

Research Project Report:
**Status dogs, young
people and criminalisation:
towards a preventative strategy**

Authors: Professor Gordon Hughes,
Dr Jenny Maher and Claire Lawson

April 2011

Biographies

Professor Gordon Hughes is Chair in Criminology at the Centre for Crime, Law and Justice at Cardiff University. He was previously Professor of Criminology at the Open University. His research interests lie in problem-solving and expertise in crime control; community safety and crime prevention; young people, communities and justice; and criminal and social justice and devolution in the UK. His publications include the following books, *The Politics of Crime and Community* (2007), *Youth Justice* (2003), *Restorative Justice* (2003), *Crime Prevention and Community Safety: New Directions* (2002), *Community and Crime Control: The New Politics of Public Safety* (2002) and *Understanding Crime Prevention* (1998 and 2010 Chinese translation edition).

Jenny Maher is a lecturer and researcher in Criminology at the University of Glamorgan, Cardiff. Her research interests relate to 1) animal abuse, 2) youth violence and 3) youth gangs. She organised the 2010 Cardiff symposium 'Situating Animal Abuse in Criminology' and has co-edited the special journal issue on animal (in *Crime, Law and Social Change*) abuse that emerged from the symposium. Her previous research projects include: the use and abuse of animals among youth groups and gangs, knife crime among young people, a comparative European study on 'peer violence among young people in public space' and 'youth gangs' - the focus of her PhD thesis. She has contributed two chapters ('Animal Abuse' [with H. Pierpoint] and 'Youth Gang Crime') to F. Brookman et al. the *Handbook of Crime* (2010, Willan). She has presented at key national and international conferences.

Claire Lawson is currently undertaking doctoral research at the Centre for Crime, Law and Justice at Cardiff University on the multi-agency responses to the 'dangerous' and 'status' dogs problem in the UK. Her Masters Degree in Criminology examined the work of the RSPCA in the context of crime prevention. She is the RSPCA's External Affairs Manager for Wales and Chair of the Animal Welfare Network for Wales.

Every possible effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this book is accurate at the time of going to press, and the publishers and authors cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, however caused. No responsibility for loss or damage occasioned to any person acting, or refraining from action, as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by the editor, the publishers or any of the authors.

First published in the United Kingdom in 2011 by the RSPCA and Cardiff University.

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction in accordance with the terms and licences issued by the CLA.

© RSPCA and Cardiff University 2011

RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham. RH13 9RS

Cardiff University, Cardiff, Wales. CF10 3XQ

ISBN: 978-1-904815-92-1

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	4
1.1	Contextualising the 'problem'	4
1.2	Key research aims	5
2	Status dogs research literature review	7
2.1	Introduction	7
2.2	Defining key terms	8
2.3	Development of the status dogs problem in the UK	9
2.4	Understanding dog ownership	10
2.5	The link between youth animal abuse and deviant and criminal behaviour	12
2.6	Responding to status dogs	14
2.7	Conclusion	18
3	Interpreting the recorded quantitative data on status dogs: an evidential quagmire	19
3.1	Introduction	19
3.2	Evidence for increase in dog fighting and dangerous dog offences	20
3.3	Evidence for the increase in breeding and negligent ownership of status dogs	20
3.4	Conclusion	21
4	Findings from qualitative fieldwork research: the seven case studies of young people	22
4.1	Introduction	22
4.2	Methodology	23
4.3	Terminology	26
4.4	Dog ownership	27
4.5	Access	29
4.6	Motivations for and influences on ownership	31
4.7	The role of dogs	37
4.8	The humanisation of dogs and canine-isation of youth	37
4.9	Problematic forms of behaviour among dog owners	37
4.10	Breeding	38
4.11	Training	40
4.12	The link to criminality	42
4.13	Responding to status dogs	49
4.14	Lessons for policy and practice to be learnt from the case studies	53
5	Towards a preventative strategy	55
5.1	Introduction	55
5.2	Hard to reach populations, bottom-up accounts and the prevention agenda	55
5.3	The challenge of 'joined-up' expertise and multi-agency preventive strategies	56
5.4	Moving forward	59
	References	60
	Appendices	64
A	Findings from the campaign company project	64
B	Findings from the use and abuse of animals project	68
C	Interview schedule	69



1 Introduction

1.1 Contextualising the 'problem'

- 1.1.1 The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has anecdotal and, to some degree, internal statistical evidence to suggest that in recent years there has been a dramatic increase in individuals owning and using dogs in harmful or criminal behaviour in the UK. In the financial year 2009-10 the Metropolitan Police Service (London) reported that they had seized and dealt with 1152 prohibited and dangerous dogs (RSPCA 2010a) an increase of 60% on the previous year. Between 2004 and 2008 the RSPCA saw a 12-fold increase (ibid) in calls reporting dog-fighting¹. Some 55% of the calls to the RSPCA in 2009 concerning 'dog fighting' referred to youths or 'hoodies' fighting their dogs in the street or park. These so-called 'status dogs' are of certain breeds/types² - both legal and illegal - and often have the label of 'dangerous'³ referring, it would appear, both to other dogs and to humans. Anti-social behaviour with dogs is a widely reported issue that affects many people, mainly in urban areas, and is occasionally associated with 'gang' crime and more generally young people and their peer groups 'on the streets'.
- 1.1.2 The RSPCA's core business is to prevent cruelty to animals and the organisation is the primary, albeit non-governmental, enforcer of animal welfare legislation in England and Wales. The Society's Inspectorate have reported an increase in the numbers of these types of dogs; changes in the situations in and purpose for which they are being kept; and who the owners are. Animal centres have noticed a significant increase in status dog breeds which in itself has presented 'kennel blocking'⁴ and re-homing problems. Meanwhile animal hospitals and clinics have seen a worrying increase in the numbers of these dogs presented for fighting injuries which perhaps backs up the anecdotal evidence that ad hoc street dog fighting - referred to as 'rolling' - is indeed on the increase.
- 1.1.3 Thus far the work of the RSPCA on the issue of status dogs has concentrated on mapping the Society's own experiences, developing a network of enforcers and influencing relevant policies with housing providers. In addition in March 2009 the Metropolitan Police set up a Status Dogs Unit to which the RSPCA ensured an officer worked alongside this Unit specifically on this issue. The Society is also running a re-homing campaign designed to educate the public on the suitability of some of these dogs as pets (RSPCA 2011). In addition ten 'hot spots' have been identified using RSPCA data and reviewed by adding in local authority and police data (such as strays and seizures) across England and Wales where special project groups are being set up across these three bodies to pilot locally designed responses to the use of status dogs in anti-social behaviour. This builds on work already developed in and around the London area and it is hoped by the RSPCA that such interventions can be better evaluated and different models tested.

