

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Glasgow
Unit of Assessment: 16: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning
Title of case study: Transforming Public and Political Understandings of Gangs, Knife Crime and Territoriality
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

At a time when youth gangs were high on the UK and Scottish governments' agendas and a focus of media concern, this research was instrumental in changing understandings of the origins of youth gangs, and why they engage in violent conflict. A key insight was that significant gang behaviour had its origins in extreme forms of place attachment. The impact encompassed changes in policy direction and programmes aimed at tackling youth violence, including policies in Scotland such as 'No Knives Better Lives'. Through very substantial publicity, including coverage on 2 primetime TV documentaries, the research informed public understandings, and challenged conventional wisdom on the nature, organisation and behaviour of youth gangs.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)
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The research was carried out during 2006-2010 as two core projects: 1. funded by Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) as part of a programme on place attachment and 2. commissioned by the Scottish Government on the behaviour of youth groups and knife crime in Scotland. These projects were preceded by a feasibility study funded by the Scottish Executive in 2005.

A central focus of the studies is the role of *territoriality* as a source of conflict. Territoriality was defined in the research as: *a situation in which a group claims an identifiable geographical area as their own, and seeks to defend that area against others*. This was derived from R.D. Sack's *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Project 1 was carried out in 2006-2008 by a team in Urban Studies at Glasgow led by Keith Kintrea (Senior Lecturer (SL) in Housing Studies)* and including Jon Bannister (SL in Public Policy), Jonathan Pickering (Lecturer in Public Policy), Maggie Reid (Research Fellow) and Naofumi Suzuki (Research Assistant). The study investigated the significance of territoriality in the relationship between young people and place in British cities; the incidence, origins and impacts of territoriality; and how policy could best respond to it.

The research accessed informants through youth projects that were active in six cities: Bradford, Bristol, Glasgow, Peterborough, Sunderland and Tower Hamlets. Researchers interviewed 43 adults including project staff, community workers, police, local authority youth service staff, local activists and teachers. The team also conducted 15 focus groups with young people including some who were involved directly with the projects and others who were not.

The research led to a key insight that had not been recognised before in the literature or policy about youth and place. It revealed that territoriality among young people is found across the UK, and is a significant source of disadvantage. Territoriality was shown to be rooted in the culture of poor places. While it helps shape young people's identities and provides them with the support of a friendship group, it has many negative impacts. It not only cuts off disadvantaged young people from opportunities – in education, work, leisure and personal relationships – but also involves them in rivalry with groups from other areas which often escalates to violence and criminality. The research therefore showed that territoriality contributes to the exclusion of young people from city life, and reduces their life chances.

Project 2 was led by Jon Bannister between 2008 and 2010. The team also included Keith Kintrea and Jon Pickering from Urban Studies, plus Glasgow colleagues Michele Burman (Professor of Criminology); Susan Batchelor (Lecturer in Sociology), and Susan McVie (Edinburgh University).

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The research sought reliable evidence about the nature, form and prevalence of youth gangs and knife carrying in Scotland through qualitative research with individuals engaged in services designed to manage and challenge problematic youth behaviours. The research also included interviews with a large sample of young people in five case study locations: Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire.

The research revealed critical insights into gang behaviours and activities in Scotland. It demonstrated that territorial rivalry and 'gang fighting' are prevalent in the West of Scotland, whilst youth gangs in the East of Scotland typically engage in low-level antisocial behaviour and opportunistic fighting. Collective violence is common in the West of Scotland and significant barriers prevent young people leaving these problematic groups.

