* [gangster]*, there like with an axe...I landed in the middle of the street, cars were beeping at me, so I wa just waving me hands about basically going "Help me, help me somebody...". But yeah, next minute I'm being taken to hospital cos there was all blood coming out of me head, he'd got me on head wi the hammer like...it's like a funny shape na me head...*

Earlier in the day, prior to being set-up and attacked by the gangsters he had robbed, Liam and an associate had visited a drug dealer operating from a block of flats in order to 'tax' him. They dragged the dealer from his flat, held a kitchen knife to his throat and repeatedly beat him with a piece of wood until his terrified friends, who had locked themselves in the flat, gave Liam and his associate a bottle of Temazepam.

Discussion

Real violence, as opposed to its mass-marketed and sanitised Hollywood variant, is ugly, often clumsy, desperate, and brutal. It bears little resemblance to the clinically executed, highly stylised 'designer' violence (Pearson, 1995) to which we are accustomed to seeing on television (see Collins, 2008). Violence like that which is described above and which has been a feature of these men's lives is driven by raw brutal determination, and a willingness to inflict maximum damage with little regard for the consequences. Martial arts training, bulging muscles, physical presence and stature, can only take the individual so far before uncompromising rage, ferocity, sheer brutality and a lack of restraint, must take over (see Hobbs, 1995, p.50-51).

Despite a strong sense of masculine bravado in these men's discussions around how they will react to threats, my data suggests that violence is not inevitable and that some men will go to certain lengths to ensure that violence is not required – but this should not be construed as an attempt to show restraint by these men or a case of succumbing to the 'confrontational fear and tension' (see Collins, 2008) that characterises confrontations. The data gathered and presented above suggests these men are engrossed in conceptions of themselves that reflect an acutely insecure desire for recognition. Confrontational situations are approached in a manner which ensures, as much as is possible, the maintenance of self-dignity and avoidance of terrifying persecutory humiliation associated with having been dominated and a *failure to act*. Both symbolic and physical manifestations of violence are resources for engaging with this.

The second part of this chapter explored through three in-depth case studies instances when some of these men have acted violently and had violence committed against them. In terms of the contextual/communal settings that staged this violence, I am unable to provide highly detailed descriptions due to issues concerning the maintenance of anonymity. However, I feel it suffices to say that all were places that had strongly felt the effects of de-industrialisation and had become characterised by marginality and economic decline. As such, these are spaces that tend to contain quite meagre sources of economic and cultural capital, and on occasions a palpable sense of desperation, insecurity and

competitiveness can grip these spaces. What the men who feature in this thesis do 'possess' they protect fiercely. As discussed above, money and market opportunities/positioning (both legitimate and illegitimate), personal status, reputation and respect, as well as females, dependents and friends, featured heavily in accounts of violence. When the latter were felt to be under threat they were defended and protected with sometimes brutal consequences. Space is important in the perpetration of violent crime, where broader 'socioeconomic processes are realized and structured' (Ray, 2011, p.193). Yet, we cannot simply assume that the characteristics of such spaces will automatically produce outbursts of violence (see Ray, 2011). They are important structuring features, but we must also consider the subjectivities and masculine identities present in such spaces and the motivations and emotions implicated in the violence that occasionally erupts there.

Each of the case studies presented were permeated by a general sense of injustice, betrayal, victimisation, desperation, entitlement, humiliation, and an intensely overwhelming fear of experiencing rueful rumination over what they could have done, or what might have been. Such fears and troubling emotions seem to be partially anchored in certain past events that characterise these men's biographies, representing a traumatic subjective collision of the present and past that transforms, albeit not always instantaneously, into rage. Memory, and the process of regularly re-memorising particular events, is therefore vital in understanding male violence (see also Winlow and Hall, 2009). Interestingly, despite the proclivity within much scholarship to account for male to male violence as homo-social in motivation and nature, the data presented here suggests issues concerning relationships with women, usually intimate, can on occasions be at the forefront of some violence that takes place between men. Some men, as described above, become enraged in response to feelings of threat and insecurity that are rooted in a pathological attachment to, and obsession with, maintaining paternalism, protection and proprietary over female intimates.

A desperate desire to extinguish or avenge traumatic emotions and feelings through violence was clearly evident and data presented here supports some observations made by other authors (see Hall et al, 2008; Winlow and Hall, 2006). In their desperation to extinguish traumatising feelings, men's violence is

often subjected to a minimal amount of restraint. In some cases it is incredibly primal, predatory, and not bound by any rigid notions of 'rules', 'codes', or appropriate 'engagement'. What also accompanied the violence, and which has not been addressed in any great depth by other literature, was a powerful sense of self-righteous entitlement and moral sanctity that will now be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Violent Reflections: Morality, Masculinity and Violence

In the previous chapter, issues of morality and justifications for violence began to emerge during some of the men's discussions of violence they have committed against others. Returning briefly to chapter four, Darren's case study also alluded to several significant thematic issues relevant for the discussion in this chapter. First, the issue of 'deservingness' and how he felt that those he has physically harmed *deserved* it. Second, his emphasis upon a lack of choice around violence, which emphasised that being aggressive and violent, is sometimes absolutely necessary and unavoidable. Finally, what seemed to unite these sentiments was both a sense of personal absolution in relation to the doing of violence, but also disdain for those that misunderstood these sentiments and thus failed to acknowledge the complexities of his life and of using violence.

This chapter then explores and analyses such justifications and how they are related to masculinity and identity in much more depth. In doing this, the chapter alludes to the men's varying reflections upon several issues: the morality and appropriateness of their violence against others and their attempts to justify this; the 'types' of men they considered themselves to be – their 'masculinity', self-identities and how this is related to violence; and, lastly, their perceptions and understandings of their roles as father figures. In particular to young boys within their families, and how issues of morality, violence and masculinity inform this.

'It's not me…it's them': Morality and Defensive Justifications – Or Not?

> The availability of languages of justifiable violence, as revolutionary or self-defensive, offers perpetrators in general a view of themselves as powerless victims (Ray, 2011, p.14).

Instances of interpersonal violence are rarely without some attendant justificatory explanation; even if these justifications have little genuine or reasonable foundation. Like much violence for those who perpetrate it, the participants heavily justified their use of violence. Some of the men were able to reflect more deeply than others upon the morality/appropriateness of their behaviour. Some even felt their behaviour had at times been excessive and said they felt guilt and shame at this. Generally though, from their perspectives, and as was intimated by them in the previous chapters, their violence was committed in response to a perceived sense of injustice or victimisation that justified inflicting, occasionally, serious harm upon others. Violence was always felt to be *deserved* by those who were on the receiving end; however obscure, perverse or unfounded this may appear in the eyes of the reader.

For example, Gary reflects briefly upon an assault he committed against a male acquaintance who he found had been 'bad mouthing' him to others while he was not present:

> **Gary:** *…he didn't get owt apart from a busted nose and a red face…I didn't like the kid so I didn't really feel any sympathy for him…I just thought well you deserve it. If he didn't want to get punched he shouldn't have been so cocky, bad mouthin' people behind their back. So* (I) *think he got what he deserved…*

Whilst Ian focuses upon his own perceived sense of victimisation after attacking an individual with a knife, who then committed the cardinal sin of 'grassing':

> **Ian:** *...the fucker grassed on me, couldn't believe it. I spent a lot of time in prison thinking about what he did to me, how he'd grassed. I heard off a few people…that he'd been done in a couple of times cos of what he did to me…I remember being sat in me pad* (prison cell) *fuming about it, I thought a lot about what I would do to him when I got out. I considered many times going round there and fuckin' doing him properly, got time* (prison sentence) *for that cunt…*

Ian continued to feel a sense of injustice and betrayal from this particular altercation and that further violence against this individual was *justified* and required. What is also interesting here is the fantasy element of Ian's reflections and memories of this event; imagining and fantasising himself alleviating his own suffering.

In the next example, Liam talks more generally about the necessity of being able and willing to defend yourself, with a specific emphasis upon having to use violence while in prison:

> **Liam:** ...I've always been reyt wi people if they're reyt wi me, I'm reyt wi them. If someone tries stealing something off me, or confronting me, things like that, you've got to ant you? (use violence) Cos if you don't in prison, you'll soon become a muppet, and that's when your life does get difficult in prison…You have got to look after yourself though, don't get me wrong, cos I mean you have to look after yourself cos they'll tek you for a right idiot, they'll be doing all sorts.

Similarly, Shane offers his more extensive and generalised reflections on his violent history, which shift between various justifications and denials:

> **Shane:** I've done some horrific things, but, really, you know, at the time, I felt like, (it was) …The right thing to do. And in my head now if I try to analyse it today I still think it was the right thing to do, even though it was over the top, I'd still think well you shouldn't have done what you did should you. Shit happens doesn't it?
>
> **AE:** …what do you think about it now?
>
> **Shane:** I think to myself it was a blast at the time, and I've got no remorse for anything I did…Cos at the end of the day I wouldn't have done what I done if I wasn't put in the position to do it, because if someone wrongs you, then you have to straighten it don't you? That's the way I look at life anyway. And I've never hurt anybody who didn't…Deserve it. I've never gone after anybody who didn't deserve me to go looking for 'em and I've never ever bullied anyone, picked on anyone, made a fool of anyone or anything, so, I aint got no regrets. I regret that I wasted a lot of my life doing stupid things, I regret that I got married…and lost most of my youth, know what I mean? I have got regrets, but no regrets that revolve around stuff like that (violence)…because I'm not what I would call an aggressive person…

Research on narratives of violent crimes has found that they tend to be devoid of a sense of agency on the part of the perpetrators (see Hearn 1998; Stein, 2007). The accounts from the men above minimise agency in two important ways. First, by indicating that they were given little choice or option but to use violence to defend themselves and to ensure they would not be targeted with further violence and humiliation. And second, by shifting agency onto the victims, who are designated as responsible and somehow at fault for making them behave

violently. In short, the victim should have known better, realised what the consequences would be, modified their behaviour, or simply stayed well away.

Other participants were not so firm in their convictions that their violence is, and has always been, totally warranted and justified, and acknowledged feelings of guilt, regret and shame. However, these were not aired or discussed without recourse to some justification, which tended to impart some blame upon the victim or was done through reference to an incident in the past in which they themselves had been victimised.

Below, Paul reflects on attacking another male in a nightclub and breaking his nose. Paul's opponent knew Paul's wife and had had a brief relationship with her while they were at college together, which had occurred sometime before she and Paul met. Paul said the history between the two of them did not bother him and had not been part of his motivation for the attack. However, Paul felt his victim still harboured some feelings for his wife and described how on this particular evening this individual had been attempting to humiliate and goad him. Paul's wife was not present during the assault and does not know about the attack. I asked Paul to consider how she might feel about it if she were to find out:

> **Paul:** *She would be disappointed wi me, I mean she knows what I'm like…I think she'd see that I was being picked on, she'd say "Oh you can walk away from things like that, you don't need to do that" and she's right you don't, but…I were drunk as well, so that's why it happened basically. It wouldn't have happened if I were sober, I would probably have just said "Come on let's stand somewhere else". But cos I were drunk and he was…just generally mugging me off I thought, no that's enough, know what I mean? It changes how you think when you are drunk but you are still sort of sober enough to move about. It's like you haven't got as much of a problem with doing it, you just think na fuck it. But I regretted it reyt bad, reyt reyt bad next day. I remember saying to me mate "I'm reyt sorry that that happened". I felt like I'd ruined uz night out, I felt reyt bad*
>
> **AE:** *And what did he say?*
>
> **Paul:** *He just said "No no he deserved it". But I mean I were happy that they weren't annoyed at me, but I did feel bad for hitting this kid, cos he was nothing, he was like you know your stereotype student? You picture 'em just like they'd never be, sort of able to look after themselves in that kind of situation, you know what I mean don't you?...I'm not saying students are like that but there's a stereotype isn't there? And he were like one of them and I just thought, there were no challenge whatsoever to walking over and hitting him and I do feel bad about it*

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Paul, like the other men involved in this study, has emerged from a cultural context in which self-worth and value are intimately connected to one's ability to defend oneself and react appropriately to challenges and attempts by others to achieve or exert dominance. The measure of the man is taken from his ability to *react* to such circumstances. Historical research focused on England highlights the existence of un-written rules of engagement and comportment during male violence, particularly notions of 'fighting fair' (Emsley, 2005b). Men's violence is often constructed around notions of a 'fair', honourable fight between two well matched opponents in which *real* men, who have earned the right to call themselves *men*, engage in confrontations to re-affirm idealised images of themselves (Whitehead, 2005). Recent work drawing on ethnographic data suggests these informal governing injunctions may be dissolving though, amidst atmospheres of extreme interpersonal competitiveness (see Winlow and Hall, 2006).

Certainly, from Paul's narrative, we can detect remnants of something which might be construed as a set of moralities and governing injunctions around interpersonal combat that linger as a vague background static; particularly the sense of shame at his violent actions, as he did not see his victim as 'fair game'. Paul's allusions to the other male's inability to fight and his general lack of masculine credibility in the aforementioned sense of being able to defend oneself, created a situation in which Paul had dominated what he considered to be an inferior opponent. Although one may also construe this as blatant narcissism on Paul's part. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the moral economy of male violence can easily disintegrate under pressure and an attempt at appeasement through offering an opponent the opportunity to walk away can very quickly threaten the individual male with a loss of face and self-dignity, particularly if such dignified appeasement fails (see Willis, 1990). Later on during this particular interview, Paul responded in the following way to a discussion about himself and his brother Gary about when they consider it is appropriate to use violence:

> **Paul:** *…I think we both think that if it needed to happen then there would be no issue. Like say if one of us were in trouble or looked like we were going to get hit or something, like for instance in the takeaway* (Paul is referring here to a recent incident in which one of his friends was involved in an argument with another male which did not lead to violence)*, if that*

lad had made a move to hit our mate, there would have been no standing and thinking oh what do we do? We'd have been straight in. Yeah

AE: *So if it needs to happen you won't hesitate?*

Paul: *Yeah if it needs to happen. We don't go looking for it and I always feel bad after but it's like the taxi rank all over again[10]. If I think, you know one of us is going to get hit, or has been hit, or whatever then it needs to happen, then there would be no, there's not a problem, it's not a problem to get involved*

The image conjured from Paul's narrative is of an individual who occupies a social space where the possibility of violence is always present, even if you *"don't go looking for it"*. Paul constructs himself, as do some of the other men whose justificatory discussions are cited above, as an approximation of a reluctant fighter. He doesn't want to be violent, and Paul describes feeling regret, guilt and shame at having to do so, but simultaneously feels there is little choice in the matter. Being taunted by someone Paul considers a stereotypical 'soft' student, raised in a safe and secure environment and thus unfamiliar with the need for violence and self-defence, represents no genuine threat or challenge to a *man* like Paul. However, his allusion to his previous experience of being attacked with a glass bottle is core to Paul's justificatory mechanism for violence against an inferior opponent he considers to be unworthy of the effort and physical exertion. As I discussed in chapter six, Paul's more recent experiences of being attacked and left feeling helpless and vulnerable, resonate with his earlier childhood experiences of being physically dominated by an older male from his local estate (see chapter five). Pragmatic experience and memory has therefore, forced Paul to reconsider and re-appraise aspects of his self-identity in light of past circumstances where he has *failed* to react in a manner commensurate with immediate cultural expectations and which left him physically and psychologically scarred. This re-appraisal, and its attendant moral justifications, shapes his on-going social engagement with others and the social world (see Winlow and Hall, 2009).

What emerges from the examples explored above is what Hall (2012) has defined morally flexible selves that are capable of engaging with moral and ethical frameworks that instruct individuals not to harm others in a calculative

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[10] See chapter six pages 141 - 144

manner. These men are not pathological as is so often assumed in media, political and some academic commentaries of violence (see Ellis et al, 2013). They do not suffer from a mental affliction that renders them devoid of the ability to empathise or express care and concern for others' wellbeing. They recognise the moral and ethical injunctions against violence, but believe these to be totally out of touch with the 'realities' of everyday life (see Winlow, 2012). Rather, everyday life is perceived to be occasionally highly pressurised and morally challenging, requiring a flexible engagement with ethics that transcends the simple dualism of 'right' and 'wrong'. Thus, violence is neither wholly right, but nor is it entirely wrong. And this ambiguous, context-bound understanding of the morality of violence that these men display is a crucial analytical point in understanding their relationships to violence and which I will elaborate upon later in this chapter.

Hearn (1998) describes how violent men will attempt to minimise their violence as only a minute part of themselves that does not represent the 'core' of who they actually are. In a similar vein, this calculated engagement with appropriate behavioural codes represents a subjective shift from the 'good me', which is considered the core of self-identity, to the peripheral 'Mr Hyde' like figure of the 'not me', who, when he surfaces under extreme external pressure, is capable of harming others (see Hall, 2012). When Paul and the other men involved in this study feel threatened they project 'the sadistic 'not me' onto the victim, who must be annihilated if the idealized self is to be reconstituted by returning it from shame to pride' (Hall, 2012, p.200). In this context, the 'idealized self' to which Hall refers, is the internalised image of the narcissistic self, defined by particular idealised masculine qualities, and that is re-elevated following domination of the other. Not always and not necessarily through actual violence, as was highlighted and discussed in the previous chapter. But, in a manner which successfully re-elevates the self over the other and wrestles back a sense of dignity, however fleeting and ephemeral, from contests with other men within much wider social contexts of shame inducing marginality (see Hall, 2002; Ray, 2011). This next section now addresses, in more depth, these men's reflections upon and perceptions of themselves.