-
- 1 This definition (from the RSPCA) covers everything from genuine accidental scraps to organised fighting but the majority of incidents concern anti-social behaviour with dogs
 - 2 'Type' has a wider meaning than 'breed'. A Pit Bull Terrier is not a breed recognised in the UK, it is a type (a definition that is wider than breed - see case law 'R v Knightsbridge Crown Court ex parte Dunne; Brock v DPP [1993]'). However for ease of use this document will employ 'breed' to infer 'type' and their crosses.
 - 3 A common perception and term in regular use.
 - 4 The RSPCA explains this term to mean where certain dogs e.g. bull breeds and mastiff types have become more difficult to rehome and until they are rehomed the kennel they occupy is blocked and the centre is unable to accept other animals for rehoming.

- 1.1.4 There is no requirement for a dog licence or permanent ID of a pet dog in the UK. As such there is no precise data on the total number of dogs kept⁵. In terms of status dog breeds there is also no available cross-UK data⁶. The RSPCA is changing the way it records incoming information, investigations and prosecutions but to date there has been no way of effectively extracting all incidents involving these breeds. Data from police, local authorities and housing providers across the UK is problematic. There is no central database, no requirement to record the many levels of information and the data that is collected by, for instance, one authority isn't necessarily able to 'talk' to another if different software and techniques have been utilised. Given the lack of effective statistical data in this sector it is perhaps impossible to quantify the issue. However, in the pursuit of a more evidence-based and dispassionate understanding of the emergence and seemingly dramatic increase in this issue, it may well be productive to both gather and use in-depth qualitative sources of data, supported by the available statistical counts from the relevant authorities. This is the core contribution which this criminological research project seeks to make to both the RSPCA's work in this area and the wider public debate on this 'hot' social problem.
- 1.1.5 Whilst it is not possible to establish direct and absolute causal links, the RSPCA in sponsoring this research project has indicated that it is keen to use social scientifically-informed criminological research and analysis to better understand the causes of harmful and criminal behaviours in relation to this 'problem' or more accurately set of problems around so-called status dogs in today's Britain. It is hoped that any findings from this project will be crucial in the development of further research, policies and activities in the fight to tackle this problem and protect the welfare of these dogs. In particular there may be scope as a result of the new knowledge gleaned from the predominantly qualitative research findings alongside the systematic review of existing research and of quantitative data sets to move beyond 'reactive', often punitive responses to a more strategic, preventative approach.

1.2 Key research aims

- 1.2.1 Building on the above contextual insights into this 'hard to know' problem, this research project aims to:
- Provide the first comprehensive systematic review of the available international research evidence and literature on 'status dogs' and the possible links between ownership of these types of dogs and young people's involvement in offending and anti-social behaviour alongside issues of welfare, neglect and cruelty to dogs (section 2);
 - Provide an overview and critical review of the publicly available quantitative data sets on the problem in Britain. This aspect of research will look at what data is currently available from NGOs and statutory authorities and also to highlight what data should be recorded in future to determine trends within this sector (section 3);
 - Provide in-depth qualitative evidence from the fieldwork undertaken with young people, variously linked to the status dog issue. This is the key original empirical contribution which it seeks to make to the public understanding of the problem. It is also likely to be the most challenging if not controversial aspect of the project in that it seeks to give voice, non-judgmentally, to the perceptions (and possibly mis-perceptions) of young people often engaged in the problematic practices which bring them in conflict with the law and public authorities. This aspect of the research will focus on

5 A number of sources estimate that approximately a quarter of households own a dog, although breed types are not identified, see Murray et al (2010), Upton et al (2010) and Welsh Assembly Government (2011).

6 Apart from prohibited types that have been exempted and entered into police and/or Local Authority databases. There are issues with this data however, plus it doesn't, of course, encompass legal breeds.



6 Research Project Report: Status dogs, young people and criminalisation: towards a preventative strategy

seven case studies on extremely 'hard-to-reach' individuals selected for their involvement within the status dog problem alongside several experienced 'gatekeepers'⁷. This will feature 'deep end' individuals with convictions for dog fighting, cruelty and/or those involved with the breeding of these dogs as well as those involved with gangs with dogs⁸ (section 4). Alongside this original body of qualitative evidence, a comparison is made with other qualitative research and in particular with the only existing cross-sectional survey to date of young people and status dogs which was undertaken by The Campaign Company in London (Appendix 1);

- On the basis of the above inter-related activities, the report concludes by proposing some options for change arising out of the research findings both for the RSPCA and other key agencies in this emergent multi-agency field, including the promotion of preventive strategies and tactics to address this complex problem (section 5).

7 We use the term 'gatekeeper' here to describe those individuals who, through their position of trust and respect among status dog owners, facilitated access to these hard-to-reach youths for interviewing. Gatekeepers played a significant role in this project, in terms of shaping the research, and facilitating accessing to and co-operation from the youths.