* All job titles correct at time of research.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. K. Kintrea and N. Suzuki 'Too Much Cohesion? Young People's Territoriality in Glasgow and Edinburgh, Chapter 10 of J. Flint, and D. Robinson, (eds.) *Community Cohesion in Crisis? New Dimensions of Diversity and Difference* Bristol: Policy Press, 2008. [Available from HEI]. [Chapter drew from original research, conducted using robust qualitative and quantitative methodologies and made important empirical contributions to emerging policy field].
2. K. Kintrea, J. Bannister, J. Pickering, N. Suzuki and M. Reid *Young People and Territoriality in British Cities*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008, pp. 70. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2278-young-people-territoriality.pdf> [This report has been downloaded 1600 times as reported by JRF, it only funds and publishes innovative research that can impact upon policy and practice.]
3. K. Kintrea, J. Bannister and J. Pickering (2010). "Territoriality and disadvantage among young people: an exploratory study of six British neighbourhoods", *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 25 (4), 447-465, (doi:10.1007/s10901-010-9195-4). [High quality peer-reviewed journal with a varied international readership].
4. J. Bannister, J. Pickering, S. Batchelor, M. Burman, K. Kintrea and S. McVie *Troublesome Youth Groups, Gangs and Knife Carrying in Scotland* Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/09/09112533/0> [Methodologically robust research funded and positively received by Scottish Government; informed further research in research outputs in Australia, Sweden and the UK].
5. J. Pickering, K. Kintrea, J. Bannister. (2012). 'Invisible Walls and Visible Youth: Territoriality among Young People in British Cities' *Urban Studies* 49 (5) 945-960. (doi:10.1177/0042098011411939). [A leading peer-reviewed journal providing an international forum for theoretically-informed articles].
6. J. Bannister, K. Kintrea, J. Pickering. (2013). 'Young People and Violent Territorial Conflict: Exclusion, Culture and the Search for Identity' *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16 (4) 474- 490 (doi:10.1080/13676261.2012.725835). [Key multidisciplinary journal with robust peer-review].

Grants awarded:

1. *Young People and Territoriality in Scotland: A Feasibility Study*, Scottish Executive, £10,000, 2005-2006. PI: Keith Kintrea
2. *Young People and Territoriality: An Exploration*: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, £72,000, 2006-2008. PI: Keith Kintrea
3. *Youth Gangs and Knife Carrying In Scotland*, Scottish Government, £180,000, 2008-2010. PI: Jon Bannister

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The depth and diversity of the research differentiated it from the largely incidental treatment of territoriality in the existing literature, communicating a new understanding about the relationship between young people, place, and violent behaviours to both policy makers and the public.

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Transforming popular understandings of youth gangs and violence

The research significantly contributed to public understandings about the roots of youth gangs at a time when there was rising concern about rates of violent deaths. This impact was achieved through a range of publicity activities and substantial media coverage.

The project pages on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation website have received 15,500 hits, with approximately 1,600 copies of the report downloaded. On publication the research was featured by over 300 media outlets, including *The Daily Mirror*, *The Independent*, *The Daily Express*, *The Times*, and *The Herald*. *The Guardian* (G2) published a two page spread on territoriality based on the report, as well as news coverage and a comment column in the main paper.

Kintrea gave live news interviews to BBC Radio Cambridgeshire, BBC Radio Leeds and LBC (London) and interviews were also included in the TV documentaries *War on Knives* (Sky 1, 14 and 21 October 2008) and *Stabbed: The Truth about Knife Crime* (BBC 1, 20 January 2009). *War on Knives* was the biggest-ever televised campaign to tackle knife crime. Kintrea featured in the first of two 2-hour live programmes which outlined the scale of the problem through films and expert interviews. Kintrea was interviewed alongside a representative from the Violence Reduction Unit and a victim of knife crime. *Stabbed* examined the reasons behind knife crime through interviews with police, youth workers and researchers, as well as teenagers and families of victims. Kintrea's interview was used as context for footage of territorially-impacted young people discussing why they carried knives.

In addition, a special exhibition, *Nothing in the World but Youth*, at Turner Contemporary in Margate in 2011, featured cognitive maps drawn by young people as part of research focus groups. The exhibition attracted 123,000 visitors and nearly 1,000 copies of the exhibition catalogue, which included a contribution by Kintrea, were sold.

The Scottish Government research received significant media attention, particularly in relation to findings about female gang members. It was reported in articles in *The Herald*, *The Sun*, *The Scotsman*, and *the Evening Times* as well as by Scottish Television (STV).

Informing policy on Gangs and Knife Crime

The research impacted on understandings of youth gangs held by policy makers. Before the research was published, there were no national policy interventions targeting the territorial aspect of gangs.