The Men We Are: Self-Identity, Pride and Respect

It seemed crucial to the men I spent time with to be able to justify their violence through narrative justifications like those explored in the above section, which uphold and are intimately connected to their self-identities. These narratives, despite some subtle variations, generally contain allusions to pride, self-dignity, respect and recognition by others, which they valued highly and were alluded to during chapter five. As one might expect, the participants did not feel their self-identities adhered to media generated or commonplace stereotypical images of individuals who have committed, or possess a genuine capacity for, violence. They strenuously denied any possibility that they were 'bullies' or 'thugs'; such derogatory labels were vehemently rejected. Crucially, the men involved in this research do not actually perceive themselves strictly through the lens of violence. Of course a *potential* for violence informs their self-image, but in a manner that is bound up with contemporary notions of what some authors have called 'male honour' (Spierenburg, 2008), as well as a sense of respect, 'ethics', dignity and other sentiments and injunctions defined by defence and protection of both the self and of 'vulnerable' significant others (see Anderson, 1999; Winlow and Hall, 2009).

Living the Right Way

> **Shane:** *I've spent many er night on the observation ward in hospital because I didn't walk away. But you just get up the next day and go home, my self-respect is intact isn't it? But if I hadn't I'd torture myself over it, and I'd go over it and over it in my head…I've always respected everybody else, other people's feelings, other people's wishes, other people's beliefs. You know, I've never put anybody down, bullied anybody, taken something off someone, nothing. So no I don't have, I can't sit here and say I've fucked my life up cos I haven't, I've lived it, bit crazier than most people, but I've lived it you know, I've lived it according to what I think is right. Even though what I've done is, in the eyes of the law wrong, it's still how I perceived things to be at the time…*
>
> **AE:** *…do you ever think that, in the eyes of other people, that they might have seen you as bullies* (referring to him and his brother Carl)*?*
>
> **Shane:** *No*
>
> **AE:** *No?*

> **Shane:** *No not at all…people know that the trouble is because such and such has done something, not because Shane is a dickhead…so no I don't think that, you know, not at all. Because if you do something to someone you have to expect it back, that's life innit? ...if you want to hit my mate and he won't hit you back cos he's not that kind of person, then I'll do it for him, know what I mean? You go and steal something off my friend, well I'll come and take it back off you. And that's not bullying, that's a form of defending the people that are around you…You protect your kids, your missus, your house, and you extend it beyond that don't you? To your work colleagues, your friends, you know your wider family, and that's just how it is I think, that's how I've always been anyway…*

Shane begins with an attempt to communicate the utter sense of self-loathing and worthlessness he would feel had he not reacted violently to events during his life that he believes have in some way threatened him or those he cares for. He would have, as he explains, literally *"tortured"* himself through ruminating constantly over the memory of not reacting, of remaining static when he felt action was required, and mourning the loss of the opportunity to catapult himself on a different path towards unbridled satisfaction and security at having ensured that his *"self-respect is intact"*. Threat of personal failure and a sense of expectation are themes that have been explored in much of the masculinities literature and are theorised as weighing heavily upon men, who assume responsibility for protecting and providing for others and suffer in the pursuance of this (see Jefferson, 1994; Kaufman, 1994; Kimmel, 1994). As Shane intimates, stoically, violence has at times been necessary in order for him to fulfil these expectations. He has paid a hefty price physically to be in the hallowed, enviable position of being a proud, ethical man. A man who has done what is right by defending himself, those close to him, and those more vulnerable than he is. Ultimately, his violence has left him able to peer at his reflection and be content with the image that is reflected back: a man who respects others, and is respected by others, but crucially, a man who is able to have respect for himself.

    Liam's account below of recently 'standing up for himself' by offering to fight a former work colleague who had been verbally abusive and was attempting to exert authority and control over Liam, evokes many of the specific qualities alluded to in Shane's self-reflections on how he has comported himself in relation to others around him:

Liam: *…he were a normal worker, just like I were, but he were tellin' me what to do. And he'd been pushing and pushing, honestly Tony I have to be pushed and pushed and pushed* (to react violently). *Started shouting again so I basically offered him out, sez "come on get outside if you want to talk to me like that, try it out here". He shut up and it totally revolutionised our relationship, after that day he were totally sound wi me, and I thought I'm really glad I did that, cos he respected me then.*

AE: *Do you think he was scared of you?*

Liam: (objects quite strongly) *No, no no, I don't think he was scared of me, he were a decent lad. But what it were, it sort of, it really helped, it sorted everything out for me, cos he just acted like a totally different person with me then. And it were much better, the environment were much better, you know the working environment was a lot nicer for me, cos he'd been on at me all the time, but he like respected me*

AE: *What, cos you'd stood up for yourself?*

Liam: *Yeah, I stood up for me self, yeah definitely. If I'd not stood up for me self he would probably have just been the same as he'd always been, a total fuckin' nob. Basically havin' an axe to grind…it were like all time, and you're thinking hold on, if I do that is he going to have a go at me? You know one of them, and you can't have it like that…it were gettin' to stage where I'd just had enough, you need to stand up to 'em…and like I said it was totally different, he were totally sound after that, we were like best mates man after that, honestly Tony man, like best mates.*

A subsequent confrontation with another colleague resulted in Liam being relieved of his duties and he has been unable to find employment since his dismissal. The emphasis within his narrative is not upon a sense of regret or shame that he had lost his job through being unable to control his anger, but more upon the positive effects of his actions through standing up for himself and not allowing what he perceived as his colleague's bullying and intimidation to continue.

The self-identities of these men are enveloped by qualities associated with aspects of the gendered, visceral habitus that places the ability to retain and to be imbued with a sense of respect and dignity from others at the core of identity (see Winlow, 2012). As has been intimated already, the sense of value, self-worth and dignity these men seek to possess and to be recognised in them by others, does not lie completely in their potential and willingness to physically harm. Rather, in a highly complex and somewhat contradictory fashion, it lies in

their ability to ensure others are not unduly dominant during interactions, that others recognise their presence and give to them respect, which in turn, enables these men to feel they are entitled to have a particular form of respect for themselves. Liam argued vehemently that he was not given respect out of fear and was, as intimated through his strong objection to my question, rather horrified by the idea that the man in question was frightened of him. Acknowledging that he inspired fear in others would plunge Liam into the mould of the 'bully': the despised 'other' the participants are so desperate to not be identified with. Contrarily, for Liam, he gained respect because he refused to be passive and to accept someone else's attempts to exert dominance and control without a reasonable claim to legitimate authority or reason to do so. Like Shane, Liam does not consider himself a 'bully' whose mere presence inspires fear and dread in others, because he has *reacted* to the conduct and behaviour of another that offends his moral sensibilities. For both men then, *reactivity* to stimuli considered threatening is the line that separates them from the bullying 'others' they loathe and despise.

This process of 'othering' in the construction of masculine identity is important and has been discussed in some literature addressing the construction of male ethnic identity through race hate and violence (see Treadwell and Garland, 2011). At a broader level, some masculinities literature has usefully highlighted hierarchical competitiveness and homophobia between men as constitutive of masculinity (Kimmell, 1994); yet, not in the context of the dialectic between identity and violence, as I discuss here. These attempts at 'othering' in relation to one's own violence are vital for making sense of these men's constructions of their identities, but they rely upon a contradictory, false dichotomy, which I will discuss in the remainder of this chapter.

Safe Man: Respect or Fear?

The field notes I present below from an incident I observed while spending time with Vince, develop the arguments I have made in the previous section. On this particular occasion I was able to witness the power of Vince's reputation in action. What was interesting about this was that this social encounter appeared on the surface to be quite cordial and was constructed by Vince afterwards as an

exemplar of the type of respect he is frequently granted by others. The event was seemingly non-violent. Yet, simmering beneath was recognition by all involved that violence, and its possibility, was very much a structuring force for the interaction. As my notes indicate:

Vince and his friend leave the bar for a cigarette and ask me if I want one, I decline as I don't smoke, but I tell them I'll join them. As they head towards the doors to leave the bar I pay a visit to the gents. As I'm returning to the doors I see Vince talking to a man who I don't recognise. I'm unsure whether to approach, but I am starting to feel sufficiently confident to be more assertive around Vince, and decide to join them. As I approach, the man talking to Vince turns his head in my direction and shoots me a brief nervous glance before he continues talking; he seems slightly on edge. Vince doesn't avert his gaze from the man, nor does he say anything to me, he just continues listening while maintaining unceasing eye-contact with him. I sense that Vince doesn't have a problem with me hearing this conversation. It becomes clear that they know each other and the man is apologising:

> **Apologetic Individual:** *…yeah I'm sorry about other night mate. You know me I don't want to cause any trouble, and I didn't want you to think that I was being disrespectful, just one of them things you know?*

Vince extends one of his huge tattooed hands out in front of him; clasping the man's outstretched hand he shakes it firmly. Vince tells the man not to worry and that he's welcome back anytime. The man replies:

> **Apologetic Individual:** *Yeah well you've bought enough cars off us anyway, so don't want you to not come back*

They both laugh and the man shakes hands with Vince's friend before leaving. Vince turns to his friend, they smile at one another; Vince then turns to me:

> **Vince:** *See what I mean pal? That's a good example there of how I run things. That bloke is a decent lad, but when he gets some drink in him he's a problem, know what I mean? Starts causing trouble and he's done it a few times. He was doing it other day and I asked him to leave and told him to come back when he'd sobered up and apologise to me. As long as people do that I haven't got a problem. I ask people to go away on the night and give them the opportunity to come and apologise to me. If they don't, it's quite easy for me to find out where they live. I can quite easily pay them a visit and teach them some respect. Few times I've kicked people's front doors in on a Sunday afternoon while they're having their*

Sunday dinner with their girlfriends or wives. Bit of a shock when I burst through the door and give 'em a good hiding in front of their missus. Wives and girlfriends will be going mental, but I'll tell 'em as their other half is knocked out on t' floor: "Control your husband then, teach him to respect others and I won't need to come round and do it for you".
(Fieldwork notes).

I lost count of the amount of times that Vince reiterated to me the importance of respecting other people, but, more importantly, ensuring that he was respected by others and the leverage this gave him within the community where he lives and works. Vince is a man committed to violence and a self-image that is built around this, more so than many of the other men involved in this research as Vince must adhere to and continually invest in this self-image and the reputation that goes with it. There is so much at stake for him, because reputation is what enables Vince to engage in the post-industrial marketplace. Without it there would be little else available to a man with no formal qualifications and who can barely read and write. For this, Vince receives an immense amount of what he interprets and construes to be respect from others.

As Winlow (2012) argues, men prepared to use violence often mistake the fear and dread they can inspire in others as a form of respect, as discussed in relation to Liam and Shane previously, who were unable, or perhaps unwilling, to recognise their own aggressive dominant behaviour as having an intimidating effect. The individual keen to offer his apologies for his previous misdemeanours while under the influence, knew it was potentially unwise to not return, tail, literally, between his legs and offer Vince an apology, crucially, out of fear. In all likelihood nothing would come of not offering an apology, despite Vince's stern rhetoric of the times when he's kicked in people's front doors and disrupted a pleasant afternoon dinner in order to teach respect. It is the lingering uncertainty that not apologising to a man such as Vince would leave. The fear of how Vince might interpret this and how he may act in a future encounter – it is the sense of uncertainty that such men are able to inspire in others which is crucial.

Social encounters with men who are and have been violent, like the one described above from my field notes, are often incredibly cordial, with plenty of handshaking, conversational pleasantries, ego-inflating compliments, and general sycophantic 'sucking up' that, to the individual, appears to be borne out of a genuine affection and sense of respect for them. Yet, underlying this is

trepidation, uncertainty and wariness about how they will act and their potential for violence. Social identity does not exist in the eye of the beholder (see Jenkins, 2004) and no matter how much men like Shane, Liam and Vince may attempt to deny it, it is inescapable that their self-identities are partly informed and defined by other's perceptions, knowledge and memories of displays of physical aggression towards others – no matter how justified or justifiable. In the communities where these men have grown up and live, such raw displays of brute physical aggression can very quickly alter the way an individual is perceived and are likely to remain etched into the collective memory of those who witness or hear about it (see Hall et al, 2008; Winlow, 2001).

"It's not worth it"…or is it?

> **AE:** *…Is there any benefit to being violent with other blokes?*
>
> **Gary:** *When I was younger I would say yeah, I'd say basically it proves that I'm ahead of them. Above them so to speak, be it in stature, whatever. Whereas now I would say no. The consequences and implications of what you are doing far outweigh any kind of, short term, feeling of machoness or whatever. Whereas when I was younger I'd just be like, fuck it, I'm going to prove to him I'm better than him, and if it means beating him up then job done. I'll walk out with my head held high. If he's silly enough to go that way I'll knock him out, if he backs off in front of his mates it shows them he is a fuckin' fanny. And that's it job done. I walk out, you know, cock of yard, looking better than him. And that's all it were, just basically keeping up appearances. Whereas when you are older you just see the bigger picture and it's just like forget that. No one is giving you a medal for it, so it's not worth it…I've still got, like I say, still got quite a bit of a bad temper like, but I think now I try to resolve it through other means rather than through just lashing out. Like I say try and walk away, just ignore people, but like I say if push came to shove and they weren't going away, as long as I could mitigate what I were doing or, you know, justify it to a point then wouldn't really bother me to knock someone out if I thought he was going to do it to me.*

Whereas Vince remains committed to an uncompromising self-image of violence and intimidation, reading Gary's narrative reflections on masculinity and violence, he appears somewhat enlightened. He suggests he has de-invested somewhat in a self-image that is defined by violent potential and volatility, and to some extent this is accurate. Having spent significant periods of time with Gary, I am aware

(because I've witnessed this) that he possesses the capability to not use violence in what may be construed as potentially volatile and threatening situations. Unlike Vince, Gary does not rely on his personal reputation, contacts and position within local violence hierarchies to ensure his financial and material success and survival. He has never, and will never, reach the dizzy heights of local notoriety occupied by the very few 'specialist warriors' (Winlow and Hall, 2006) like Vince, whose reputations and violent potential are their key economic assets. Gary has been able to attain employment in a competitive sector of the labour market that requires a different set of skills to those used by Vince. In his narrative above, Gary shifts between opposing discourses of a more 'respectable', passive masculinity and those that equate masculinity with raw, visceral power and dominance over others. Some of the existing literature on masculinities and violence doesn't acknowledge the complex and often contradictory ways in which men identify with and negotiate 'masculinity' (see Gadd, 2000; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007). Similarly, some of the pro-feminist literature was criticised earlier in chapter two for glossing over these complexities and over-predicting violence as a masculine affirming act. The data discussed here during this chapter suggests a highly complex picture and interactive relationship between violence and masculine identity.

Some of these men were all too aware that violence and aggression were not socially acceptable behaviours, and, as intimated above in the discussion of morality and justifications, sought very hard to 'bend' the standard conventions that forbid violence to grant legitimacy to their actions. As Gary explains above, he understands and recognises that he must display more passive qualities if he is to ensure his own personal and economic survival. This is vital in a socio-economic context that denigrates interpersonal (criminal) violence committed by individuals in a physical form, and thrives on more subtle, symbolic practices of violence and aggression (see Ellis and Wykes, 2013; Hall, 2002).

Yet simultaneously, Gary cannot ignore the occasional pressing realities of his social location and the specific cultural injunctions to which he has been exposed throughout his life. Gary knows what the consequences are of 'backing down' and failing to 'stand up for himself' - torturous humiliation and shame. And no matter how much he might try to tell himself 'it's not worth it', when faced with a threat that is attempting to mock and denigrate him, he responds in a way that

he knows will be effective – with aggressive posturing, verbal attacks and if necessary physical violence. Avoiding violence in contexts when it is expected of him conflicts with his socio-cultural inheritance, which is defined by a particular set of enclassed masculine virtues that he has internalised deeply and are etched into his subjective identity. Gary might be able to distance himself somewhat from violence through various 'discursive shifts' in his 'talk' about violence (Hearn, 1998), but he cannot completely divorce himself from violence and his potential to use it.

Clearly Gary is not invested in violence to the same extent or degree as someone like Vince, Shane, Liam or Darren whom we met in chapter 4, and nor does he need to be. However, he remains invested in a particular self-image commensurate with that of these men and one that is subject to the same fears and insecurities of annihilation and consequent isolation and insignificance in an ultra-competitive socio-cultural milieu.

'Listen to your Dad': Fatherhood and Preparing Sons

Discussing fatherhood with some of the participants revealed a contradictory tension that lies at the heart of these men's relationships with children in their lives, particularly sons. Those men who had sons and talked about them with me, were caught between a desire for their sons to stay out of trouble, but to also be able to 'look after themselves'. None of them wanted their sons to experience what they had, or behave as they have done. Yet, they were acutely aware of the very real potential that exists for their sons to become embroiled in confrontational situations; and this was a cause for concern.

Like Father Like Son?