8 It is likely that some of these individuals may hold views and indeed have 'an agenda' which regulatory and law enforcement agencies will find both inaccurate and troubling. As a consequence, a 'health warning' may be required when reading this 'evidence'. We need to be clear that our task in this research is not to adjudicate between the truth claims of the various parties; rather we aim to present rarely heard voices 'on their own terms'. Obviously much more systematic research and cross-cutting evidence is needed to get at the fuller and more accurate picture of this social problem and its control. We await further research, for example, on the processes of regulation on the ground which we plan to undertake in the near future (see also Hughes and Lawson, 2011).

2 Status dogs research literature review

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Despite the growing body of literature in the US, the study of violence against animals has been largely ignored in UK criminology and similar scientific disciplines. Despite a half century of research that has established animal cruelty as an important indicator of mental health issues (American Psychiatric Association [APA] 1994), a contributing factor to interpersonal violence (Arluke et al. 1999; Ascione 2001), and a serious offence in its own right, very few studies have examined in depth the specific forms of animal cruelty (Green 2002). Yet, these studies are crucial for understanding further the complex relationship between animal cruelty and human violence (Hensley and Tallichet 2009).
- 2.1.2 In the past five years, the rising concern over irresponsible dog ownership in the UK, and in particular, the ownership and use of 'status dogs', 'weapon dogs', 'bling dogs', or 'combat dogs' among young people has clearly entered both the public sphere (evident in the increased reports of youth street dog fighting to the RSPCA 2010b) and governmental discourse and policy (evident in the development of the Metropolitan Police Status Dog Unit (SDU) and provision in the Policing and Crime Act 2009 to prohibit gangs using status dogs in public). This concern has largely been fuelled by high profile media reports (Williams 2010; Mail Online 2008; BBC News 2006) and TV documentaries (Channel 4 News 2010) on dogs used as weapons to threaten or injure both people and other animals (Hardman 2010), linked to youth gangs, violence and homicide. The problematic use of status dogs by young people has been recognised and reported on by animal welfare agencies (e.g. RSPCA and Dogs Trust), Criminal Justice Agencies (e.g. Metropolitan Police Status Dogs Unit), health professionals (e.g. NHS) and local agencies (e.g. local councils, Park Wardens and Housing Association). In some parts of the UK, and in particular London, status dogs are firmly identified as a social problem of inner city council estates (Wandsworth Council 2010).
- 2.1.3 Academic literature and research is limited on this relatively recent UK phenomenon - much of what we know comes from the news media. These latter accounts are not necessarily reliable or accurate, but they do provide some context to the problems identified by agency workers (Davis 2010; Barkham, 2009; Philby 2009; BBC News 2006). This research literature review focuses on academic and professional published work relevant to status dogs, for example, dangerous dogs, dog bites, dog fighting, the relationship between dogs and their owners and more generally animal abuse and its links to criminality and interpersonal violence. This review will provide both a broad and more accurate account of what is known evidentially about the issues surrounding status dogs. In particular dog fighting, dangerous dogs and dog bite data has been used to evidence the rise of status dogs in the UK, and thus such evidence requires further close scrutiny⁹.
- 2.1.4 This section is organised as follows. A definition of key terms is presented first, to clarify the focus of the discussion and research, followed by a brief historical account of the development of status dogs in the UK. The discussion then focuses on the body of research seeking to identify the complex links between status dogs (and dogs more generally) and their owners in terms of social development, anti-social behaviour, criminality and interpersonal violence. Finally, the available research literature on responses to status dogs in the UK from the formal criminal justice agencies, local public authority agencies and voluntary, 'third sector' groups is discussed.

9 To date there has been one preliminary study on status dogs in the UK (Maher and Pierpoint, 2011), most of the evidence comes from observations by people on the ground and speculative links to dog bites, dangerous dogs, animal welfare and shelter data and veterinary caseload.



2.2 Defining key terms

2.2.1 Much of the terminology used to discuss the phenomenon - such as status dogs, dangerous dogs, weapon dogs, dog fighting and dog rolling - is now part of mainstream mass media-influenced public opinion. It is essential to clarify and differentiate between these terms, as they are often confusingly and interchangeably used. In previous decades, reference to 'status', 'accessory' or 'fashion' dogs usually implied the use of certain small breeds of dog, linked to the rich and famous (e.g. the Queen's Corgi, Paris Hilton's Chihuahua), to confer this status and image to their owners¹⁰ (Hirschman 2002). More recently the term 'status dog' has referred to the use of certain 'tough' and 'illegal' breeds¹¹ of dog by young people to confer an image of toughness and the threat of aggression:

The term 'status dog' describes the ownership of certain types of dogs which are used by individuals to intimidate and harass members of public. These dogs are traditionally, but not exclusively, associated with young people on inner city estates and those involved in criminal activity (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs [DEFRA] 2010:4).

2.2.2 The term 'weapon dog' is a variation of status dog, which is specifically used to describe dogs 'used in crime and as weapons for intimidation' (Greater London Authority [GLA] 2009: n/p). The GLA identified youth gangs and violent youths who train 'status' dogs to attack people, in effect replacing the need to carry a knife or other weapon. These dogs are somewhat distinct from other trained attack/guard dogs used in many professions in that they are unlikely to have received formal training¹². Section 10 of the Dangerous Dog Act 1991 (DDA) ensures that 'constables or persons in the service of the crown' are exempt from the Act but only when the dog is being used for a lawful purpose. The Guard Dogs Act 1975 (although many provisions were never brought into force) provides some additional requirements for the conditions in which such dogs must be kept.

2.2.3 Status dogs are often referred to as 'dangerous dogs', although this is not necessarily the case. Dangerous dogs are specifically defined in legislation as any dog that is 'dangerously out of control':

a dog shall be regarded as dangerously out of control on any occasion on which there are grounds for reasonable apprehension that it will injure any person, whether or not it actually does so, but references to a dog injuring a person or there being grounds for reasonable apprehension that it will do so do not include references to any case in which the dog is being used for a lawful purpose by a constable or a person in the service of the Crown (section 10(3) of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 - DEFRA 2010:3).