In 2008 a series of fatal stabbings urged the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee to launch an Inquiry into Knife Crime, which reported in June 2009. The research formed the basis of discussions at an evidence-gathering seminar in Leeds, contributing to the Inquiry's conclusion that *'the rise in violent knife offences seen over the past few years is associated with street violence between groups of young people who share a territorial identity, often referred to as 'gangs'*.

During the period of the Inquiry, the researchers delivered two seminars at the Home Office (October 30th 2008; March 12th 2009). The first addressed civil servants from The Home Office and the Department of Communities and Local Government, while the second, organised by the Tackling Gangs Action Project (TGAP) within the Home Office, was delivered to senior police officers, youth practitioners, senior civil servants and partner agencies. Researchers also gave a presentation to the Youth Justice Board in February 2009. During this period, the research was quoted in the politically influential Centre for Social Justice report *Dying to Belong* (2009).

According to the Head of Public Space Violence at the Home Office at the time, the research contributed to their understanding of the nature of gang violence, with its emphasis on how territoriality fuels much of this. This helped to improve initial Home Office understanding of the problem at the important stage of building an evidence base and formulating strategic plans for TGAP.

There is now clear recognition of the central role of territoriality in gangs, with the most recent policy document *Ending Gang Violence: A Cross Government Report* describing case studies in exactly the same terms as Kintrea et. al (2008). The introduction of gang injunctions in England in 2011 is a direct response to the need to tackle territorial violence.

Informing Scottish Government Policies on Young People and Knife Crime

Prior to the research, there were few large-scale empirical studies of gangs or knife carriers in the UK, and none in Scotland. The research reports therefore filled important information gaps for the Scottish Government and shaped its approach.

New insights included: statistical data about the backgrounds of gang members and knife carriers; the different aetiologies and risk factors for the two groups; and information about young women's involvement in gangs, which is characterised more by victimisation than aggression. These research findings have become reference points in policy meetings and briefings within the Scottish Government. In addition, Jon Bannister was invited to participate in a Scottish Government debate into knife crime in January 2009. During the debate he drew from both research projects to highlight the significance of territoriality to gang behaviour and also to urge for more sustained funding to be dedicated to early intervention projects.

According to Senior Researchers at the Scottish Government, the research gave confidence to policy development around the Scottish Government's 'No Knives Better Lives' campaign, elements of the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) and the Cashback for Communities programme. The CIRV, in particular, has had great reported success in reducing the rate of gang violence in Glasgow by 50% between 2008 and 2011.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 1) Corroborating e-mail enclosing media monitoring file from JRF Press Office. Available from HEI
- 2) Media Coverage of JRF Report: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/oct/14/children-social-exclusion> and <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/oct/18/young-people-rowntree>
- 3) *Nothing in the World but Youth* Exhibition, Turner Contemporary, Margate 2011. Exhibition information and Catalogue available at: <http://www.turnercontemporary.org/exhibitions/nothing-in-the-world-but-youth> and corroborating Letter and E-mail from Turner Contemporary about visitor numbers and catalogue sales.
- 4) Media Coverage, see, for example: <http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/crime-on-your-streets-1-winning-the-war-on-crime-104148n.19115861>
<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/scottishnews/3134203/Neds-worship-the-knifemen.html>
<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/inside-the-secret-world-of-girl-gangs.16957396>
<http://news.stv.tv/scotland/196833-gang-culture-is-worse-in-the-west/>
- 5) House of Commons, [Home Affairs Select Committee Report on Knife Crime; 7th Report of Session 2008-9](#)
- 6) Head of Public Space Violence at the Home Office can attest to the impact of the research on their work at the time, in particular on TGAP.
- 7) [HM Government *Ending Gang Violence: A Cross Government Report*](#), CM8211, London: Stationery Office, 2011
- 8) Corroborative e-mail correspondence as per comments in Section 4: Senior Social Researcher, Scottish Government. Available from HEI.
- 9) Scottish Parliament Knife Crime Debate, 25 January 2009: Report, available at: [Link](#)
- 10) Community Initiative to Reduce Violence, [6 Month Progress Report](#) and [2nd Annual Report](#)