Carl's 11 year old son has already been in trouble for fighting with other young males at his school and seems to be displaying a temperament similar to his father and uncle:

> **Carl:** *He's* (Carl's son)*, it's a bit hard to describe it, he's not like we* (Carl and Shane) *were, but he'll have a go at anyone…He got into a fight with someone at school and apparently he knocked him out by banging his head against a wall… And I said to him "did you really do that? Or did you*

just take the blame for someone else?" And he wouldn't answer me. So I presume he did do it, but both me and me wife sat him down and said "look why did you do it?" And he said the other lad was picking on his friend. And once I heard him say that I thought well that's the kind of thing I've been through. So I tried to get him to stop and he said to me he wouldn't do it again. And since then he's not been in trouble, I mean he was getting in trouble pretty much every week for fighting, but nothing serious, it was just minor things…I hope to god now that we've had the talk with my lad he'll not do that. Can't guarantee it but we hope to god he doesn't. He wants to learn boxing to teach him a little discipline, cos both me and Shane did boxing. So we started teaching him that…Since that incident with the head on the wall he's been alright. Since we spoke to him about it and told him the possibilities that could happen, you know through the experiences of me and my brother, since I told him about it and what could possibly happen, I think he's stood back and thought, hang on I shouldn't be doing this maybe dad is right. I mean he won't admit it to me cos he's like that, but it seems to be that he's behaving himself, he's not getting into trouble. He gets in trouble with my wife, just silly little petty arguments, but he's a kid growing up, it's what they do. But other than that he seems to be getting his head screwed on now. We told him that if he gets into trouble to try and walk away from it, if he can't walk away from it, don't take it on. If you can't, if you're in school, there's going to be plenty of people who you know, just walk to them. And if you've got more people with you than they've got with them picking on you then they'll disperse and leave you alone. And he says that has happened, he's walked over to a group of friends and the ones that have been mouthing off to him have walked off. They've left him alone now cos they know he's got a lot of friends, it's sort of school yard rules innit? My gang's bigger than your gang sort of thing, don't actually get involved in the violence, but it's actually learning him to keep his temper under control, cos he does have a bad temper my lad…

Carl's and his wife's interventions seem to have been somewhat successful in curbing their son's anger, who has managed to remain out of trouble while in school. But, as Carl explains, he remains concerned about the future, as he knows what will be expected of his son should he encounter trouble again – Carl himself can't help but expect it from him:

Carl: *…if we're not careful with it, he might go down a similar sort of route that me and Shane have gone down, if I'm not careful with him*

AE: *And if that was to happen how would you feel about that?*

Carl: *I would be upset that he's getting into trouble, but at the end of the day he's my son. But I just hope to god it doesn't get that far. I want him to be able to look after himself, obviously every parent does don't they? Their kids to be able to look after themselves, but I don't want him to end up in prison for doing something stupid. You've got to defend yourself…You've*

got to be prepared to look after yourself, but not to take it too far. Self-defence yeah, but don't take the piss out of it and I think he's getting that into his head. Yeah it's okay to fight if I have to, but not unless I have to. He's alright he still wants to box with me all the time when I come home, when I pick him up from school and he comes home he starts going like that (Carl puts his fists up)…We have a bit of a laugh about it and then he goes and plays on the Xbox or something. So he's alright with it, but I just hope whenever it comes to the time it stays how he is at this moment

Don't Follow in My Footsteps

Liam: *…I want to start working again, don't want to be one of these that meks up the numbers of unemployed anymore. I need to stop smoking cannabis as well, got to kick that it's no good…I mean I'd even do like factory work, just need to do summat, it's more for my boy, cos he deserves better. I mean I don't want to be getting involved in any violence, hopefully I won't do anymore and that's the end of it…*

Despite being dismissed from his previous employment for using threatening behaviour (see above) Liam has committed himself to his methadone substitute programme, ceased his acquisitive offending, but, as he so aptly put it to me:

Liam: *…even right up to this time in my life, I'm still doing it, I'm still headbutting people.*

A recent altercation with a local man in the presence of several local children and women left Liam with superficial injuries. Liam had refused to fight back in the presence of children and through a desire to have his assailant arrested and charged. Following an arrest no charges were brought. In the aftermath of this incident, Liam himself escaped arrest and charges after he beat a local man unconscious:

Liam: *...wi him being a big guy, once they grab hold of you, honestly Tony, basically you've fucked it if they grab yer, big man like that, yeah so you've got all these things whizzing through your head and I'm thinking hold on, it were only a couple of weeks ago that I was thinking to me sen no I'm not retaliating, if he hits me he hits me, I'll get the police involved. That didn't work out very good for me did it? Med me look a chuffin idiot, even our lass teks piss out of me still…*

Being unemployed, Liam has assumed domestic responsibilities and takes a very active role in caring for and bringing up his young son:

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Liam: *…I like to spend a lot of time with my son, and if there's anything on at school where parents can go into class and take part, I do that because I can remember when I was a kid how much I would have loved that. You know or even for me mum and dad to watch me play football, they never used to come, never… So that's why I try to do that with me boy, try to fill the gaps, you know get on floor and play cards wi him and that, you know you might feel daft but you're spending quality time with your kid. So in that regard, I do think back and try to mek his life a lot better in that sense through having a relationship with his dad. Cos I've never had a relationship with my dad, never, never once...I gi him advice about school. I always say to him "If owt happens to you just go straight to teacher". Anything like that he goes straight to 'em, and he does, he listens to me...when I went to parents' evening, teacher said she didn't have a wrong word to say about him, and that he gives 100% in everything that he does. Honestly it wa fantastic hearing what she said...*

Despite his young age Liam's son already has a scar on his face from a shard of plastic that was thrown at him by a local boy while they were playing together in a local park, which left a deep gash requiring hospital treatment. Whether he intended to hurt him is unclear, but Liam paid a visit to the boy's home and threatened his father with violence. When I asked Liam more about his son and the possibility that he too may encounter violence as he matures, like Carl previously, Liam expressed his concerns:

Liam: *I do worry yeah, I do. Because it's going to be a situation where there isn't really going to be a right or wrong answer is there? If you know what I mean. Like you said, it's almost inevitable that he'll be put in a confrontational situation, that's going to be quite erm, hostile as well...to be honest if you analyse it properly you wouldn't want to bring your child up in this town. You wouldn't want to bring your child up on an estate like this...I mean it's getting worse round 'ere, you're taking him to school there's rubbish everywhere, so like you are saying you are stuck in a place aren't you? And you can't really escape that, you could do I suppose, but even so you still aren't going to escape all the devil's armoury, the problems are you? No matter where you go. So yeah as far as advice goes to my son, going to have to be to try and do your upmost to not get yourself in the position in the first place, ant it? That's got to be first and foremost, and then after that who knows...*

When the father to son relationship has been discussed within literature in relation to violence and masculinity, the emphasis has tended to be upon when fathers encourage/teach sons about violence, or when they subject sons to actual abuse (see Hobbs, 1994; Winlow, 2012 for example). This was discussed as a theme present in some of the men's childhoods in chapter five. Yet, there has

been little acknowledgement in literature of the complexities of this and the specific reasons why some men's relationships with their sons are connected to violence. My data and analysis interrogates this relationship somewhat.

What emerges from Carl and Liam here are an acute set of anxieties, uncertainties and concerns that appear to be borne out of a natural and understandable, yet highly idealistic, desire for their sons to be protected and to remain free from intimidation and threats. Neither Liam nor Carl has had the luxury of being able to avoid violence and intimidation, and, unfortunately, it is hard to imagine their sons avoiding them completely. For Carl and Liam then, pragmatic experience features strongly in their parenting, as does a strong sense of fear. And this fear seems to emerge from a recognition and realisation of the dependency of their children, who must learn to become conversant with the immediate milieu. As fathers, they experience a strong sense of responsibility and duty (see also Goodey, 1997) to adequately prepare their sons for this. Preparing their sons for this through brutality in order to 'toughen' them up is not evident. Although it is interesting that Carl felt violence, albeit in the controlled form of boxing, would help to instil discipline in his son. Neither wants their sons to dominate others, or to become involved in serious violence as they have. Yet, simultaneously, they do not want others to dominate their sons and both express an anxious desire for them to be able to adequately 'look after' and 'defend' themselves. This does not represent a brutal, un-reflexive approach to instilling a 'hard', thuggish masculinity that reflects a blunt instrument for reproducing a dominant hegemony (see Connell, 2005a). More accurately, it represents a complex and anxiety-ridden approach to fatherhood, caught up in an ambivalent struggle to instil respectful, moral behaviour, as well as a capability to deal with very 'real' threats adequately. Importantly, what envelops this is the same strong sense of paranoia, fear and insecurity about what exists 'out there' in the wider world that was discussed in chapter five.

Corporal Punishment

The field notes I present below are taken from a day spent with Vince on the estate where he grew up and now lives, during which I met members of his family. Like data presented above from interviews conducted with Carl and Liam, Vince

discusses his role as a father-figure to both his niece, who was present during the fieldwork encounter, and his other nephews. Like Carl and Liam, Vince discusses the role of violence in his nephews' lives, but in contrast outlines his firm commitment to physical forms of punishment and intimidation as a means to discipline his nephews', at times, challenging behaviour.

> I am sat in Vince's living room, sipping a cup of tea while watching the early afternoon news on TV. Vince is sat to the right of me, slouched at the other end of the sofa; one leg crossed over the other, his tattooed stomach hanging slightly over his jeans while he smokes a cigarette and drinks his tea. His twenty-something niece, Kerry, is sat in the chair opposite him, legs tucked under her, occasionally taking sips from her cup while thumbing the key pad on her mobile phone. Vince points to a framed picture on the wall behind her. It contains a young man dressed in a black shirt; either side of him stand several women smiling for the camera, his arms draped around them:

> > **Vince:** *That's our Kev, my nephew, when all the family went up to visit him for the day*

> Kev is in prison, serving a long sentence for a serious violent offence.

> > **Vince:** *…they* (police) *basically wanted him off the streets for as long as possible…He's not a particularly big lad, but he's just not bothered. There are two things that will happen if he is after you, you'll go to an early grave, or you'll spend a lot of time in hospital.*

> Vince has no children of his own, but has helped his sisters to raise their children, especially Kerry who lives with Vince and whose father left her and her mum when Kerry was very young:

> > **Vince:** *I raised her you know* (pointing at Kerry) *I did a good job an all. Brought her up proper, that's why she's never been in no trouble*

> > **Kerry:** *Oh yeah, he were right strict wi me, him and our Kev. One time I was going out with my friends to a party and before I went they called me into the room to check what I was wearing* (laughs)

> > **Vince:** *What's up wi that? That's a good thing, kids need that in their lives. There isn't enough of it nowadays, especially not round 'ere* (the estate where they live)

> One of Vince's younger nephews is already developing a fledgling reputation locally for his aggression and volatility. And Vince is attempting to curb his

nephew's aggression with a brand of discipline that had been a feature of his own childhood:

> **Kerry:** *...It's proper funny when Uncle Vincent's around though you don't hear nothing out of him (laughs)*
>
> **Vince:** *That's cos he knows I'll give him a clip if he starts getting mouthy. He's a bully my nephew and I can't stand bullies. None of my mates can stand bullies. Other day I had to bollock him for mouthin' off at some lass...*
>
> **Kerry:** *He goes abaat wi all of his mates in a big gang, that were funny when you saw them outside the shop other week*
>
> **Vince:** *aah him and all his mates were stood in a gang outside the shop up road. I wa in me car with me mate* (local gangster) *and I pulls up at side of 'em, soon as I did me nephew went reyt quiet and put his head daan. I sez to him "You cause any trouble tonight round 'ere and I'll gi thi a reyt hiding, and that guz for all on yer, I'll crack fuckin' lot on yer if you cause any bollocks round 'ere and I'll crack all thi fuckin' fathas* (fathers) *an all if tha wants to fetch them daan"*

The family suspects one of Vince's other nephews may have ADHD; Vince isn't convinced. The behaviour of his nephews when he is present is proof enough for him that they do not have a medical condition:

> **Kerry:** *He's like me brother is though when you're around* (laughs) *he daren't move*
>
> **Vince:** *Aaa, we had t' nurse round a bit back to observe him. I came in house and sez "Hey up love, what you here for?" She sez "I'm here to observe your nephew for his ADHD". I guz "ADHD? He ant got ADHD love, I'm going to sit here and show you". So me nephew came back from the shop and sat in living room wi me and t' nurse, and I'm telling yer, he sat there for an hour and read the newspaper cover to cover wi out moving once. I guz to nurse "Are tha still trying to tell me he's got ADHD love?"*
>
> **Kerry:** *I don't get it when people say you shouldn't hit your kids? Why? They're your kids. I was hit when I was naughty growing up and i've never been in trouble*
>
> **Vince:** *I'm telling yer, there's nowt wrong wi giving a kid a good hiding now and again…* (Fieldwork notes)

For Vince, violence makes perfect sense. It is something that Vince has learned to hone and deploy in a competent fashion. Violence represents a pragmatic and commercial resource within his life course that, for him, is a ready-made solution to any situation where there is an absence of 'respectful', 'disciplined', socially acceptable behaviour. And that is regardless of whether that is on the night club doors and streets that he protects, or to *beat* the *bully* out of his nephews.

Contrary to Carl and Liam's more cautious and ambivalent approaches, Vince is more robust and confident in the utility of physical punishment as a socialisation strategy. In a similar vein to Carl and Liam, it is not for the crude purposes of ensuring his nephews are dominant and superior over others, but, albeit misguidedly, for ensuring his nephews are disciplined, moral and respectful individuals.

Discussion

What emerges strongly from the men's reflections and accounts in this chapter, and which has been hinted at in previous chapters, is a general point of consensus and agreement amongst them that the everyday world they inhabit is threatening, dangerous and morally ambiguous. What these men describe being confronted with since their childhoods (see chapter five) is a social context that is often highly pressurised, and, from their perspectives, appears to be populated by atomised, highly competitive and aggressive individuals who lack basic moral principles and who will harm others to further their own ends. Marooned in such morally and ethically vacuous circumstances, these men present themselves as facing a deep, complex and unavoidable quandary that requires them to adopt a 'flexible' approach to legal and moral sanctions around appropriate behaviour and conduct towards others that they *themselves* must decide upon. Pragmatic experiences and memories of previous social encounters that have been highly traumatising and humiliating seem to provide much of the guiding principles for negotiating this. For those men who occupy a 'father' role, this complexity and personal experience informs their approaches to fatherhood. As discussed, the moral principles that they are attempting to instil in children - particularly young males - are not to actively seek to harm others in order to achieve dominance. As we saw with Vince, ironically, effective intimidation was considered an appropriate means of preventing his nephews from becoming unduly dominant and disrespectful towards others. The emphasis is upon qualities like fortitude and resilience, to ensure children are able to defend, protect and 'look after' themselves in a dangerous outside world that these men know only too well.

Therefore, the men themselves decide what is 'moral' and 'ethical', which is informed by allusions to possessing, but also giving, 'respect' and underpins their own conceptions of their self-identities. There were vaguely similar sentiments articulated and aired by the participants around moral behaviour and their own 'maleness', which tended to emphasise qualities like self-defence, reacting to threats from others, 'taking care' of oneself as well as those you care about, and protecting those who are 'vulnerable', who in most cases are women and dependants. As discussed, these identities are always constructed in relation to the imagined 'other' who bullies and intimidates those weaker than them without justification. Fundamentally these are well-meaning sentiments that are defensive in nature and mirror gendered discourses that equate maleness with control, power and protection (see also Gadd and Jefferson, 2007; Winlow and Hall, 2009). Yet, the violence of these men, as discussed in the previous chapter, does not always fit neatly into such a framework, despite their claims and exhortations that it does. These men's attempts at 'othering' in the construction of themselves as men are therefore based upon a rather false dichotomy between 'them' and the 'other'. Any individual who does transgress this vague set of moral and ethical values, in the eyes of the participants, *deserves* violence, as this is considered the only form of suitable and *just* punishment. To quote Zizek (2008), the men who participated perceive their violence as righteous and *divine*, which 'stands for such brutal intrusions of justice beyond the law' (p.151). Such 'transgressions' committed against the participants provide ripe justification for them to then be released from psychosocial restraints against harming others. The result being they can 'do as they wish' to those who have transgressed, which is complemented by a concomitant air of narcissistic self-righteous entitlement and absolution that nobody else can question or criticise. As Hall et al (2008) point out:

> …it is after all only others who commit real crimes, and all others, to the narcissist, simply get in the way of the self and deserve to be punished (p.196).

This returns us to the dualistic aspect of self-identity alluded to above – Hall's (2012) discussion of the 'good me' and the 'not me'. The 'good me' is described as the core of these men's self-identities: as fundamentally good and moral individuals who adhere strictly to the governing injunctions and ethical codes

around 'respect' for others and for oneself. While at the periphery lies the bad 'not me', who is capable of being called forth to descend into a self-righteous rage. The 'not me' can *handle* himself and others, transgress moral frameworks, and although *bad* is capable of doing what is occasionally considered *necessary* within the challenging socio-cultural contexts these men occupy; which, from time to time, can become too overwhelming. Even amongst those men who are not so engrossed in a self-image defined by violent potential, the possibility that they can call upon the 'not me' to use violence competently remains a durable component of self-identity.

To summarise then, engagement with issues of morality and ethical behaviour are done in often contradictory, confusing and calculated ways. That does not mean these men are immoral, on the contrary, they were extremely keen to moralise their violence through their attempts to situate it within discursive frameworks that they felt made their actions justified and *right*. But in such a context, we are confronted with a situation in which 'what is ethical and unethical, is essentially a decision for the individual and therefore nobody else's business' (Winlow, 2012, p.208). And clearly, for these men, *righteous* and *justified* 'divine' violence (Zizek, 2008) represents, as others have suggested (see Winlow and Hall, 2006), a means to enforce something appropriating a moral order.

Chapter Eight

Men and Violence: A Discussion

Chapters four to seven explored in considerable detail the life courses and experiences of a small sample of men who have used and experienced serious violence throughout their lives. The analytical themes that emerged from the analysis were outlined and discussed in these chapters and were supported through reference to the data gathered during the fieldwork. In this penultimate chapter I provide a much broader discussion of these findings and their implications for our understanding of the relationship between men and violence contemporarily within the context of neo-liberal capitalism and its ideologically hegemonic position.