2.2.4 Separate to the definition of dangerous dogs (identified by some as 'deed' rather than 'breed'¹³), under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991(s1) there are four banned or illegal types of dog in the UK - Pit Bull [PBT], Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro¹⁴. These dogs, traditionally bred for dog fighting, were

10 There is a long history of breeding dogs for specific function and appearance (e.g. toy category of dogs), the purchase of pedigree for their lineage and the purchase of rare and unusual pets for status (Hirschman 2002).

11 This often refers to bull breeds and their crosses (e.g. Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Pit Bull Terrier, Mastiff) and other large breeds and their crosses (e.g. Rottweiler, German Shepherd, Akita).

12 Perhaps a key point here is that at least some 'dog professionals' are more likely to utilise or be aware of positive reinforcement training methods whereas young people with status dogs are unlikely to be aware of such knowledge and methods, therefore more likely to employ negative reinforcement training methods.

13 A common use term to emphasis the breed's 'innocence'. It is disputed for its ability to reflect the perceived flaws with the DDA however and thus some seek to address this by saying that 'much of the problem is at the other end of the lead'.

14 Exemptions can be made by the courts if they decide the dog poses little threat to public safety and the owner complies with a number of conditions of exemption and the dog is placed on the Index of Exempted Dogs (a register).

prohibited in 1991 as the then government wished to control their circulation within the UK following an increase in their popularity as pets and media coverage of some 'serious' attacks¹⁵. Prohibited dogs under s1 are identified by their confirmation to their 'breed standard' and if they show a sufficient number of those conformities/characteristics (for example with the PBT it is the 1977 American Dog Breeders Association standard set out in the Pit Bull Gazette, vol 1, issue 3). Some involved in identifying dogs prohibited under the DDA acknowledge that this is not an ideal system as it can be subjective, however in recent years there have been moves to try and ensure a consistency of approach as evidenced by the introduction of Dog Legislation Officers (DLOs) in the majority of police forces, all of whom have been trained and assessed by the same team.

- 2.2.5 Animal abuse has been identified as a consequence of status dog ownership. Animal abuse encompasses a broad spectrum of forms of behaviour that span from barely noticeable offences to those that become widely publicised. A commonly used definition of animal abuse proposed by Ascione (1993:228) is 'socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering or distress to and/or death of an animal'. Dog fighting is prohibited under section 8 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Dog fighting was first banned in England and Wales under the Humane Act of 1835. It is defined as "an occasion on which a protected animal is placed with an animal, or with a human, for the purpose of fighting, wrestling or baiting" (Animal Welfare Act 2006, s.8).¹⁶ Organised dog fighting (largely covert, well organised and linked to serious criminality) is distinct from 'dog rolling' or 'chaining' (terms given to street-dog fighting with status dogs) in that the latter involves 'impromptu public scraps' and is less likely to be motivated by significant financial gain (RSPCA 2009b). In the US this is known as 'street' dog fighting - by which they mean 'informal and "pick up" dog fighting rather than professional dog fighting' (Humane Society of the United States [HSUS] 2008).

2.3 Development of the status dogs problem in the UK

- 2.3.1 Prior to the emergence of status dogs, dog fighting (Panorama 2007), irresponsible dog ownership (The Guardian 2006) and dog attacks especially on children (BBC News 2005) were highlighted as serious public concerns in the UK, giving rise to changing social attitudes towards the regulation of dogs and dog owners (Animal Welfare Act 2006). The specific focus on status dogs is evident in the media from 2006, among animal welfare organisations from 2008 and political discourse and policy from 2009 (Parliament 2009). In March 2009 the Metropolitan Police Service launched the Status Dog Unit in recognition of the growing numbers of Pit Bull type dogs being used in London in criminal activities. It would appear that the public concern over status dogs developed initially out of anxiety from the police and the RSPCA over the negligent ownership and breeding of illegal and prohibited dog breeds by young people and more recently the use of these dogs as weapons in offending (including guarding criminal assets) and for protection and illegal entertainment by gang members (Robinson 2010). The RSPCA (2009c) identified an upsurge in the status dog population in parts of the UK, leading to a significant reduction in the value of these dogs and, consequently, an increase in the abuse they experience.

15 There are many problems identified with the breed-specific legislation some of which are discussed below. The rationale for banning these specific types to protect human welfare (due to their traditionally being bred for dog fighting) is significantly flawed according to Collier (2006) as Pit bulls, for example, bred for fighting have also been bred for their stability and loyalty towards humans (e.g. their non-aggression to humans - which was important to ensure people in the pit were not injured).

16 Some academics strongly argue for a broader definition of animal abuse to include 'legal' and 'unintentional' abuse. For example, Beirne and Messerschmidt (2006) suggest animal abuse can be "physical, psychological, or emotional", may involve "active maltreatment or passive neglect or omission", may be "direct, or indirect, intentional or unintentional" and may include behaviour which is socially acceptable (e.g. punitive training techniques, over-breeding).



2.3.2 Widespread status dog ownership has been documented across the US - both in terms of dog fighting and youth street gang ownership of dogs (HSUS 2008). It has been suggested that this phenomenon has transferred in no small measure from the US 'gang' or 'gangster rap' culture to UK youth culture (See FIFA 2011 for Wayne Rooney with a large bull breed¹⁷ and the PS3/Xbox 360 game Dead to Rights: Retribution¹⁸). While both 'tough' status dogs and dog fighting have been part of some subcultures for decades, the nature and form of the current status dog problem is dissimilar to the well organised international dog fighting rings (Panorama 2007) and the cross-breeding and ownership of designer pets (BBC 2008) that had previously been identified in the UK¹⁹. The link between status dogs and youth peer groups and gangs is tentative (see below), but not unexpected given both issues are newly emerging in the UK and appear to have taken hold in the same communities (especially in inner city deprived 'social housing' estate areas in large cities - London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Cardiff) (Maher 2010).

2.4 Understanding dog ownership

2.4.1 The relationship between man and 'his best friend', the dog, has received much attention in literature, art and academic work. Some of the studies discussed below may be useful for understanding the motivation for and nature of status dog ownership by young people. Specifically, US research literature in the social and psychological sciences which explored the reasons for and benefits of pet ownership for humans, and European studies which explore what is probably one of the most contentious issues in the dog-human relationship - dog bites and attacks - are discussed below.

2.4.2 Given the value of pet consumerism in the Western world²⁰, numerous marketing and business studies have been conducted to further our understanding of the motivation for dog ownership. The majority of these studies have been conducted among pet owners in the general US population, but may be useful for understanding young people's ownership of dogs in the UK. Haschman (1994) suggests six reasons for ownership: animals as objects in the consumer's environment, animals as ornaments (e.g. kept for its aesthetic value), animals as status symbols, animals as avocations (e.g. exhibiting pets), animals as equipment (e.g. protectors, guides, therapy), animals as extensions of their owners ego who act as a form of self-definition (e.g. macho dog to assert masculinity) and, most commonly, animals as companions (extension of family, friends). Beverland et al. (2008:490) identified only two types of ownership motivation - pets as companions to love versus pets as toys, status markers and brands. The latter, they suggest, forms the "dark side of pet ownership". They argue that the motivation for ownership influences how people tend to relate to their pets. Beverland et al. (2008) differentiate between intrinsic (activities innately satisfying) and extrinsic (behaviour that earns reward and acknowledgement from others - e.g. the dark side of pet ownership) goals of ownership. In particular, extrinsically motivated ownership has been related to health and behavioural problems associated with cross-breeding dogs to make them more visibly appealing to humans and their subsequent disposal when they are no longer fashionable. Maher and Pierpoint (2011) identified that the main reason given by young people for their dog ownership (the majority of which were status type dogs) was companionship and socialisation with the dog - generally an intrinsic goal of ownership.

17 See advertisement/promo available at <http://www.epltalk.com/fifa-11-tv-commercial-starring-wayne-rooney-video-24641>

18 <http://gamerinvestments.com/video-game-stocks/index.php/2009/12/07/dead-to-rights-retribution-ps3-xbox360-dog-fighting-trailer/>

19 It should be noted that there are other cultural contexts to dog fighting in the UK for instance the importation of such by Pakistani communities - dog fighting is socially acceptable in Pakistan.

20 Pet industry is valued at 2 billion in the UK (Pet Food Choice 2008) and 45.5 billion in the US (American Pet Products Association 2010).

The second most common reason for ownership was using the dog as a weapon (i.e. reactive and proactive) and the third, for status - which would largely fall into the extrinsic or dark side of pet ownership. Other extrinsic motivations for ownership were identified - such as breeding dogs (for increased aggression/size and financial gain) and fighting (for status and entertainment) (see Appendix B for further details).

- 2.4.3 Dog ownership, especially intrinsically motivated ownership, can be very beneficial for people. As far back as the 1820s animals were believed to play a significant role in child socialisation, particularly in developing empathy (Grier 1999). Detailed studies on child development have identified the positive impact of pet ownership on children and young people. From a developmental perspective, higher attachment in children to pets is linked with higher scores of empathy and pro-social orientation and is positively correlated with feelings of importance, social competence and self-esteem when compared to non-owners (Vizek-Vidovic et al. 1999). This research indicates that the child-pet relationship has an impact upon the cognitive and social emotional development of children; however, this positive impact is mainly in periods of preadolescence and early adolescence. In fact, Melson (cited in Vizek-Vidovic et al. 1999) argues that strong attachment in later adolescence may interfere with personal development and is indicative of problems with social interaction with peers. More generally, Beverland et al. identified a positive influence on human social interaction as:

other research shows that dogs serve important human to human social functions as well...dogs serve to facilitate interaction among the previously unacquainted and to establish trust between newly acquainted (2008:459).

- 2.4.4 Sanders and Hirschman (1996:114) support this by arguing:

animals add to and enhance our skills, expand situations in which we can achieve status, heighten our feelings of pride, and so forth. As possessions, animals augment positive self-definitions...placed in the position of enhancing the relative feelings of worth and control cherished by their human associates

- 2.4.5 The RSPCA also identifies "a multitude of benefits, from being good for a young person to learn responsibility, to helping them socialise, mix with other people; a dog is a great tool for all of that" (Williams, 2010:n/p). Bennett and Rohlf (2006) found that owners who shared activities and trained their dogs experienced less dog behavioural problems, which had significant benefits for both the companion dog and owner.

- 2.4.6 However, the positive socialisation and interaction among youth dog owners may be dependent on the breed of dog they own. In particular, two studies carried out in the Bahamas and the US explored the experiences of owning a dog with a negative image (Tyrone et al. 2005; Twining et al. 2000). In the Bahamas study, the majority of Pit Bull owners - mostly under 19 years of age - reported that the negative publicity around Pit Bulls had stigmatised them. The negative stereotype could be potentially detrimental to both the owner and dog (Tyrone et al. 2005). Hearne (1991) conducted ethnographic interviews with 28 Pit Bull owners in the US and found the negative portrayal of these dogs in the media led to the depiction of Pit Bull owners as dangerous and deviant:

these reports often described pit bull owners as white thugs or poor urban blacks and latinos who kept their dogs in dope dens and fed them raw meat to make them as mean as possible (cited in Twining et al. 2000:1).