Across historical periods and in cultures throughout the world, as various studies have shown, violence has been, and is, largely the preserve of men. Male violence was under previous historical epochs prevalent throughout the social order, on occasions was highly ritualised, and represented a genuine potential means of achieving social distinction and mobility. Contemporarily in the West, it has become highly individualised, apolitical, largely divested of its former power and prestige, and is concentrated, predominantly, amongst groups of economically marginalised working class men who have lost what had become in recent history legitimate forms of masculine identity grounded in employment, affiliate institutions and collectivised politics. This contemporary context for male violence will be discussed in greater depth in this chapter as a frame for interpreting the lives of the men involved in this research. I begin first with a discussion of the psycho-subjective aspects of men's violence before moving onto, in subsequent sections, the broader socio-economic and political context to this.

Violent Traumas, Cumulative Humiliation and Subjective Transformations

How much do you know about yourself if you've never been in a fight?
(Tyler Durden. Fincher, 1999)

Veiled within Tyler Durden's hypothetical question during David Fincher's hit film *Fight Club*, is the suggestion that experiencing violence can unlock aspects of the self that are hidden; catapulting the individual onto a path of subjective transformation and discovery into hitherto unknown realms of possibility. Durden's ponderings pertain to his desire for an encounter with the *real*. The character's frequent engagement throughout the film in the raw, visceral energy of physical confrontation and resultant pain represents the intrusion of the real that breaches the seams of the manufactured, commoditised unreal of his day-to-day life under advanced capitalism. It represents 'a radical attempt to (re)gain a hold on reality…to ground the ego firmly in bodily reality, against the unbearable anxiety of perceiving oneself as nonexistent' (Zizek, 2002, p.10). Durden's hypothetical pondering opens up profound questions about the nature of postmodern subjectivities and masculinities, which is useful for my discussion here.

Without doubt, the dialectic between structures/expressions of masculinity and emotions plays a significant role in motivating violence against others. The data presented in the previous chapters provides overwhelming evidence in support of this assertion. Traumatic emotions that are experienced by individuals as threatening and persecutory, such as humiliation and shame, feature strongly in these men's accounts of their lives and violence. Jones (2008) in particular has argued that such emotions must be recognised and understood as operating within the context of specific masculine biographies that have a particular history and are situated within broader socio-structural and historical conditions.

As was described, particularly in chapters four, five and six, some of these men have been subject to quite difficult, traumatic experiences in both the formative and adult years of their lives. Strained familial relationships and periods of estrangement from family, bereavement, tumultuous relationships with intimate female partners, physical and psychological abuse, and problematic drug use, are features of some of these men's life courses. And these are lives that are

situated in marginalised social localities defined by a historical legacy of de-industrialisation and economic decline. These experiences and conditions were sources of quite deep-seated humiliation, shame and anger for some of the men that continued to haunt memory and subjective experience. Alongside these difficult personal experiences and social conditions, violence had been a core feature of these men's childhoods and youths. Literature reviewed in chapter two that has researched the biographical histories of violent men has found evidence of abuse and violence in the formative years of their life courses. Research on the effects of domestic violence upon male children finds increased risks of them subsequently becoming involved in physical aggression (McPhedran, 2009), as does research on the effects of witnessing violence being perpetrated by others (Gibson et al, 2009). Psychoanalytic approaches to understanding trauma stemming from experiencing and witnessing abuse and violence indicate that it represents overwhelming and terrifying external stimuli that rupture the protective barriers of the brain (Freud, 1961). Given its alien, 'unreal' nature, such stimuli threatens the individual with an incomprehensible sense of looming annihilation that leaves a deeply profound sense of loss, damage and emotional disturbance. Such experiences are often so terrifying they cannot be symbolised as genuine experience resulting in their pathological disavowal and dissociation (Hall, 2012; Stein, 2007).

Data from my research strongly suggested that traumatic experiences with violence had left a significant legacy upon these men; particularly in its effects upon their own self-identities and on-going engagement with the social world. As intimated throughout the preceding chapters, particularly in chapters four and five, many of the men fixated during conversations and interviews with me upon particularly horrific experiences during their formative years, usually one that involved being dominated by a more powerful, physically superior individual(s). Tremendous significance was attached to these conscious traumas, which seemed to represent epiphanies within their biographies that had a resultant transformative effect (see discussion by Goodey, 2000). Although some of the men intimated that their past experiences of being victimised were to some extent to blame for their own use of violence, their understandings and discussions of previous victimisations and traumatic experience were far more complex than a simple 'blaming' exercise. Rather, experiencing violence, particularly from a

young age as discussed in chapter five, was described by some as actually beneficial, as it helped to reinforce to them something that everyone should know: that the world is dangerous and is 'populated by nakedly instrumental others who will attempt to wrestle dignity from the self' (Winlow, 2012, p.207) and you must be ready and willing to use violence in response to this. Being able to 'handle' and 'look after' yourself was then a vital constituent of masculine identity and credibility, and an ability to do this, as the men suggested, could only really come from having *real* violence irrupt one's experience. As one young male involved in football violence who I met during the ethnography said to me, in a very stoical and slightly exaggerated fashion, after describing his first encounter with violence when he was attacked by a group of young men:

> *I'm telling yer pal, when you get punched and see your own teeth flying through the air it proper changes how you think about things…*

Winlow (2012) has articulated the general point I make here in relation to men who are regularly violent and suggests such traumatic experiences can shape subsequent interactions with the external social world. Something that was also explained to me, and was alluded to in the previous chapters, is the sense of diminished inhibition and transformation following victimisation and also perpetration. Once you have experienced violence and been dominated you know what to expect. Although this experience is without doubt a painful one, violence is no longer purely unknown, uncertain, or so alien anymore. Once you have been through it and come through it still alive and relatively intact, the possibility of going through it again is no longer filled with the trepidation and fear that was felt before. One of the participants, Gary, captures these analytical points nicely:

> **Gary:** *…once you get hit, it's not as bad as you think it is. It stings but you aren't going to break…so after that I was like well if it's going to happen, it's going to happen. Talking's not going to get you anywhere, if someone is in your face then they are not coming to talk to you are they? So yeah, it kind of made me…a little bit nonchalant about it…once you realise you can get hit and it doesn't hurt then it doesn't really bother me anymore. You kind of build up a resistance to it and think well if it's going to happen, I know I can handle myself, I know I'm not going to break, so let's go…*

In addition to Winlow's arguments, my research suggests that such events and the memories of them, acquire an ambivalent quality. My data strongly indicates

that particular aspects of severe traumas are retained as foundational parts of identity, but in a manner which emphasises, as much as possible, the positive outcomes of such experiences for one's on-going and developing self-identity[11,] as Gary intimates above. For these men the old adage rings true: *whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger*. Yet, traumatic memories seem to adopt an almost parasitic quality. The parasite metaphor is useful, as trauma seems to have become attached to these men, gnawing away over time as the memory of it is re-visited, re-imagined, and regularly incorporated into personal fantasies of an alternative scenario in which the individual emerges triumphantly from confrontation. During on-going interaction, the individual becomes embroiled in a process of disavowing the terrifying aspects of traumatic experience that threatens the self; while emphasising those aspects which allow them to re-appraise and project a self-identity that is more positive and commensurate with immediate socio-cultural expectations.

Of course some scholars have, correctly, identified the emasculating and shameful consequences of displaying weakness or being identified by others as weak (Kaufman, 1994; Kimmell, 1994). They have also identified the pure hatred and rejection of anything that approximates 'feminine' that define some particularly rigid masculine cultures (Carrington et al, 2010; Connell, 2005a Edwards, 2006; Jones, 2008). Suffering defeat and capitulating to another's superior strength is without doubt ignominious, partly because of the unrealistic and thus harmful demands of such cultures (Jefferson, 1994; Kimmell, 1994). My data suggests something more complex and deeper than violent victimisation equalling an emasculating, and thus shame-inducing experience. Importantly it must be acknowledged that the physical experience that actually ruptures these men's identities is not some alien unfathomable force; but something that, as chapters four and five highlighted, is an accepted part of the immediate culture, setting and thus the habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). So we must acknowledge and give

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[11] What I mean by this is the actual traumatic event(s) is only partially remembered because it is so threatening to the 'idealised' self and, as Winlow and Hall (2009) argue, is not likely to be recalled and remembered accurately for this reason. However, what I suggest, and which is broadly in line with Winlow and Hall's (2009) arguments, is that the aspects of the event that allow the individual to reap a sense of dignity from it are most likely to be selectively remembered and emphasised during a narrative reflection of it. These will be narrated with a strong sense of personal stoicism, fortitude and survival that has enabled the individual to become a 'stronger', 'better' person.

sufficient analytical attention to the evident significance that is attached to being able to react appropriately to what are construed as, and understood to be, inevitable and unavoidable threats that constantly attempt to 'test' and expose within these men that which is culturally designated as weakness. The valorised quality of 'hardness' itself, the 'hard' body, implies resistance to external forces that attempt to act upon and breach it (Ahmed, 2004). It thus encapsulates the ability to withstand pain and the mental capacity to face and accept this stoically (Jefferson, 1998). So what is of significance here then is how you take the beating, what you take from it, and what you then do afterwards; this appears to be of utmost importance.

Therefore violent victimisation need not be wholly negative and is perhaps subjectively and subconsciously, as Winlow (2012) has suggested, rooted in the experience of *jouissance* as there is pleasure in the pain, where the individual subconsciously desires the passivity they experience during abuse at the hands of another, and feelings of shame emerge from self-revulsion at this desire. My data alerts us to the possibly ambivalent experience of victimisation, which can have potentially positive aspects for some men, who retain those aspects as a symbolic 'badge of honour'; a horrific rite of passage that when undertaken stoically, imbues dignity.

The data gathered from the men I worked with suggests that actual past events themselves may not be remembered directly or in their full actuality during confrontational moments that are considered threatening to the self. Rather, fragments of the emotions experienced during these past traumatic events are recalled and experienced as an overwhelming and incomprehensible sense of threat and dread. As outlined in previous chapters, this was often expressed by the men during interviews in statements like *"I just lost it"* or *"I couldn't cope with it"*, which was the language used by them to explain their feelings at the point of executing violence. In addition to this interview data, my ethnographic material reveals the spontaneity and rapidity with which some of these men will become aggressive and violent in particular situations and contexts. This suggests that such reactions do not require recourse to any pre-meditative thought or conscious decision-making, but are immediate and akin to pure 'instinct'. The choice of language here may appear incredibly reductive and connote animalism, but the data indicates strongly that in some quite specific circumstances some

men's destructive violent behaviour is not the product of rational thought, choice or agency. Rather 'they simply announce their intention to act by acting; language and reflective thought are bypassed' (Hall, 2012, p.196).

Sociologist Randall Collins (2008) has argued, drawing on a broad range of examples of violence, that humans are not adept at using it and in the vast majority of cases never transcend what he describes as the aggressive 'bluster' that occurs in tense confrontational situations. His critique of literature which tries to locate the source of violent behaviour in individual psychology, evolution, social or cultural factors is well-founded. Yet, as has been demonstrated in this thesis and similar research, for a minority of men, overcoming these restraints against using violence is not so difficult in particular circumstances. Various other ethnographic studies demonstrate this, and have shown that some men are not afraid to use violence and will often use it with minimal provocation and sometimes in an extremely brutal and competent fashion (see Bourgois, 2003; Bourgois et al, 2012; Hobbs, 1995; Hobbs et al, 2003; Treadwell, 2010; Winlow, 2001).

The data gathered and presented in this thesis reveals the complexities that lie behind men's violence. This problematizes somewhat those analyses that suggest a contemporary social and individual habitus in greater control of internal drives and anxious insecurities that are oriented towards the avoidance of violence and domineering behaviour (see Collins, 2008; Elias, 2000; Fletcher, 1997). Of course, there is not often much 'skill' in the actual execution of violence and sometimes actual violence is not resorted to (see Collins, 2008), as was discussed in chapter six. However, there is certainly willingness and intent in the case of these men. Violence and the need to 'save face' is so deeply ingrained into the hyper vigilant habitus, that they will immediately resort to not always and necessarily actual violence, but at the very least some form of aggressive bodily comportment, gesticulation or symbolic weaponry (usually violent reputation) that communicates preparedness to fight and attempts to sufficiently dominate and intimidate the opponent into submission. My research and analysis also suggests a need to think in slightly broader terms about how we might conceptualise 'violence', which is not always physical in manifestation (see Zizek, 2008). Even in the case of men who use physical violence, the ability to humiliate, denigrate and so dismantle the identity of another through symbolic means performs the

same function of self-elevation over the threatening 'other' as a physical attack. This is commensurate with what other scholars have described as the democratisation or diffusion of the use of symbolic violence to humiliate and denigrate others in order to aggrandize the self (Hall et al, 2008).

The rapidity of such aggressive reactions, even during what may appear to be fairly innocuous and jovial encounters, suggests that rather than the actual memory of past traumas being recalled in their exact entirety, which may take some time and as explained already is potentially too psychologically troubling, vague feelings associated with past traumatic experience are carried around by these men. Traumatic experience and memory are then, akin to a form of baggage that is incredibly difficult to shed. And these feelings seem to awaken and begin to bubble to the surface during such interactions. Katz's (1988) discussion of humiliation and rage is useful here. Katz describes humiliation as a profound and incomprehensible loss of control over one's identity that generates an intense feeling of social isolation that fills the entire body and seems, momentarily, to be unending. Psychoanalytic approaches provide a deeper analysis of such emotions, which are so troubling to individuals because of their primitive roots in the dependent phase of childhood. Feelings of shame and humiliation stem from infantile anxieties concerning a fear of abandonment and isolation from carers, which would inevitably result in one's death (Jones, 2008). So in moments of unbearable seemingly ceaseless humiliation, when such primitive anxieties re-surface, rage represents the ideal response as its purpose is to swiftly obliterate what stands before it. However, Katz's formulation does not incorporate biography and the vague partly retained, partly disavowed, memories of traumatic biographical experiences, which play a crucial function in the individual's on-going identity. So during threatening and challenging encounters, these men strive 'to impose a brutal order on what is essentially a vague threat that resists symbolization' (Hall, 2012, p.197). Despite the occasional vague nature of such threats, as many of the men intimated in previous chapters, it is sometimes better to resort to brutality *first* and deal with the potential consequences *later.*

Some of the men intimated, as do Winlow and Hall (2009), that feelings of humiliation do not always just erupt suddenly and momentarily during interaction. Humiliation can arise retrospectively some considerable time afterwards, when a

particular event is memorised. Through this process of remembering, humiliation returns and will often persist for considerable time afterwards, even years, leaving the individual to rue over what might, or should, have been. Jones (2008) has also discussed the longevity of past events memorialised through a retrospective frame of personal failure. Despite attempts to bury and forget such events, these memories are difficult to shed and are liable to re-surface, driving outbursts of violence towards others (Jones, 2008).

My research has identified then, the potential cumulative effect of traumatic experiences and their accompanying sense of humiliation, which can remain dormant and seemingly forgotten. It is important to bear in mind alongside such violent traumas, the humiliation and sense of shame that stems from other troubling events and socio-economic conditions that have been, and are, present in some of these men's lives. Difficult personal and familial relationships, the shame of deprivation, the realisation of one's economic worthlessness, a sense of social isolation and political abandonment, against a broader context of high consumption and the socio-emotive pressures to engage in this. As several scholars have argued, feelings of frustration, resentment and rage emerge from these deleterious conditions (see Jones, 2008; 2012; Ray, 2011; Ray et al, 2004; Sloterdijk, 2010).

The data I have gathered suggests that although these men have repeatedly assaulted others, they have also been subjected throughout their lives to repeated beatings and victimisation. When one looks across these men's life courses, these seemingly isolated events must be understood in connection to one another as a continuum of humiliations that coalesce and are thus potentially cumulative. Some of the violence described in this thesis may appear to be, and undoubtedly is, totally excessive, unjustified and unjustifiable. One must acknowledge however, the various personal and social conditions discussed thus far that form the roots of these men's feelings of paranoia, cynicism and fatalism, as well as hyper vigilance and an anxious obsession with self-defence and preservation. Such repeated humiliating experiences across already marginalised life courses reinforce and connect with earlier traumas and their humiliating consequences, in such a way that reinforces and exacerbates feelings of being repeatedly down-trodden, dominated, and to quote one of the participants, *"walked all over"* by others. This fuels the subjective sense of being constantly

victimised, under threat, and the accompanying absolutist and narcissistic self-righteousness 'not me' when violence is then inflicted upon others. What Hall (2012) describes as a 'shadow-world of perception and motivation…etched into the brain' (p.197) is this subjective realm that is brutally carved open by traumatic experience. Here, anxious insecurities, memories, images of threat, and fantasies of a powerful, respected, idealised self, abound. And so it goes for these men, 'these injustices are not forgotten. They are accumulated, the wrongs are registered, the tension grows more and more unbearable, till divine violence explodes in a retaliatory destructive rage' (Zizek, 2008, p.152).

My assertions are not that victimisation *causes* an individual to become violent and to victimise others; nor that victimisation precludes perpetration. Such assertions are simplistic. Neither am I attempting to justify men's violence through drawing attention to their personal experiences of victimisation. It is important to bear in mind the benefits of adopting a 'victimised' identity for some men who will use it to justify certain behaviours (Gadd, 2004; Hearn 1998), as I discussed in chapter seven and address again further below. As the previous chapters indicated, these men certainly do not fit into the narrow mould of 'ideal' and 'co-operative' victims that lie at the heart of victim reform agendas (see Hall, 2010). Nevertheless, it is inescapable that these men are both harmful and harmed. Criminology must understand and acknowledge this crucial point. This may be incredibly unpalatable and difficult to accept for some criminologists - to essentially view men who are, and have been, violent towards others as victims themselves. But the discipline has for too long tended to think in a quite restrictive dualism that separates *offender* from *victim* and sees them as always distinct from one another, perpetuating 'the myths surrounding criminality in general and the victimization of men in particular' (McGarry and Walklate, 2011, p.913). Criminology, if it is to better understand the lives of those men who inflict serious harms upon others, must first accept that the typological categories of 'offender', 'perpetrator', 'victim', that it obsessively attempts to impose upon what are incredibly chaotic and complex lives, actually make little sense when we attempt to apply them to the lives of the men, and similar men, who feature in this thesis. Their lives do not fit neatly into such categories and, as I intimated in chapter seven, even when these men do commit violence against others, they rarely see their actions through such a simplistic lens of being 'the perpetrator'.