- 2.4.7 This negative stereotyping of the status dogs and their young owners appears to be emerging in the UK and is evident in the types of labels and names given to these animals in the media (e.g. 'dangerous', 'weapon' or 'combat' dogs) and the labelling and stigma generated by the legislation that bans certain breeds (i.e. Dangerous Dog Act 1991). These owners are portrayed as being irresponsible, aggressive, macho and



abusive to their dogs in a variety of abhorrent ways in news media coverage. According to Kaspersson (2008), one of the results of banning the Pit Bull and similar prohibited types has been to increase their attractiveness to the 'wrong' (irresponsible) people. In doing this, pet ownership especially of bull types becomes more difficult for the 'right' owners. Harding (2010) agrees that it may be the pariah status of these stigmatised dogs that ultimately makes them attractive to youths. However, as the literature suggests, perhaps the negative experience of owning these dogs also plays a significant role in exacerbating the isolation and stigmatisation that is said to characterise these young owners. At present we lack the body of accumulated ethnographic research on the sociology of street cultures and the lived experiences of young people in these cultures to draw any reliable conclusions. In turn this dearth of criminological research adds further weight to the initial case studies described in section 4.

2.4.8 Let us now examine the European research to date on dog attacks. It was noted above that the negative image of status dogs and the need for dangerous dog legislation is largely linked to the fear of dog attacks - the latter phenomenon remains one of the key difficulties in the relationship between humans and dogs. The reported link between dog attacks and status dogs is problematic. The research literature on dog bites raises questions over the accuracy of the 'dangerous' dog and 'irresponsible' owner image portrayed in popular debates. There are challenges to the evidence that banned breeds are responsible for the majority of dog attacks and that these incidents are stranger-attacks by dogs on the street (as suggested by the official version of the status dogs problem). Keuster et al. (2006) report that dangerous dogs were not responsible for the majority of dog bites incidents in Belgium. When the number of registered dogs was compared to dog bite breeds, there was an over-representation of German shepherds, rather than 'status' type dogs. The majority of incidents recorded in the research occurred at home by a familiar dog. The Dutch government recently removed a 25 year ban on Pit Bulls when it was identified that the ban had failed to decrease the number of bite incidents (Delise cited in Kaspersson 2008). Dog bite research in Spain (Rosado et al. 2009) found bite incidents were predominantly on young males, associated with medium to large breeds known to the bite victim. The summer months and specific incidents such as human interference with hurt or fighting dogs were identified as common variables in dog bites. US data found Rottweilers, followed by Pit Bulls accounted for 60% of fatalities from dog attacks in 2007 and 2008, the majority of which (60%) were unrestrained dogs on the owner's property (Sacks et al. 2000). The same research also highlighted that the most dangerous breeds responsible for bites varied considerably over time, for example, German Shepherds were top of the list in 1975-80. Kaspersson (2008) suggests breed is not a very good indicator for aggression, as the variation between individuals within the breed varies widely and the identification and recording of breed type is unreliable. Dog bite statistics are not reliable for establishing a clear link between status dogs and dangerous dogs or irresponsible ownership.

2.5 The link between youth animal abuse and deviant and criminal behaviour

2.5.1 The relationship between animals and interpersonal violence has been highlighted repeatedly in US research (Felthous and Kellert 1987; Hensley and Tallichet 2009 and Wright and Hensley 2003). The Pittsburgh longitudinal study, for example, found that cruelty to animals was one of four factors associated with persistent aggressive and criminal behaviour (Kelley et al. 1997). Since the 1970's the American FBI have identified animal abuse as an indicator of psychopathic and serious violent behaviour, for example, linked with serial killers (Lockwood and Church 1998). The link between young people and animal abuse has been established by psychologists and sociologists, who view animal abuse as an indicator of mental health problems and problematic behaviour and a risk factor for future interpersonal violence (Wilson and Norris 2003; Beirne 2004; APA 1994). Since 1984 (APA 1984/1994), animal abuse has been recognised as a symptom of conduct disorder and has since been linked to serious violent offenders (Loeber et al. 1998).

Youths who bully or were bullied are reportedly more likely to engage in animal abuse (Henry and Sanders 2007). A study on college students found that those who participated in animal cruelty or who observed animal cruelty had higher scores on the self-report delinquency scale than those who neither observed nor participated in abuse (Henry 2004). McVie's (2007) study of youth transition and crime found that although animal abuse was less commonly identified than other types of violence, the frequency of this offending was similar to other violent offences. Animal abusers were identified as dissimilar to non-violent offenders, but shared similar traits to all other violent offenders. Overall, McVie (2007) proposed that youth animal abusers were a highly problematic, risk prone and vulnerable group, who demonstrated more impulsive and risky behaviours - including involvement in gangs, alcohol and drug consumption and self-harm and had less commitment to school. Animal abusers were significantly more likely than any other group of offenders in the study to report being influenced by their friends. McVie (2007) posits these findings indicate that abusers are entrenched in a culture of violence.

2.5.2 Two explanations for the link between animal abuse and youth criminality and violence are proposed - that animal abuse is generalised (generalisation hypothesis) or progressive (graduation hypothesis). The graduation hypothesis suggests animal abuse precedes more serious interpersonal violence (Lockwood and Ascione 1998). The deviance generalisation hypothesis argues that animal abuse may precede or follow other offences, as it is just one element of a unified phenomenon of antisocial and violent behaviour, where the only real difference is the species victimised (Arluke et al. 1999). The latter perspective is supported by a small number of studies which establish a relationship between animal abuse or the ownership of status dogs and general deviant and criminal behaviour. Barnes et al (2006) study on the ownership of what he terms 'high-risk dogs'²¹ identified an important link between dog ownership and animal cruelty, child abuse and neglect, as well as other offences. Owners of high-risk dogs had significantly more criminal convictions (for aggressive crimes, drugs, alcohol, domestic violence, crimes involving children, firearms convictions and major and minor traffic citations) than owners of licensed low-risk dogs suggesting that 'ownership of high-risk dogs can be a significant marker for general deviance' (2006:1616). The choice to own a 'socially deviant' animal perhaps indicates the owner holds a deviant identity²². Three types of offending were identified by an RSPCA vet as resulting from ownership of status dogs (RSPCA 2009c). First, the ownership of banned breeds can involve neglect, abandonment, road accidents and traditional cruelties in training. Second, the indiscriminate breeding of dogs for financial gain may result in animal abuse due to congenital abnormalities and neglect. Finally, the incidence of dog fighting and training dogs to intimidate people as part of gang culture and criminal activity.

2.5.3 Degenhardt's (2005) statistical analysis of animal abuse arrestee data from the Chicago Police Department identified that these offenders (predominantly male aged 18-24 years) in comparison to non-animal offenders, were more likely to carry and use firearms (26%) in the commission of other offences, and be involved drug sales (70%) and criminal street gangs (59%). Green's (2002) study on arrested animal freeze-killers²³ found that they were also arrested more than five times for crimes of violence and almost three times for property offences than the control group taken from a cross-section of the population. His findings support the generalisation hypothesis of animal abuse, beyond violence. The positive correlation between animal abuse and criminality may be because the behaviour is the result of the same underlying causes. Green suggests

21 Barnes et al (2006) noted the difficulty of defining high-risk dogs and identifying their owners. Status dogs would fit into the category of high risk dogs due to their potential to inflict harm on others.

22 In using the term 'socially deviant dog' we are not of course seeking to impute human qualities on an animal. Rather the term refers to the label often attached by other people to such dogs and not least as the property of their folk devil owner.

23 i.e. an illegal type of poaching involving spotlight/deer freezing to kill deer easily - defined as unsporting and thus constitutes abuse.



dog fighting may also fit in with this hypothesis in that the activity is exciting and may prove financially lucrative, but is also risky due to the risk of apprehension and suffering financial loss. Dog fighting is discussed in more detail below, due to the suggested link to status dog ownership (e.g. rolling/chaining) and the extensive literature available on this issue.

- 2.5.4 The University of Chicago project (2008), through interviews with dog fighters (at various levels) and focus groups with children aged 9-16, established that dog fighting is an activity secondary to other street violence, often used to resolve street/gang conflicts and for financial gain. Participation in dog fighting often began inadvertently or through a relative or friend. The age of onset was 9 years, at which age young children found the tough image associated with the activity appealing. Aggressive masculinity and status have been central to the culture of dog fighting (Gibson 2005). For 'dogmen', the term given to the dog fighters in the pit, 'the important thing is not so much to kill the other dog as to be game enough to try' (Drabble 1948). Evans et al. (cited in Ortiz n/d) suggest this is a way to 'validate their masculine identity while remaining only on the periphery of actual violence'. Ortiz proposes a typology of dog fighters: a) the professional (characterised by significant financial gain, involved at the national or international level, breed and fight dog, very secretive), b) the hobbyist (characterised by urban location, organised at regional level for entertainment and financial gain, fewer dogs owned and less likely to breed) and c) the streetfighter (characterised by the urban location, small financial gain, significant status enhancement, impromptu fights ignoring 'rules' and 'respect' for breed - includes new forms such as 'trunking' or 'fight to the death' in abandoned buildings). Ortiz indicates the streetfighter has increased in the US over the past 25 years and links this directly to the rise in youth gangs. Status dog owners involved in dog fighting would predominantly fall into this category, evidenced by the desire for dogs bred for size rather than gameness and, in direct contrast to professionals and hobbyists, human aggression is desired in the breed (to protect person or illegal merchandise [Ortiz n/d]).

2.6 Responding to status dogs

- 2.6.1 The response to status dogs across the UK²⁴ has largely involved regulation and enforcement through legislation, controls and the use of specialised police officers (DLOs) and units alongside the non-government agency of enforcement, the RSPCA. More recently intervention and prevention measures have been introduced which build upon the continuing efforts of animal welfare agencies to educate people and change attitudes towards animal ownership and animal abuse. Owning a status dog per se is not illegal²⁵; however, there are a number of ways in which legislation and controls can be utilised to manage irresponsible dog ownership and associated problems among young people. Table 1 (see below) sets out the relevant legislation and identifies the corresponding behaviour it regulates. The Policing and Crime Act 2009, alone, specifically tackles the issue of status dogs and young people, with particular focus on the link between status dogs and gang behaviour (DEFRA 2010).

24 The RSPCA only operates within England and Wales.

25 Unless it is a prohibited type.

Table 1: Legislation and controls available to regulate irresponsible dog ownership in England and Wales

Legislation and controls	Regulation
Police and Crime Act 2009	s.34-35 Injunction against gang members being in charge of an animal e.g. dog in a public place, if it has been proven that the gang member has engaged in, or encouraged or assisted, gang-related violence (DEFRA 2010:6).
Animal Welfare Act 2006	s.4-8 Prevent unnecessary suffering. Including s.8 - it is a summary offence to cause an animal fight to take place, knowingly receive money, publicise, provide information, bet, take part, keep or train an animal for fighting or keep any premises for use in an animal fight. It is also an offence to attend a fight or supply, publish or show video recordings of animal fight (unless the fight is outside the UK or before HMSO 2006). s.9-s12 promotes animal welfare, including s.9 which offers the option of prevention before abuse has taken place.
Dangerous Dog Act 1991 (Including Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Act 1997)	s.1-2 Possession, sale or breeding ²⁶ of a prohibited type of dog. s.3 Dog dangerously out of control in public place or place to which the dog is not allowed to be ²⁷ .
Housing Act 1996 & Crime and Disorder Act 1998	s.153A-D ASBI can be issued if anti-social behaviour is housing-related. s.1b - ASBO can be issued if person acts in an anti-social manner - e.g. is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons (Home Office 2010).
Offences Against the Person Act 1861	s.20 unlawful and malicious wounding or inflicting any grievous bodily harm upon any other person, either with or without any weapon or instrument (Crown Prosecution Service 2010).
Dog Control Orders Regulations 2006	Places restrictions on: dog fouling, dogs in public space, where dogs can be allowed off-lead, multiple dog walking (Replaced Dog bye-laws - Control Orders can be made at a local level by a local authority or a parish council) (DEFRA 2006).
Tenancy Agreements	May involve compulsory registration and micro-chipping of dogs: Wandsworth Council was the first to bring in a compulsory dog micro-chipping policy - all tenants and leaseholders must microchip their dogs and register on a borough-wide database or they will be in breach of their tenancy and lease agreement (Wandsworth Council 2010).
Guard Dogs Act 1975	s.1 It is a summary offence for a person to use, or permit the use, of a guard dog to protect any premises unless a handler capable of controlling the dog is also present (unless the dog is secure) (Crown Prosecution Service 2010).
Dogs Act 1871	s.2 allows for the courts to order the control or destruction of a dog if the dog is considered dangerous - including dog attacks in a private place ²⁸ .