Fundamentally, a complex paradox lies at the core of the lives of the men involved in this study: they are potentially *dangerous* and simultaneously *vulnerable*. This potential dangerousness and vulnerability arises in relation to other men who are similar to them. Like particles caught in a raging vortex they endlessly circulate and collide with other equally marginalised men. Collisions that often result in pointless confrontations over meagre and largely worthless cultural resources and capital, and are thus utterly insignificant in a material and broader political sense (see Hall, 2002).

As discussed during my review of the literature in chapter two, some existing theoretical work, particularly pro-feminist, equated maleness with a desire for power, and violence as a possible instrument for achieving this and reinforcing a patriarchal order. Without doubt, men's violence clearly exacerbates climates of fear that can evidently grip women and other men (Brownmiller, 1975; Goodey, 1997; Stanko, 1990). This gives men who are willing to use violence an inflated sense of self that may be perceived as power. Yet, whether this fear actually serves to create or provide any beneficial 'dividend' (see Connell, 2005a) or material advantage for such men, and men in general, is suspect and a complex issue. As this thesis and other similar masculinities and violence research has demonstrated, interpersonal violence is very much the preserve of socio-economically marginalised men who possess little in the way of genuine power, material advantage, and influence (Hall, 2002; 2012; Ray, 2011; Treadwell and Garland, 2011; Winlow, 2012). For the men who appear in this thesis, violence has not provided them with a means to ascend the social ladder. They remain marooned in the working class communities in which they were born. The reality is that they occupy a fractured social group whose genuine power had once lied in politicised institutions and the forms of identity that were available to previous generations of working class men – their fathers and grandfathers. However, these were cruelly snatched away and obliterated, with little offered to replace them; only the hollow iconography of the free-floating entrepreneurial individual.

To summarise briefly then, my broad argument in this section has been that personal experiences of both perpetration and victimisation clearly do affect identity and masculinity in very profound ways. As they coalesce with the wider social context of de-industrialisation and post-political abandonment that frames

these men's lives, these experiences appear to lock some men into potentially dangerous spirals of paranoid insecurity, humiliation, and barely contained hostile aggression. Especially when experienced from within a micro culture that still clings desperately to a particular image of dominant, powerful masculinity, and where violence, at certain times, is encouraged of men, is expected of them, and is sanctioned as socially acceptable behaviour.

Men's violence and the emotions which act as the drivers for it are therefore socially and culturally contingent and not simply confined to the individual. As the individual becomes interpolated into the hegemonic macro context of the social world as part of the dialectical process which produces subjectivity, we can see how such emotions and biographical events can be stoked and primed to orientate men towards violence. Particularly from within marginalised social contexts, with specific cultural expressions of masculinity, that are saturated in the broader hegemony of advanced neo-liberal capitalism, politics and culture. The remainder of this chapter will re-introduce the social aspect of masculinities and violence, as the discussion thus far has been largely centred upon the psycho-subjective.

'When the Going Gets Tough'…Toughen Up

> ...many young males are receiving brutal treatment…to 'toughen them up', for what are they being toughened up? (Hall, 2012, p.192)

In response to Steve Hall's pertinent question, this empirical research indicates men are being toughened up, and are toughening themselves up, in preparation for, and in response to, what is perceived to be an acutely competitive, atomised and threatening social world. As we saw in chapter five, such sentiments stem from an almost paranoid obsession with being able and prepared to defend oneself. Immense significance is attached to these men's abilities to react appropriately to those who they perceive are attempting to unduly dominate, which seems to be partially rooted in their childhood experiences and parents (usually fathers) own anxieties and paranoia concerning the *adequate* preparation of their sons for entrance into such environments.

As we saw in chapter seven, the men who discussed relationships they now share with their own sons also displayed this acute sense of fear and

foreboding. This did not lead however to brutal abuse, excused as necessary to 'toughen up' their boys. Instead, there was a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty upon recognising their inability as fathers to completely protect their children, and this was accompanied by a somewhat muted acceptance that their sons must inevitably be prepared to 'look after themselves' - clearly, given these men's own violence against others, what constitutes 'looking after yourself' is fraught with ambiguity. And so violence and its potential utility for addressing such threatening and deleterious social conditions are often handed down through a durable and specifically masculine socio-cultural inheritance.

Physical violence, and the threat of it, constitutes the habitus of the men who participated in this research, as an acutely pragmatic *effect* upon the habitus. Experiencing, and being confronted with, violence is not a matter of *if*, it's a matter of *when*; and, as so many of these men were eager to point out to me: you had better be prepared for *when* it does happen. The data gathered during this research though suggests we cannot simply dismiss such sentiments as pure unfounded paranoia or as complete misinterpretations of what are essentially benign unthreatening situations. Certainly, my data and in-depth critical analysis of it indicates the presence within these men of a heightened sensitivity to *threats* that is without doubt excessive. However, as I have just discussed in the previous section, such insecure hyper vigilance is partially rooted in actual pragmatic encounters with *real* violence and physical threats that the vast majority of people not confined to the communities where these men have been raised and live are, largely, able to avoid.

Like men from similar socio-economic backgrounds encountered in the small body of empirical work on masculinities and violence, the men involved in this research also seem to attempt to confront this seemingly constant, grinding background static of potential violence and insecurity with competent displays of stoicism and fatalistic fortitude to recoup and maintain as much self-dignity as is possible (see Winlow and Hall, 2006; 2009). When one looks beyond these microcosmic settings of the family and neighbourhood locality there is an increasingly competitive socio-economic environment that has been aggressively cultivated and promoted under neo-liberal capitalism; which, as I alluded to towards the end of the previous section, does not value men and masculinities that do not 'fit'.

In stark contrast to the early decades of the post-war period, generations born since have grown up amidst an educational, employment and broader social environment that is fiercely competitive (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997) and where the spirit of individualism, personal entrepreneurship and endeavour have been promulgated as solutions to what had been regarded as 'the 'monotony' of universal modernism's vision of the world' (Harvey, 1989, p.9). First encapsulated by Margaret Thatcher in her famous claim that there was 'no such thing as society', government administrations have during the past several decades waged a relentless political onslaught against collectivised politics and identities. The trade union movement, the backbone of working class politics, became a prime target as its stubborn militancy was deemed to be stifling the potential for greater and more efficient economic growth and productivity. The logic of growth, expansion and economic gain has gradually been embraced wholeheartedly in the US and the UK beyond the corridors of power in Washington and Whitehall, becoming 'the dominant organising principle of social life' (Currie, 1997, p.151-152). The hegemony that has been achieved by neo-liberal ideology across the political, economic and cultural spheres of the West, benefited from its well-timed dovetailing with increasingly post-modern cultural currents. As well as becoming the driving force behind political and economic change, neo-liberalism fused with a nascent post-modern cultural movement that had at its core a desire for greater individual freedom and self-expression, as Harvey (2005) explains:

> Neoliberalization required both politically and economically the construction of a neoliberal market-based populist culture of differentiated consumerism and individual libertarianism. As such it proved more than a little compatible with that cultural impulse called 'postmodernism' which had long been lurking in the wings but could now emerge full-blown as both a cultural and an intellectual dominant (p.42)

The ascendancy of the individual within post-modern culture has come at the expense of greater political awareness, understanding, and engagement, and the collective forms of identity that had characterised the period of Fordist modernism (Harvey, 1989). We now increasingly view these 'with disdain...regarding them as restrictive, as dead weights placed on our individuality' (Winlow and Hall, 2012, p.401). The individual has been thrust then into an ambivalent culture that is increasingly sceptical of our current politics. Yet, contemporary culture is actually apolitical in itself, utterly devoid of a utopian image for the future; static, and

seemingly content to remain in stasis. The emphasis instead is upon culture's endless possibilities for individual advancement, in which the potential for the creation of the individual's self-identity are limitless. Consumption has taken on an increasingly heightened role and significance in relation to this process. Personal success, social distinction, and the means to express self-identity, have become fixated around consuming everything and the ability to do so in a *competent* manner. Those who do not are likely to quickly find themselves being mocked and vilified as 'losers' for lacking the competence, personal finesse and self-respect required to distinguish oneself from the 'herd' (Briggs, 2013; Hall et al, 2008; Hayward and Yar, 2006).

Hobbs (2012) describes the inherent aggression within this broad process of transformation and change:

> …the end of industrial society signalled the gloves coming off, and predatory entrepreneurship is now the norm in a society emptied out of the flawed certainties of industrial society (p.265)

These were the certainties, however flawed, of a more inclusive socio-democratic political economy that engaged a politically organised working class in conflict and collectivised struggle with the state and market place. This helped to encase interpersonal violence and sublimated aggression in an institutional symbolic framework that enabled the industrial working class 'to have a positive self-image, exploited and dominated as they may have been' (Wieviorka, 2009: p.13). The relative solidity of this period helped foster some of the lowest recorded rates of violence and crime in history (Hall, 2007; Reiner, 2012). But this nascent symbolic structure was swiftly dismantled to pave the way for an unregulated, flexible market society that energised individuals into a competitive struggle with one another to further the system's new economic imperatives (Hall, 2012).

Neo-liberal consumer capitalism with its manufactured reality of lifestyle imagery, symbols and fantasies (see Zizek, 2002), has simultaneously cultivated a terrifying abyss of insignificance, indignity and humiliation that awaits those who will not play the game or simply don't make the grade. The evidence of this is omnipresent in the West's digital and mediatised world that is dominated by the advertising industry and the various post-industrial urban consumer spaces that strategically invoke desire and uncomfortable emotions in an attempt to orientate the individual towards consumption (see Briggs, 2013; Hayward, 2004). Indeed,

the possibility of experiencing humiliation and utter social insignificance is all the more pervasive in economic contexts characterised by extreme competitive individualism; and most criminal acts, particularly violence, represent a means to stave off this omnipresent threat (see Hall et al, 2008; Jones, 2012).

In a socio-economic context devoid of former certainties, where the 'gloves are off', it makes sense to some men socialised in a marginalised habitus that values violence as a means to defend and recuperate respect and dignity, to 'off gloves' themselves. These men 'bulk up', quite literally, specific cultural and bodily capital that will assist in the inevitable competitive struggles that take place with 'others' in these more atomised and divided circumstances. The men who feature in this thesis have all invested, albeit to varying degrees, in an image of potential volatility and dangerousness within what have rapidly become depoliticised, competitive, atomised working class communities. Cultivating such an image is a direct response to the sense of mistrust and fear that abounds in contexts of marginality and rampant individualism (see Hall et al, 2008, p.193). Fortified bodies of intimidating physicality, bodily scars and the stoic tales of how they were attained, exaggerated swaggers, aggressive gesticulating, as well as clothing associated with extreme sports, militarism and physicality (see Treadwell, 2008), combined with occasional uncompromising displays of raw physical power – this is their bodily and cultural capital. These combine to forge personal images that are built upon an appearance of absolute impenetrability that signs to others 'unusual physical risks have been suffered and transcended…implying that the wearer has passed or expects to pass through some sort of disagreeable muck' (Katz, 1988, p.81).

The tendency to retreat into fortified enclaves of security and protection that has become characteristic of post/late modernity (Hayward, 2004; Low, 2004), as individuals respond to a growing and profound sense of threat and insecurity (Atkinson and Smith, 2012), is merely a continuum shift from the behaviours exhibited by these men. They do not have the necessary economic capital to escape and completely circumvent those insecure sectors of post-industrial cities and towns. In contemporary post-industrial Newcastle, with his umpteen CCTV cameras positioned around his house, his volatile reputation, and muscular physique, Raoul Moat was an extreme exemplar of the paranoid-aggressive territoriality and insecurity that has come to engulf some marginalised

working class men. And the former nightclub doorman, who eventually took his own life, was a man who certainly did not 'fit' into this new post-industrial landscape (see Ellis et al, 2013). Just as Moat did, these men have made best use of the resources available to them to fortify themselves: their bodies, resource networks and alliances with other men, and personal reputations for being prepared to fight and to go further than other men will.

As we saw in chapters six and seven particularly, the injunction to use violence was considered to be an absolute *must* in some circumstances: you simply *have* to, and there was often no sense of agency, choice or alternative possibility detectable within these men's narratives or in the behaviour I observed. The possibility of negotiation or avoidance was often uncompromisingly rejected as a possible or even viable strategy. There was a deeply felt cynicism amongst them about the amorality and dangerousness of the world and the inability of the state to police and control it, while distributing adequate *justice*. With some of the older men, there were occasional hints at a vague political language in their narratives that had once been more commonplace amongst a politically conscious and organised working class (Charlesworth, 2000). This was not so much the case amongst the younger generations of men interviewed and observed who were aware of their lowly social positioning, but seemed to accept this quietly with little protest. Equally, the sense of danger and threat from other men was faced with a similar distinct air of fatalistic resignation as something that must be confronted with the resources at one's personal disposal. The emphasis amongst them was very much upon individual rather than collective solutions to conflicts (Wieviorka, 2009): it's every man for himself and if violence is necessary, then so be it. For some of the men, during moments of quiet and calm, when they were not so engrossed in the regular grind of having to 'perform' (Messerschmidt, 1993) the kinds of self-images described above, self-reflection and the possibility of non-violence was acknowledged. To only then be swiftly rejected as a viable possibility, as their narrative would always return to the pressing realities and dangers in the immediate environment that cannot be circumvented – it's dog-eat-dog and you had better have a good appetite.

Physical violence has become increasingly redundant as a potential source of achieving genuine power in the West (Hall, 2002). As Arendt (1970) states:

...power and violence are not the same. Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy... (p.56)

Civility, *passivity*, and far more subtle symbolic forms of violence are the tools necessary for achieving and maintaining genuine power, influence and material wealth (Hall, 2002). However, we still cannot ignore the 'service' that physical violence does provide some men; particularly those that have emerged from working class and marginalised social locations, even if it is not a very successful dominance strategy in a broadly economic or political sense.

For the men that feature in this thesis, despite evident differences amongst them in terms of the frequency of their involvement in violence throughout their lives and their willingness to involve themselves in it, violence still represents for all of them a form of cultural capital in the fields that they compete in with others (Bourdieu, 1984; Jenkins, 1992). But how that cultural capital manifests itself and its ultimate usage is variable, and was evidently varied and highly complex amongst these men throughout their lives.

In the contemporary context of late modern market society, violence has become an instrumental, commercial resource that can be used to engage in the post-industrial marketplace (Hobbs, 1995; Hobbs et al, 2003; Winlow, 2001). But occupying such a position is rare and filled by only a few feared 'specialist warriors' (Winlow and Hall, 2006) like Vince. For men like Brett, Ian and Wayne, who ply their trades in criminal markets, violence is also a potential commercial resource to secure and defend one's market position. These are men that are willing to engage in serious violence and are connected to criminal networks made up of similar men who tend to occupy the upper echelons of the incredibly vague hierarchies of 'hardness' that tend to persist in working class communities. Such use of violence is compatible with reputation, notoriety and the cultural benefits this brings in terms of respect and recognition from others. And yet, as the case study of Darren in chapter four indicates, and discussion of the other men explored in other chapters, like Shane, Carl, Neil and Liam, reputations for violence can also be cultivated for their own sake, without any commercial benefits, but which endow these men with various degrees of 'respect' from

others[12]. Violence is also about 'protection' and 'defence', and recouping or maintaining one's self dignity in the face of individuals who are perceived to be attempting to wrestle this away. Importantly, this research reveals that male violence is not strictly and always a homosocial phenomenon that occurs within the realm of contests that take place between competing men and masculinities. Notions of proprietary, control and the protection of women feature occasionally and appear to have been sources of insecurity and anxiety for some of these men. And finally, as we saw in the case study example of Paul and Gary in chapter six, in consumerist environments that are highly competitive, some young men will refuse to back down when threatened by others who are perceived to be attempting to flaunt their dominance and superiority.

Within each of the masculine life histories presented and discussed in this thesis, we see some of these men shifting between and occupying these different positions at varying times and in the different contexts the men have occupied across their life courses. My analysis and discussion in this section extends the psycho-subjective described in the first section, into the current socio-economic and political context that frames it. In this sense, my thesis fills some of the gaps in the psychosocial criminology literature, particularly that which is rooted in the 'psycho' and does not situate the latter within a requisite discussion of its bedfellow: the hegemony of the socio-economic (see my earlier discussion in chapter two around some sections of the psychosocial criminology literature pages 37 - 41).

The 'Good' and 'Not Me' vs. 'Them': 'Othering' Through Violence

As has been discussed by several scholars, and was alluded to in chapter two as formulating a theoretical background context to some masculinities and violence literature, the collapse of industrial working class life and culture has been one of the most profound events in British social history (see Charlesworth, 2000). The significance of this has already been discussed in some depth in relation to the men who feature in this thesis. The gradual demise of working class forms of

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[12] How accurately this reflects a genuine form of respect and admiration from others is debateable however; as I discussed in chapter 7 (see pages 167-173).

employment, institutions and its political affiliations and activism, resulted in a gradual fracturing of this social group into a divided, largely de-politicised collective. The few scholars still willing to engage theoretically with the concept of 'the working class', and the even fewer scholars willing to conduct qualitative research amongst this fractured social group, have documented the suspicions and hatred that have begun to emanate from this divide (Anderson, 1999; Briggs, 2013; Hall et al, 2008; Hall, 2012; Jones, 2011; Treadwell and Garland, 2011). Rather than recognising a mutual history, common identity, oppression, and a potential for political unity, members of the former industrial working class increasingly regard each other as hostile, threatening and dangerous nomads to be out competed and avoided. In particular, those most marginalised and vilified sections of the working class that are considered a drain on state resources (Jones, 2011) and whose consumption choices are mocked and vilified (Briggs, 2013; Hall et al, 2008; Hayward and Yar, 2006).

As discussed in chapter seven, the construction of the 'other' featured strongly in these men's accounts of their own identities and their violence. As other scholars have observed and rightly argued (see Winlow and Hall, 2009; Winlow 2012) the desire to not be dominated by another is hugely elevated in significance and is a powerful discourse present in these men's immediate cultural settings. For the vast majority of people though interpersonal violence makes no sense. However, to these men it makes perfect sense in a world which they believe has become increasingly unable to produce morally rounded and respectful individuals. As just discussed, these men rely on personal reputations that have been forged out of occasional displays of raw physical power and interpersonal domination as a means to confront this set of insecure and uncertain circumstances. Violence and reputation are what constitute both the physical and symbolic armouries of these men: the ability to watch others squirm in their presence; to witness men back down upon learning who they are dealing with, or when they realise that these men are willing to take the confrontation to its ultimate physical conclusion, which large majorities of men will seek to avoid. The men involved in this research display a deep commitment to a particular set of enclassed masculine virtues and moralities, as has been found in other research where physical violence represents a means to enforce something appropriating a basic and traditional conception of what is morally 'right' (see

Winlow and Hall, 2006, p.191-192). It was made abundantly clear to me that essentially threatening and dangerous individual 'others' – 'bullies', 'nob heads', 'shit bags', 'scum bags', 'cunts', 'piss takers', 'divvies', 'wannabe gangsters' – must be confronted and 'dealt with' without any hesitation.

As will hopefully have become clear during chapter seven, it is not that morality is dead; far from it. Morality was very much alive and well in these men's narrative accounts and is vital to them. It was used to underpin their identities as *moral* individuals who are different to, and unlike, the threatening and predatory 'others' just mentioned. Morality underpinned their violence, which is defensive, righteous, brings 'justice', and is thus *divine* (Zizek, 2008). It is not unprovoked, predatory, and therefore without *just* cause. Their violence comes not from the core 'good me', but from the peripheral bad 'not me'. This represents 'a morally flexible self whose brutal double can be brought into play at will when needs must' (Hall, 2012, p.200). And despite being 'bad', this double self *has* to exist because of these occasionally pressing requirements within the immediate context, where hesitancy or passivity will leave the individual dominated, isolated, humiliated, and without dignity.

Certainly, one would find it difficult to disagree with some of the basic fundamental moral and ethical injunctions that some of the men regularly recited to me: protecting those who are vulnerable, taking care of one's family, friends, and loved ones to ensure they are safe, and, of course, ensuring one's own physical and mental well-being. There is nothing wrong with these sentiments. But citing these as suitable justification for using sometimes serious, excessively gratuitous violence that, when examined closely and with a critical eye, goes way beyond any notion of 'defence', calls into serious question the validity of their claims that their violence is actually wholly defensive in nature. The greater consequence is that it 'simply adds to the general climate of violence' (Winlow and Hall, 2006, p.146) and exacerbates the sense of unpredictability and volatility that grips the communities and spaces these men occupy.

The desire to *not be dominated* by another is then, actually much closer to a desire *for dominance over others* than perhaps these men realise. While these men sought to emphasise and 'big up' the defensive nature of their violence against those 'others' who deserve it and need to be put in their place, they failed to recognise the irony of such a defence, which very quickly became dominance

and reinforced the dominance and superiority they possessed over their opponent. Rather than the men's violence representing a genuine means to bring justice to an unfair set of circumstances that creates equilibrium, the subterranean outcome is interpersonal dominance, in which they attempt to ensure that the 'other' will see, recognise, and realise the physical and moral superiority to which they have been subjected. Defence, and a desire to 'balance' things, can very quickly become narcissistic self-elevation. To quote Hall (2012), 'the subject does not fear the other as a monster' who will destroy them, 'but as a figure potentially more competent, more successful, more interesting, more attractive' (p.159) who has, to quote one of the participants, *"got one over on them"* and is, therefore, utterly superior in every imaginable way. There is then a great sense of competition and homophobia in these men's relationships to other men and the sense of manhood that they invest in (Kimmell, 1994). This otherness, then, that these men apply to the various individuals that they believe must be fought and dealt with, is constructed out of a fear and insecurity that these atomised others will then shove their 'instant success and special liberty' (Hall, 2012, p.159) in these men's faces. Resulting in the washing away of their self-dignity, respect and self-worth in one uncompromising fell swoop (see Winlow, 2012). Yet, such violence cannot be about generating 'fairness', 'equality' and 'justice', as these men's narratives attempted to imply. Because, in the act of taking their retribution these men have 'the last word' on proceedings - it ends when they say it ends. And so, ultimately, they are the ones in control, and it is they who are, in their eyes, ultimately proven to be dominant and, therefore, superior to the threatening 'others' that they despise.

Given all the talk of dangerous, threatening amoral 'others' though, certainly begs the question of who exactly these 'others' actually are. Should we assume they are simply paranoid delusions, merely products of these men's imaginations? Or are there genuinely a group of dangerous predatory 'others' who exist outside of the morally-rounded, respectful majority, intent on wreaking harm upon everyone else to their own benefit? Who, therefore, must be fought and dealt with without any hesitation or remorse? The reality I think it is fair to suspect, is actually much less 'Hollywood' than this, and is likely to be that the various 'others' to which these men refer are merely their own mirror opposites: equally fearful, insecure, victimised, marginalised men, attempting to negotiate

the wreckage of the post-industrial landscape with the few resources at their disposal. And who, like them, have found violence to be a resource that still carries some potential cultural clout and currency.

In sum, notions of what is 'moral', 'right' and 'wrong' seem to linger in the background. However, these appear to be vague and are engaged with using a degree of flexibility and calculation by the individual based upon pragmatic circumstances, context, personal memories, the teachings and injunctions of significant others, and immediate culture. So in some contexts violence is 'right', in others it is 'wrong', but even during those times when it is clearly 'wrong', justifications can still be made by the individual. And so, my data suggests, we have something approximating an almost apparitional moral framework, that is neither fully evident nor entirely absent, but which the individual engages with as and when required, and which can be bent and bowed to provide justification for pretty much anything.

The current liberal doctrines that demand we show respect for others and promote equality for all are of course right enough and sentiments which should be encouraged. But, in reality, they are but distant, barely comprehensible echoes in the background of the pressing everyday contexts of advanced consumer capitalism. Here, narcissistic individuals are engaged in the business of self-actualisation, creation, and simply cannot afford to be shackled by an order that would jeopardise this project. Clearly, as my data indicates, a total commitment to them is not made by individuals, and this is quite evident in the sometimes contradictory justifications, excuses and denials given by these men to justify harming others. But, as I have suggested, neither is such a commitment entirely possible in the current socio-economic context. Ultimately, in the current context, it is the primacy and needs of the individual that have been increasingly elevated over the collective and community. A collectivised, embodied identity is therefore too much of a restriction and shackle (Winlow and Hall, 2012).

"…nobody or nothing…"

The end of the previous section returned us nicely to the discussion in chapter seven and reiterates the argument I made in that chapter, that such 'othering' is based upon a false dichotomy between 'me' and 'them'. Men regularly involved in

violence represent the marginalised and criminalised 'othered' men, who fight, maim and kill men of similar socio-economic lineage, who they see as the true 'enemy'. As discussed, this 'enemy' must be out-fought in what are seemingly 'all or nothing' battles, during which the sense of self-dignity and respect that men cling to so desperately, seemingly stand on the brink of evaporation into utter insignificance; lost forever, never to be regained unless fought for immediately and ruthlessly. During these 'epic' confrontations in the West's most marginalised and politically abandoned communities, the minute struggle to retain self-dignity, respect, recognition and reputation, becomes hugely momentous.

Such violence is of little actual concern for the elite, who regard it as merely the work of a minority of pathological individuals who do not share or abide by the values of liberal culture that have emerged from the hallowed economic and political arrangements of post modernity. The men I have worked with and whose stories appear in this thesis, are simply examples of yet more 'little evils' to be policed, controlled and punished – a small price to pay for our new found 'freedoms' (Hall et al, 2008; Hall, 2012). These threats to law and order are swiftly mopped up by the state, which has little actual incentive or desire to expunge the required resources needed to rehabilitate or transform the unequal socio-economic and political context in which violent crime has been able to fester and burgeon (see Currie, 1997; Hall, 2012; Reiner, 2012; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). At the very moment when the Western world was approaching a situation of greater inclusivity, this was quite swiftly and uncompromisingly obliterated (Young, 1999). Rather than a gradual benevolent civilising process (Elias, 2000) there exists, more accurately, a form of *pseudo-pacification* (Hall, 2007; 2012). This process ultimately served an instrumental economic purpose, but when it became powerful enough to threaten economic growth and productivity, it was branded an expensive and unnecessary set of apparatus that was strategically severed:

> ...this epochal change represents the systematic run-down of the relatively stable political, economic and cultural infrastructure that – albeit for instrumental and functional reasons – promoted the pseudo-pacification process's vital codes, affectations and sensibilities. The plain fact is that, in the age of globalized flexible accumulation and competition between permanently uprooted individuals, this complex and expensive infrastructure is no longer a vitally necessary element of economic development, and therefore no longer a prudent investment beyond the

retention of a minimal requirement of public order...Just as Western individuals were beginning to value each other more as members of socio-political collectives, the situation was spun into reverse and they are beginning to see each other as hostile, competing monads and therefore potential enemies (Hall, 2007, p.98)

Much scholarship tends to approach interpersonal violence, aggression and rage as forms of disorder, both in a social and psychological sense: as aberrations that rupture the norms and conventions of our pacified way of life. Critical of such a scholarly position and the failure to recognise the connection between violence and human societies, Ray (2011) rightly identifies that violence 'is ubiquitous in human societies and lies deep in human history' (p.191). Of course, as was discussed in chapter one, violent crime has declined over centuries and we have witnessed in recent years an apparent fall in overall rates of recorded criminality. Yet, this and other research has documented the persistence of hyper-violent sub-cultures amongst specific groups of men, which exist in and around the interstices of less dangerous spaces and groups that embody more passive ways of being. Suggestions that such trends should be taken to infer a move towards more harmonious and peaceful social relations should be regarded with caution, particularly given the West's current politico-economic structure. In this broader sense, the inherent aggression in the social transformations witnessed over the past several decades suggests that in the late modern post political context, rage *returns* rather than being completely extinguished and removed from everyday social and political life; as Sloterdijk (2010) explains:

> Modernity has invented the loser… Not all losers can be pacified by pointing out that their status corresponds to their poor placement in a contest... Their resentful feelings turn not just against the winners but also against the rules of the game. When the loser who loses too often calls into question the game as such by means of violence, this makes conspicuous the state of emergency… of a politics after the end of history (p.40)

Thus, there is violence and aggression throughout the current social order: from its visceral manifestation on the streets of post-industrial cities and communities, to its more subtle, symbolic forms in the sanitised air-conditioned boardrooms of the corporate world. Violence and aggression are systemic, ruthlessly functional resources that have been, and continue to be, systematically stimulated at varying times to provide the energy needed to drive capitalism forward and

further its own end point (Hall, 2012). Under such aggressive and competitive conditions 'there is a relationship between this kind of structural violence and major acts of everyday violence in spaces of neoliberal abandonment' (Ray, 2011, p.193).

The concept of masculinity itself has been theorised as having some causal and problematic relationship to violence and crime, but if we turn this on its head, we can see how violence is constitutive of masculinities throughout the social order (Ellis and Wykes, 2013). Indeed, the violence engaged in by the men who feature in this thesis actually serves to shore up the interests and legitimacy of elite groups of men and masculinities, as Wykes and Welsh (2009) argue:

> Crime discourses legitimate the acts and interests of some masculinities through the rule and application of law whilst simultaneously making illegitimate 'other' masculinities that might challenge or threaten (p.149)

The structural and symbolic 'violence' of the powerful that is akin to 'the notorious 'dark matter' (author's emphasis) of physics' (Zizek, 2008, p.2) ensures the smooth and efficient operation of the new political and economic systems of global advanced capitalism and creates the sense of *order* that 'sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent' (Zizek, 2008, p.2). Unlike the violence of the physically scarred, traumatised, marginalised men that occupy the West's de-industrialised zones, this is the barbaric violence that continually circumvents identification, contestation and thus challenge (Ellis and Wykes, 2013; Wykes and Welsh, 2009). Its executioners represent capitalism's 'undertakers', who occupy nodal positions within the system, perpetrating the necessary violence and 'evils' that further the system's strategic aims (Hall, 2012).

With these suggestions made, I want to return now to the men and violence that has been the feature of this thesis. The current socio-economic political context has presided over, and 'violently' promoted, the ascendancy, pluck, entrepreneurialism and competitiveness of the individual to further its strategic economic imperatives; while collective identities and solutions have been increasingly eschewed. Amidst such reckless aggression, it becomes very easy to see how some individual men have interpreted their own personal sense of victimisation as a product of such a deleterious world that is filled with competing nomads. Driven on by a subjective shadow-world (Hall, 2012) brutally

cultivated out of exposure to acute interpersonal and socio-economic insecurity, there is little sense of alternative but for such men to join the rest of the 'herd' of 'competing monads'. That is to embrace an equally *individual* project of deep subjective transformation that allows one to make the stoic journey from personal adversity, into awe-inspiring narcissistic barbarism.

> **Shane:** *…I started getting to the point after a while where it's all just a state of mind to me, that's what it felt like to me, pain was a state of mind, doing something to someone was all a state of mind and it was something you didn't think about until later…you deal with the situation and then think about it later…doesn't matter how big someone is, the size is not an issue, it's all a state of mind innit? That's how I sort of, programmed myself if you like, that nothing would bother me, nobody or nothing…*

Shane's chilling words capture the essence of this chapter and the thesis more broadly. They forge the connections between a palpable sense of change and transformation in the everyday world and the subjective self-transformation of the violent subject who responds in the only way they know how: to toughen up and be prepared. Whether that is by keeping a pick axe by the front door, a 'shooter' stuffed down the back of the trousers, or positioning yourself to deliver the knockout blow in an eyeballing and chest puffing contest while waiting for a taxi at 2am on a Sunday morning.

Why *some* men are violent has been one of the central questions that this research has sought to address. Throughout the thesis, but particularly in this chapter, I have striven to emphasise the significance of a broader confluence of forces in these men's lives. Being violent then, is not just about trying to be a 'man', nor is it simply a product of growing up and living in marginalised circumstances: it is more than this. It is the product of a broader confluence of psychosocial experiences and forces in men's lives; a blend of exposure to violence, traumatic and humiliating personal experience, socialisation, habit, masculinity, structure and political economy.

Chapter Nine

Afterword: Reflections on the Research

One of the Lads?

It's early Sunday morning. I'm in a nightclub with Gary, Paul and Jimmy. We've been drinking since the previous Saturday afternoon. I'm now feeling very drunk and find myself dancing, rather terribly, on a very sweaty, over-crowded dance floor. The overcrowding begins to irritate me and I grow increasingly impatient and intolerant as people keep banging into me. A young lad bumps into me from the side. Without thinking or bothering to look around I suddenly see red, lose my temper, and throw my elbow in the direction of his face. I don't feel any clear impact and assume that I missed. A brief melee ensues and I find myself 'squaring up' to one of the lads that is part of his group shouting obscenities in his face. Out of nowhere Gary, Paul and Jimmy jump into the melee in an attempt to calm the situation. Jimmy pulls me out of the way. The other group of lads don't react aggressively, and Paul asks a member of their group: 'is this fucking happening then er what?' They obviously do not want to fight and (thankfully) they back off; the situation quickly diffuses. My anger subsides and through my drunken haze I realise what I've done. An intense wave of shame and guilt washes over me. Shortly after we leave the club and head to a takeaway for food. The lads laugh and mock me as we walk along the dimly lit streets. Their mockery does not stop even when we reach the takeaway and begin stuffing calorific cheese burgers and chips into our mouths:

> *"T'owd Tony trying to start a feyt with them poor lads, you horrible bastard!"*

I laugh too, not that I feel like laughing, as the guilt begins to feel like a knot tied in my stomach. Anxiety begins to creep all over me as I imagine alternative scenarios that could have resulted in worse outcomes. I apologise to the lads repeatedly saying 'don't know why I did that', partly in response to this anxiety. As expected, the lads aren't concerned; they've seen and experienced much worse. They tell me to forget it and continue to joke about how much of a 'bad lad' I am. When we arrive home Gary laughs at me and says jokingly:

> *"You're studying some of us for your research; we are supposed to be the bad lads, not you. I hope you are going to write about this in your work"*
> (Fieldwork notes)

In this final brief chapter, I will provide a reflective account of what I feel has been the overall contribution of my research. I will offer some critically reflexive thoughts on my methodological approach and make several suggestions for potential future research on the broad issue of men's experiences of violence.

Overall, I have found completing this thesis and the research upon which it is based, to be the most rewarding, enriching and stimulating period of my life so far. But the process has not been without stresses or strains on me psychologically and emotionally, as my quite uncharacteristic reaction described in my field notes above indicates. As I stated in chapter one, I do not possess a history of using violence against others. I have witnessed plenty of violence and spent considerable time around some dangerous and potentially volatile individuals throughout my life. But apart from a few scuffles and largely inconsequential confrontations with other males, I've always been a relatively calm and pacified individual; happy to keep my head down and stay out of trouble. Yet, my reaction on that night both shocked and concerned me – it could have been a lot worse. And, as Gary rightly pointed out, what of my role as a researcher of men's violence? Is this event indicative of me having 'gone native'?

These are questions and issues I wrestled with in the aftermath, but are also questions that have been posed to me by some of my academic colleagues. Crucially, as was discussed in chapter three, I did not begin the research, nor conduct it, with the intention of becoming immersed to the extent that I would partake in all of the activities my participants engaged in. I fitted in, but at no point did I try to be, or become, one of the lads to the extent that I and they were indistinguishable. That said, I was forced, from carrying out this research, to confront events and aspects of my own life and identity as a male from a working class background; something that, perhaps rather naively, I did not envisage or foresee at the beginning of it. As I discussed in chapter three, I could often relate to and empathise with some of the things these men described to me, as I had encountered them myself. Certain things the participants talked about awoke feelings and emotions within myself that emanate from particularly difficult personal experiences – some around confrontation and violence – that I had forgotten and in some cases tried to forget. Significant family members and peers had attempted to instil in me the same injunctions that some of these men had received to 'stand up for myself' and that if someone was to hit me, I should hit

them back, harder. And the same feelings of self-loathing and humiliation that these men described in relation to past events in their own lives resonated with some of my own, and I found myself at times becoming angry and resentful about those times when I had not followed these injunctions or failed to live up to others' expectations. Returning to some of these memories brought back the pain experienced at the time of the event(s) when I too felt I had been "walked over", dominated, and stripped of my dignity.

For periods during the fieldwork, and afterwards, I had quite disturbed and poor sleep. I found it often difficult to relax and focus my thoughts upon other things unrelated to my PhD and participants. At times I suffered from mild paranoia. I was worried that I would be subjected to police investigation or harassment, or that, during the instances of covert research, I would be discovered and that there would be potentially dire consequences. Those occasions when I was placed in considerable danger did nothing to alleviate these difficulties. I also found myself worrying obsessively over the psychological impact my research might have upon the participants, particularly when they had re-visited aspects of their lives that were obviously difficult and traumatic for them. I also regularly felt intense feelings of guilt that I was somehow taking advantage of the participants and their kindness towards me. Some gave up extraordinary amounts of their time to talk to me. They welcomed me into their homes and lives, introduced me to their friends and families. Given such kindness and helpfulness it was difficult not to feel a genuine sense of affection towards some of the participants, who have benefited my academic career in ways they will probably never realise, with minimal personal gain for themselves. Their kindness and openness imbued me with a tremendous feeling of personal responsibility to ensure I produced an account which accurately reflects their lives and experiences and the pressures that come with trying to achieve this.

Such closeness meant that I was also exposed to the harshness and difficulties that some of them had faced and continued to face – chaotic lifestyles, strained relationships with others, and economic hardship. At times I could not help feeling intense sympathy towards some of the participants. Yet simultaneously, I was on occasions appalled and angered by their behaviour and their complete lack of empathy for those they have harmed. On those occasions when critical reflection and empathy towards victims was in short supply, and

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there was a clear and demonstrable lack of regret, I did feel both disturbed and disgusted.

In this sense the research for this thesis has perhaps been as much an investigation into the lives of other men, as it has my own. Why I have not immersed myself in the image of the hard man and have not behaved like some of the men in this thesis, is a difficult question to answer here and is actually not the question that needs to be answered. What is significant however, is that I personally feel that the event described at the beginning of this chapter is indicative of the fact that I too possess the capability to become violent as I did on the night described above, and I feel this helps to reinforce the points I have striven to make throughout the thesis: that the issue of men who regularly use violence is one of scale, rather than strict difference and pathology.

Assessing Contribution

At the beginning of this thesis in chapter one, I set out the various questions that this research would seek to answer. A key aim was to gain a better understanding of how, and why, it is that some men value violence and are willing to use it against others. The project also sought to examine notions of masculine identity, how this might be related to being violent, and to explore the contexts in which men become violent or feel it is necessary or appropriate for them to do so. All of which were to be explored against a broader background context of social and economic transformation at a global level.

A lot of the existing research which addresses masculinities is theoretical. Much of what I was reading in the early stages of the research was interesting, insightful, stimulating, and gave me plenty of ideas for trying to make theoretical sense of male violence. But quite often the actual voices of men who committed violence were missing from these, and in the few studies that did engage with men who had committed violence, these were often men sampled through criminal justice institutions or agencies. This is not an attempt to castigate that body of work, which is both useful and interesting. But the potential for researchers who work with offenders in such contexts in order to understand and fully grasp the complex subjective motivations that underpin criminality, I would argue, is potentially quite difficult. Such institutions can place considerable

constraints upon researchers and their potential to develop relationships in which participants will feel able to reveal aspects of themselves and their offending behaviour. In this sense I was fortunate enough to gain access to spaces participants occupied day-to-day, where they were not subject to an institutional regime and thus felt comfortable and able to relax. I have also benefitted from the kind of introductions required to help better circumvent and overcome the kind of mistrust and suspicion researchers may experience.

Methodological issues aside for a brief moment, much existing work seemed to assume from the outset that masculinity has some causal/problematic relationship to violence and seemed to implicitly suggest that men, without difficulty, can quite easily summon the will to use violence. Even those studies that take a more detailed and nuanced approach using case studies of men who have committed violence, often just focus upon the violent acts, with no discussion or consideration of how these men had reached this point, where their understandings and appreciation of violence had actually come from, and why they were so willing to use it.

My own biography has given me an understanding of violence and crime that I could not help but bring to the project. And I often felt that what I was reading in some books and journals, although highly interesting and useful, did not always provide a requisite depth of analysis of men's biographies and subjectivities in the context of our macro socio-economic and political arrangements. Nor did it grapple sufficiently with the complexities of violence that, from personal experience, I was fairly familiar with.

Early on in the research I was keen to simply 'get out there' and hear what people had to say about themselves, their lives, and their violence. I did not feel structuring interviews and ethnographic encounters with participants would be particularly helpful. Of course I had ideas and issues that interested me, but I wanted them to tell me what they thought was important and use this as the stimulus for my questioning. The fact that I knew some of these men before I began the research and was introduced to those that I did not know by individuals that are respected and well thought of, meant that I could get access to the lived everyday experiences of some of these men's lives. I could blend in quite seamlessly to such an extent that I am pretty certain that some participants would often forget the real reason I was present. The fact that some of these men

engaged in criminal activities in front of me and made me aware of information that was particularly sensitive, is indicative of the trust I had gained. I spent sufficient time in these spaces with participants to 'ensure that we entered a mutual space that encouraged critical reflection and honesty' (Treadwell et al, 2013, p.4). I could have quite easily remained in the field after I had collected sufficient data to write the thesis, but actually made a conscious decision to distance myself when I began to hear about and see things that I knew would place me in a highly difficult position should the police suddenly intervene. I am willing to admit that I share relationships with some of these men that are based upon friendship, which obviously brings benefits in terms of securing trust and access. I am aware though of the difficulties of this in terms of questions regarding neutrality and potential for objectivity and critical distance.

Issues of trust and access aside, of course I would accept and fully acknowledge criticisms of my research, as it is based upon a localised ethnographic study with a small group of men not sampled with the kind of methodological rigour often utilised and expected within the academy[13]. Inevitably this raises questions concerning generalizability beyond the men involved and these are the kinds of criticisms that other similar studies have had to contend with (see Hall et al's (2008) methodological discussion, pages 18-20). As a pre-emptive defence to such criticisms of my work, what the participants said to me and the findings of my research in general are not radically different from those of other researchers using ethnographic methods to study men's violence and active criminality more broadly.

I cannot state unequivocally that I made no errors or mistakes during the course of this research. There were several occasions when I ruminated, often for days and weeks afterwards, on how I had phrased a question incorrectly; missed opportunities to probe and challenge things that were said to me during interviews and conversations; and had on occasions, unintentionally, perhaps colluded with some of these men or even validated, in their own minds, some of the things they had done. Quite often I was immediately aware that I had made a mistake during the fieldwork, and I had to quickly put this acknowledgement to one side in my mind while I continued to gather data. Returning to it and

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[13] See my earlier discussion of this in Chapter three (pages 63 - 67) and my arguments for using this method of sampling.

considering it afterwards during reflective periods. Other mistakes became clear when I listened to the recording of interviews or during the process of writing up field notes.

In taking a critical realist ethnographic approach to the study of men, masculinities and violence, mistakes were unavoidably made while attempting to employ this in the settings that I entered. And this pragmatic experience in the field has taught me that imperfections will appear in one's methodological approaches over the course of fieldwork; regardless of how meticulously these have been designed beforehand. The varying pressures that accompany doing research amongst potentially dangerous and volatile groups of men makes having to temporarily suspend one's own beliefs, sentiments and values (see Calvey, 2008), and even sacrificing some of those sacred academic standards to 'objectivity', unavoidable pragmatic necessities. It also means having to take part in interactions and to build rapport in order to generate sufficient trust, co-operation and access to gather the data necessary. These are all vital in order to properly fulfil the role of a critical ethnographer: 'to unpack…experiences and events as much as possible' (Briggs, 2013, p.21) and provide as accurate account of these as one can.

I do accept potential critiques of the accounts that I received from the men who appear in this thesis: I am referring here to the possibility that these were potentially partial and distorted. I am in little doubt that this probably was the case at times. In response to such suggestions I would argue that although there is a strong possibility of this, I did develop trusting relationships with these men, mainly because of my personal background and my contacts that made the introductions and vouched for my legitimacy and trustworthiness. Of course this does not automatically absolve me of any such criticism. Where possible I would check the reliability of what I was told, particularly certain information that I was suspicious about. I would often strategically ask participants at a later date to reiterate the event again, claiming I had forgotten what they told me, using this as an opportunity to check for inconsistencies. I also occasionally sought verification from gatekeepers, but used this sparingly and with caution as I did not wish to divulge what the participant had shared with me, which would contravene confidentiality. Occasionally during the ethnography, just through 'hanging around', I became privy to information that supplemented and verified things I

had been told or suspected. This was often a way to access additional information on participants that they had not divulged themselves. In one or two instances, this was the sort of information that I expected participants might not reveal to me; i.e. instances when they had been badly beaten up or had been made to look foolish in a way that contradicted and undermined the images they sought to present of themselves to others, including me. Although this technique was not without limits – sometimes acquaintances simply did not know the answer or did not possess the information I sought. At other times I suspected they knew more than they were letting on and obviously did not wish certain information to be known by me. Media sources were also occasionally helpful to an extent for verifying that particular criminal activities had taken place.

Importantly, I feel that the possibility and tendency for participants to lie, exaggerate and distort, should not be viewed as simply detrimental to the 'quality', validity or reliability of the data. On the contrary, I feel such behaviour represents an interesting source of data in itself. The fact that individuals no doubt did this on occasions and certainly, as just discussed, did withhold certain information from me, says much about the kinds of self-images and identities these men wish to project to others and lends further support to the theoretical framework I have employed in this thesis around masculinities and violence. In particular my emphasis upon the evident fragility and sense of insecurity that lies behind identities that are built upon a credible threat of violence and 'hardness'.

Returning to the research questions in light of my findings and discussion of these in the previous chapters, what I feel this thesis contributes, overall, is a highly nuanced account of the complexities of men's experiences of violence, masculinity, subjectivity, and the significance of the historical legacy of de-industrialisation and the global hegemony of Neo-Liberal capitalism's ideology for making sense of these.

As was discussed at the end of chapter two, when I explored the existing literature, masculinity within much criminological literature has only been theorised in relation to social structures or the individual, and is sometimes completely ignored despite its salience within offending patterns, particularly patterns of interpersonal violence (Wykes and Welsh, 2009). This thesis is unique in that it has focused on the concept of maleness and masculinity first and foremost, as informed by both the individual/psycho-subjective and socio-

structural conditions. This thesis utilises a theoretical framework that attempts to fuse these and accounts for both. Furthermore, chapter two identified that the use of interpersonal/subjective violence has not been the focus 'per se' of empirical studies and theory (Ray, 2011; Winlow, 2012). This thesis offers a further unique contribution in that it focuses purely upon interpersonal violence committed by men against other men and has not concerned itself with a specific 'type' of interpersonal violence. This thesis has therefore, drawn together these various fractured elements. It provides an account of men's violence that is anchored in rich ethnographic material gathered directly from men who have perpetrated and experienced violence during their lives; while utilising contemporary and integrated critical psychosocial theories to interpret this material. The ethnographic life history approach taken in this research highlights these aforementioned nuances to violence within men's lives and their relationships to violence within the context of their own life courses.

My aim in this thesis has not been to present a crudely deterministic argument. The data presented in this thesis and from other branches of recent critical criminological scholarship, suggests there is a pressing need to broaden the discipline's historical and current ontological preoccupation with the realms of language and social constructionism. Criminology must also focus upon the micro worlds of the subjective, which are cultivated out of pragmatic experience, psychology, drive, materialism and prevailing hegemonic ideology (see Hall, 2012). These men's life courses and self-identities have been anything but 'free' and self-determining. No matter how difficult this may be to accept for some sections of the academy, their behaviour and actions have not always been of their own choosing or making. In the harmed, traumatised, violent biographies of the men who feature in this thesis, no genuine sense of empowerment, betterment, lasting material advantage or social mobility is detectable. The only real detectable benefits, as discussed in chapter eight, are the brief gratification from victory, the 'respect' earned through reputation, and the relatively small financial sums that can be earned through one's violence. In sum then, it is difficult to disagree with the statement that persistent violence merely 'results in pointless interpersonal hostility, the breakdown of relationships, imprisonment and the collapse into further immiseration and hostility' (Hall, 2012, p.124), which

for some of the men who participated has on occasions brought them close to death.

As I have discussed at various points during this thesis, numerous recent critiques of criminology and criminological theory indicate strongly that the discipline has struggled to get to grips with the realm of criminal motivation (see Gadd and Jefferson, 2007; Hall et al, 2008). The men who appear in this thesis have, as I have demonstrated throughout, engaged in highly destructive behaviour throughout their lives that when examined closely is neither 'rational' nor always entirely beneficial to them. Perhaps even more perplexing, is that this research has revealed that these men have regularly placed themselves at significant risk of being harmed by others. And as I have discussed in the previous chapter, view this through a lens of distinct fatalism and potential character enhancement, despite being potentially harmful and life threatening (see also discussion by Ellis and Wykes, 2013). Through its theoretical and methodological framework, this thesis has provided a fresh analysis of men's violence that has attempted to grapple with some of these complexities and to understand the sheer brutality that on occasions erupts in some of the UK's most marginalised contexts. The thesis has developed our understanding of some particular issues where knowledge had been lacking, shedding light on some of these complex and difficult questions.

The structure of the thesis from chapter four to chapter seven reveals the broad overarching themes that are significant in these men's lives and that emerged from the data. Childhood and youth appear to be significant phases in the life course where violence is experienced, learnt and becomes intertwined with notions of identity, masculinity and habitus. Some of the traumatic and humiliating experiences that characterise the formative years of these men's lives appear to have left deep and complex legacies in terms of subjectivity and on-going social engagement, that have undoubtedly and evidently re-surfaced and manifested in internalised and externalised rage. The experience of actually committing violence, and being a victim of it, reveals the significance of troubling emotions and the importance of taking seriously the issue of emotions in our theoretical frameworks for understanding violent criminality. The chapter also demonstrates the sense of insecurity, anxiety, desperation and worthlessness that lie behind exaggerated facades of impenetrability, power and aggression.

Finally, the thesis has revealed the significance of morality in the doing of violence – a morality cultivated out of the personal trauma that emanates from being exposed to insecure environments, threats, brutality, and marginalised socio-economic communities. A flexible morality chosen by the individual themselves that has flourished in the void left following post-political abandonment and liberal market capitalism. It is thus able to thrive in the absence of a universal ethics capable of tempering the extremities of neo-liberal free market ideology and the iconography of the post-modern individual.

The thesis is also suggestive of several future research directions and through shedding some light on these issues poses new questions that require exploration. The data indicates that interpersonal violence does not appear to be a wholly deliberate tactic, used in a cold, rationalistic, instrumental fashion to engineer social dominance. Violence is very much couched, by men who use it, in quite ambivalent terms that are indicative of paranoid-obsession, insecurity, defence, protection and importantly fear; yet, simultaneously, in terms of dominance over the threatening 'other', narcissism, envy, and self-righteousness. Together these forge a strange, complex and borderline contradictory hybrid. Essentially, these are men that have been at the sharp end of socio-economic and political transformation in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. These changes have had a profound impact upon their everyday life worlds and cultures. What appears to be at root here is, fundamentally, fear and anxious insecurity, hardwired into marginalised men through repeated encounters with violence within what are now insecure, acutely competitive contexts of quite aggressive individualism. Certainly perpetration is not the end of the story, as the data presented in this thesis suggests. Personal experiences of victimisation are significant for men who use violence, particularly their humiliating and traumatic consequences. This shines a light on an underdeveloped area of the literature and something that has been largely neglected by criminologists and scholars that have studied violence previously and have focused foremost upon perpetration without considering how victimisation figures. It also signals the significant overlap that exists between those men who regularly commit violence and those men who are the victims of it: they are very much one and the same. This research opens up a potentially new area of inquiry into such experiences and how perpetration and victimisation are related. Particularly how do men

respond subjectively to being victimised and how do such personalised experiences become contextualised in the broader social and cultural contexts they encounter? This research has identified trauma and humiliating experiences as significant, but how might such experiences then manifest in the types of masculine identities and violence that some men subsequently invest in? Is there potentially a connection between acutely brutalising experiences, particularly in childhood, and the perpetration of seriously harmful and gratuitous violence later in life? There is evidence for such connections (see Stein, 2007), but this is in need of much further and deeper exploration.

A broader and more politically loaded set of issues to consider from this research is how to address the most problematic aspects of our politics and cultural life? How might we rehabilitate and re-invigorate civic and political life to begin working towards the kinds of ideology, symbolic universe and subjectivity that will temper the acute tensions that manifest in extreme hostility and violence in some marginalised social locations? We currently occupy a realm of political apathy and badly need an alternative to the drab centre politics of our mainstream parties and the growing popularity of the new Far Right. Clearly, as I have attempted to indicate in chapters seven and eight, these men's violence and their moral justifications for it must be understood in this broader context of 'post politics' (Winlow and Hall, 2012), where recourse to a credible universal sense of ethics is lacking. How these men enforce their notion of morality is of course wrong, but we must not be too quick to wheel out the standard accusations of pathology and moral vacuity when interpreting interpersonal violence. Morality is there, it is not dead; it has just become intertwined with a sense of *individual* responsibility and personal endeavour, because there is little sense of a collective means with which to solve the problems *individuals* face regularly. As Katz (1988, p.19) points out to us, extreme violence is often executed, however misguidedly and wrongly, as an attempt to defend both the morality of the social system and a personal sense of moral self-worth. These men do not feel they can rely on anyone else to protect them and those they care about, so they take responsibility for that and utilise the cultural capital they possess in order to do this. They are 'handy' lads, and from their perspectives being 'handy' is a means to lead what they consider to be a dignified existence at a time when dignity and

self-worth are increasingly connected to individual bodies, actions and endeavours, rather than a collectivised social body.

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Appendix One

Pen Portraits of the Handy Lads

Billy

Billy is aged in his mid-20s and works in a distribution warehouse. As an aside to his employment Billy occasionally sells small quantities of cocaine, ecstasy and mephedrone to networks of peers and acquaintances within the context of the local night time economy. Billy has also been involved in football violence and disorder for several years and regularly socialises with the large network of men that loosely comprises the football 'crew' that Darren, Neil, Jez and Wayne associate with. Billy is known for being able to 'handle' himself during violent confrontations. I did not interview Billy 'formally' during the research, but came to know him through spending time with Darren and several of his acquaintances. Billy was not aware that I was a researcher.

Brett

Brett stands around 6 foot 2 and is aged in his forties; he is currently serving a custodial sentence for a serious violent offence. He has a long history of involvement in acquisitive criminality and violence. Prior to his arrest and incarceration he was a regular supplier of cannabis and amphetamines.

Brett has never met his biological parents; he was put up for adoption by his mother before he reached his first birthday. He is unsure of the specific reasons why, but Brett suspects his biological father had been a violent sex offender who had attacked and raped his mother. And Brett believes the shame of raising a child conceived through rape had forced his mother to give him up. Brett was raised by his foster parents in a large town in the north of England and described having a poor relationship with his foster father who would occasionally subject him to physical abuse during his childhood.

Brett left school aged 16 and began working in the construction industry, which has been his main source of legitimate employment throughout his adult life. Through working in construction Brett became acquainted with a network of individuals involved in the cocaine trade and other forms of serious criminality. At

the height of his criminal success Brett was selling large quantities of cocaine and cannabis resin, and has also been involved in protection and mortgage fraud.

Darren

See chapter four for information on Darren.

Gary and Paul

Gary is aged in his late 20s. His virile physicality is his most noticeable feature: he stands around 5 feet 11, his physique is lean, muscular and powerful, sometimes he has his head shaved, and tattoos cover his arms. Paul is Gary's older brother by about 18 months and is of similar height and build. Paul is slightly broader across the shoulders and a little bulkier than his younger brother, but he is also in very good physical condition. Both men take immense pride in their physical appearances, spending hours in their local gym and engaging in sporting activity to maintain them. Physicality characterises the men in their small family – their father is a short, bald, stocky former miner, who also regularly frequents the same local gym.

Gary is University educated and has a stable job working full-time in an office. Paul left school aged 16 and has held several different jobs in administration, manufacturing, in a call centre and he spent several years in the armed forces. He is married and now works in an office role. They grew up together with their parents on a small housing estate in the same local community where Brett had been raised. Gary and Paul's local community is both ethnically and socially homogenous: predominantly white and of largely working class heritage. It is a community where the local faction of the British National Party (BNP) has been able to garner support and in previous elections has enjoyed some political success. The community is flanked by two severely deprived localities; one of which is a predominantly Pakistani Asian community. As the area's historical political sympathies suggest, relations with this nearby locality have been tense at times, which has on occasions led to violence between groups of young men from each area. Some men in Gary and Paul's community have established reputations for violence and are involved in football violence and other acquisitive criminality. Some of these men attended the same

comprehensive school as Gary and Paul. Neither Gary nor Paul has convictions for violence or any other offences and they possess modest reputations for violence in their local community.

Ian

Ian is aged in his forties. He is a committed drug dealer and has been involved in serious acquisitive offending and violence since his late teens. He currently lives on a severely deprived council estate with his long-term girlfriend. Ian was born and spent his childhood in a large city some distance from the area where he now currently resides and does business. He and his family moved to the area where he now lives when Ian was a teenager; his step-father had accumulated several large debts, which had been the motivation for the family to re-locate.

Ian was first convicted during his late teens for his involvement in a commercial burglary; he was given a custodial sentence. Ian made a number of contacts during his first stint in prison and upon his release began engaging in further criminal activities with them. He spent several years as a professional shoplifter and distraction thief, targeting large and medium sized retail and business outlets across the country. Although it was the introduction of CCTV and growth in private security that began to seriously curtail Ian's activities. Having become friendly with several individuals heavily involved in the region's burgeoning drug markets, Ian quickly shifted to the importation of large quantities of amphetamines from abroad and then subsequently large-scale supply at a localised level. As a large scale supplier of heroin, amongst other substances, Ian has encountered serious violence on several occasions. Several years ago Ian was released from prison following a lengthy stint for a violent offence. Ian's main source of business remains the distribution of heroin and he has recently moved into large-scale cannabis cultivation.

Jez

Jez is aged in his mid-20s and works in the construction trade. He is a respected and popular individual amongst the various networks of men that regularly 'turn out' for the football firm at matches. In his late teens and early 20s Jez was a regular member of the football firm, but has over recent years distanced himself

from football related violence. Despite this, Jez still retains a reputation for and willingness to use violence - he was recently involved in a violent altercation with a group of men in a local pub which left him with superficial injuries. Jez was one of the few men who associated with the football firm that was aware that I was conducting research.

Liam

Liam is aged in his early 30s and lives with his long-term girlfriend and their young son on a council estate. He stands around 5ft 11 inches in height, is slim in build, quite pale skinned, with short hair, which is usually covered by a branded baseball cap or a woolly hat. The small fenced area at the front of their home is guarded by Liam's large, fiercely territorial dog, who took quite a liking to me during the research but did not hesitate to wrap his enormous jaws around my foot one afternoon when I stepped through the front gate while he was eating – I made sure I used the backdoor after that.

Liam is a recovering heroin addict, who for most of his adult life has struggled with addiction. From his late teens onwards, Liam oscillated between prison and a life of drug use, violence and low-level acquisitive street criminality; from which, apart from a few scars, he has little to show for. At the time of writing he is unemployed and on a methadone substitute programme. While his son is at school Liam tends to spend his days doing housework, smoking cannabis, filling his head with various interesting facts from TV documentaries and Radio 4, playing on his PlayStation, and occasionally inviting the Jehovah's Witnesses who frequent the estate into his home to quiz them on their faith and a variety of pressing metaphysical issues.

Liam has not been involved in acquisitive offending (predominantly shoplifting and burglary) for several years now and he has managed to re-build relationships with several members of his immediate family that had suffered at the height of his offending and drug use. However, his relationship with his father remains poor and Liam has not seen nor spoken to him for several years. Liam's violence, however, has remained fairly persistent. After recently securing full-time employment for the first time since his late teens, Liam was sacked after using threatening behaviour towards other members of staff. He has also recently been

involved in several violent altercations with local neighbours on his estate and managed to avoid being formally charged after an argument with a local couple ended with Liam beating the woman's partner unconscious.

Neil

Neil is aged in his early 20s and is employed by his town's local council. He is a football hooligan who associates with the same firm as Darren, Billy, Jez and Wayne. At around 5 feet 8 inches in height, Neil is not the tallest of men, but he possesses a solid, heavy-set frame, and will not hesitate to involve himself in violence, particularly within the context of the football firm.

Neil's parents separated when he was very young and he was raised, predominantly, by his mother. Neil described how his mother had worked two jobs during his childhood to provide for them and that much of his care was provided by family and his mum's close friends while she worked. Later during his childhood Neil's mother met her current partner, who Neil struggled to get along with initially. Neil wasn't particularly forthcoming with details about the strained relationship with his step-father, but described how in recent years they had begun to get along much better. His step-father had helped Neil secure his current employment after Neil had left school

Neil has been associating with the football 'firm' since his late teens. He is willing to involve himself in violence, but he carries this out, in the eyes of his peers, with a degree of calculation and finesse. He possesses a reputation for being 'pretty switched on' (intelligent) and for knowing when, and crucially when not, to 'kick off' at opponents. Neil has received a caution and fines for his involvement in football related disorder, but at the time of writing, has not received any formal convictions. This more 'measured' approach to using violence has earned him a healthy amount of respect and admiration from peers and has made him something of an unofficial 'top lad' within the youth faction of the firm.

Shane and Carl

Shane and Carl are brothers and are aged early 40s and mid-30s respectively. They have different fathers; Shane's father separated from their mother when

Shane was three and he was raised by her and his step father – Carl's father. Shane stands around 6 foot 3, he is slim in build, but his height gives him an imposing physical appearance. He is employed in a skilled, manual occupation. Carl is shorter than his older brother and stands around 5 foot 9 in height. At the time of the research Carl was unemployed and had been for around 9 months. He had previously worked as a delivery driver, but left his employment after a long running dispute with a senior colleague turned violent and Carl had to be physically restrained by several of his co-workers to prevent him from attacking his superior with a large spanner.

Shane has been married twice and has two children; Carl is married and has four children. Shane and Carl were raised together with their sister and lived in a large home that was used by their parents through their employment with the local authority to care for, and look after, young people released from prison and the state care system. Both men have convictions for violence and are known for their potentially volatile temperaments. Although of the two, Shane possesses a more fearsome reputation than his younger brother and has been involved in more violent criminality.

Vince

The first time I met Vince in one of the bars he protects he announced to me that he was an ideal participant for my research as he had had more fights than hot dinners, had knocked out two million people, and had been knocked out a million times himself. Despite his rather exaggerated self-description, he is a man who is well-versed in violence and has forged a career out of his reputation and his ability to use it. Vince is a member of a large, notorious family, several of whom are involved in serious criminality.

Vince is aged in his late forties. Standing around 6 foot 4, with a large muscular build, he looks utterly impenetrable. His upper body is a canvas of intricately detailed tattoos that cover his arms, his chest, his back, and his stomach. Vince has few teeth left in his mouth that are his own and at the base of his back is scarring from a gunshot wound. He has only ever had two jobs: a fair lad and a nightclub doorman, which is his current occupation and has been for

around 20 years. He has never been to prison and has no criminal convictions to his name.
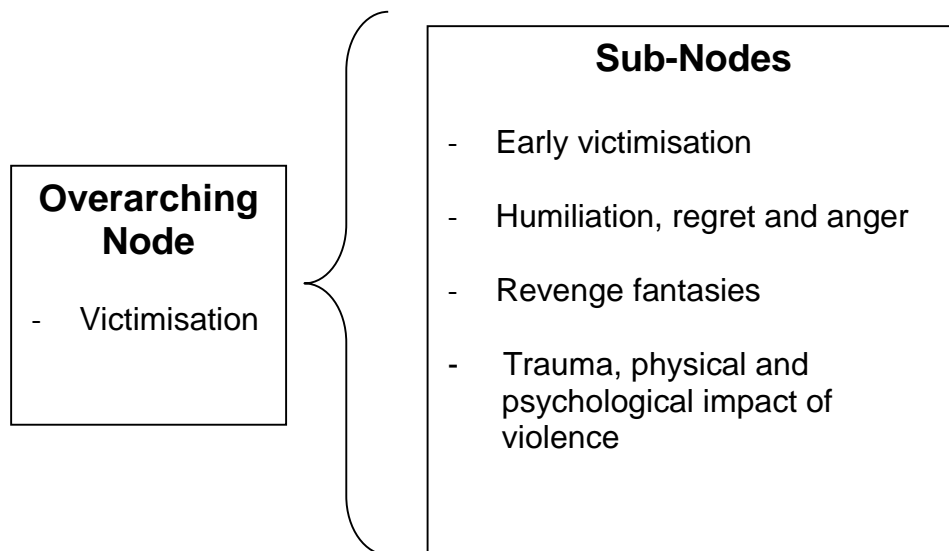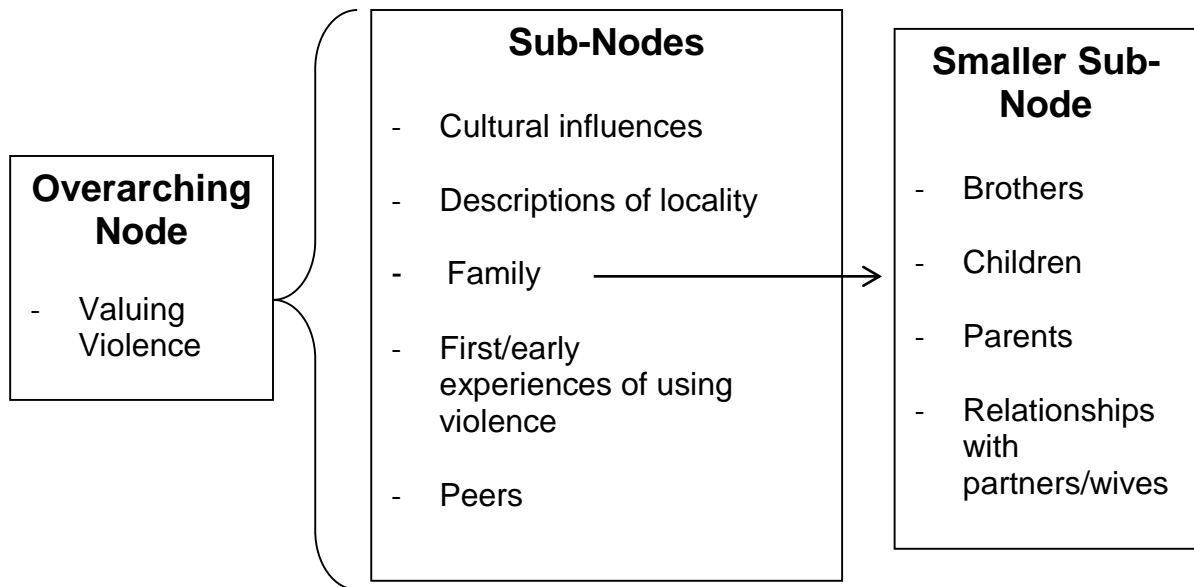
Vince was born and currently lives in a large city in the north. He grew up on a severely deprived council estate with his mother and other siblings, and now lives there with his older sister and her daughter. Vince possesses little formal education: he began working at the age of 11 on a fairground in the city and left home when he was 13 years of age with the group of traveller families that ran the fair. He worked on the fair for over a decade as it travelled around the UK, before returning to his native city in his mid-20s during the economic downturn when its heavy industrial sector collapsed amidst de-industrialisation. Several of the men Vince had grown up with and knew from his estate, had begun to secure positions within the developing consumerist industries and their attendant criminal markets that were rapidly replacing the mining and manufacturing industries that had previously been the main employment routes for local men. Known for his violent potential and knowledge of local violence hierarchies within the city, Vince gained employment as a nightclub bouncer. An occupation that has opened up a variety of 'business opportunities' with which to supplement his income: particularly protection, debt collecting and private enforcement. He has strong connections to the city's serious crime community. Vince's connections, his personal reputation, and that of some of the men in his family, have enabled him to spend most of his life moving seamlessly between the licit and illicit marketplace.

Wayne

Wayne works in the construction industry and lives in a satellite town that is sandwiched between two much larger metropolitan areas. He is good friends with Darren and is well-known amongst many of the men that have an affiliation with the football crew. Wayne has a history of involvement in serious criminality, particularly drug dealing and cannabis cultivation, and has served several custodial sentences for various offences, some involving violence. He has an established and fearsome reputation for violence. Like Billy, I did not conduct any interviews with Wayne and neither was he aware that I was conducting research.
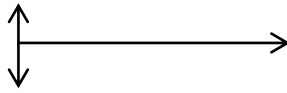
Appendix Two

Diagram of Tree Nodes

Overarching Node

- Valuing Violence

Sub-Nodes

- Cultural influences

- Descriptions of locality

- Family

- First/early experiences of using violence

- Peers

Smaller Sub-Node

- Brothers

- Children

- Parents

- Relationships with partners/wives

Overarching Node

- Victimisation

Sub-Nodes

- Early victimisation

- Humiliation, regret and anger

- Revenge fantasies

- Trauma, physical and psychological impact of violence

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Overarching Node

- Justifying and
  Reflecting on
  Violence

Overarching Node

- Self-reflections and
  Self-awareness

There were sufficient qualitative differences
to justify having these as two separate
nodes, rather than one as a sub-node of the
other. The vast majority of data nested under
these two informed chapter seven, as there
was a close alignment in terms of morality,
justification and identity which was
established during the analysis phase.

Overarching Node

- Involvement in
  other crimes