26 This list is not exhaustive and there are other offences contained within the Act

27 Also see the definition for 'dangerously out of control' s10 DDA

28 This is by civil complaint and not criminal prosecution therefore not suitable in cases of serious injuries to people. Also 'private place' is only where people have implied access.



- 2.6.2 The Dangerous Dogs Act (DDA) 1991 is the key piece of legislation used to regulate the ownership and use of status dogs (i.e. illegal types, dog attacks and using the dog to threaten a person). The DDA 1991 is greatly criticised as being a particularly ineffective and ill-conceived piece of legislation. For example, Kaspersson (2008) sees the DDA as resulting from a moral panic (Good and Ben-Yehuda 1994), in which the dog, as 'folk devil' (symptom), is the focus rather than the irresponsible owner (cause). The enforcement of the DDA is particularly problematic according to the RSPCA (2010b), as evidenced by a rise rather than a decrease in banned dogs in the UK²⁹. Enforcement and regulation of dangerous dogs is compromised by the difficulties of identifying banned types and the excessive costs³⁰ of enforcing s.1 of the DDA. At the time of writing this report, DEFRA has completed a summary analysis of the responses (but not yet formally responded) to a public consultation on the DDA (DEFRA 2010) - they are considering policy and practical measures to tackle the issues raised but there appears no real appetite amongst Ministers³¹ to consolidate legislation to curb problematic status dogs and their owners (unlike the case in Scotland and Northern Ireland).
- 2.6.3 The Animal Welfare Act (2006) is central to the regulation of the dog's welfare (e.g. dog fighting, abuse and neglect associated for status dog ownership). This legislation is proposed as the first piece of legislation that 'aims to have a genuinely preventative effect', as it confers greater discretion to enforcers to intervene in and prevent animal abuse (Robinson 2010:6). As animal abuse is not a reportable offence (e.g. the police do not have to compile statistical reports on it), it is difficult to assess how effective the legislation or enforcement of legislation actually is³². Pierpoint and Maher (2010) identify insufficient enforcement of animal welfare legislation due to multiple factors, such as the limited role of the police in the identification and prosecution of abuse cases. According to the RSPCA (2010c), the need to ensure the resources are available for enforcing current laws is more pressing than the need for new laws regulating the problem.
- 2.6.4 Sections of the Housing Act 1996, Crime and Disorder Act 1998; Offences Against the Person Act 1861; Dog Control Orders Regulations 2006 and Guard Dogs Act 1871 regulate the impact of irresponsible dog ownership and use upon the individual and community. Local authorities, particularly in London, have used Anti Social Behaviour Orders, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Tenancy Agreements to address the issue of status dogs and anti-social behaviour concerns at a local level (GLA 2009; Home Office 2010). Through the development of tenancy agreements, which makes it compulsory for owners in some localities to register and micro-chip their dogs, the Housing Association have become enforcers through the monitoring of dog owners on a borough/area-wide database. While the police and RSPCA are the main enforcers, the responsibility is also falling increasingly to other agencies to engage in a multi-agency approach to the status dog problem; an example of which is the London Dangerous Dog Forum (LDDF)³³ developed in 2008 (Metropolitan Police Authority 2009) and the RSPCA's 2009 (see RSPCA 2009a) and 2010 Status Dogs Summits. The Status Dog Unit, part of the LDDF, is a dedicated police unit set up in the Metropolitan

29 This rise could be due to the continual recreation of PBTs from the basic root stock (i.e. crossing staffies and mastiffs). There is a market for these dogs and while they are 'fashionable' people will continue to recreate them.

30 The estimated cost of £2.65 million in 2010-11 for boarding dogs seized in the Metropolitan Police Service alone (Metropolitan Police Authority 2010).

31 This refers to Ministers in Westminster. Animal Welfare, as a policy area, was formally devolved to the National Assembly for Wales following the referendum of 3rd March 2011. Any successor legislation to the DDA will need to be replicated in both countries if it goes beyond public safety and contains welfare measures.

32 Various RSPCA data sources are somewhat helpful but provide an incomplete picture.

33 The LDDF is brings together the GLA, local authorities, police and welfare organisations in a bid to address the underlying issues backed up with enforcement by SDU officers. Involves various strands such as education, welfare, public affairs, responsible ownership, joint initiatives and legal processes are being progressed (Metropolitan Police Authority 2009).

Police Authority in 2009 to specifically address the status and dangerous dog problem in London (there are now two further specialist units around the country in West Midlands and Merseyside). As discussed previously, the SDU has a central role in identifying offenders (dog and human) and enforcing legislation. For the rest of England and Wales, under the DDA 1991, only specifically trained DLOs are suitably trained to identify prohibited dogs (Home Office 2010). Most recently forensic experts, through developments in dog DNA technology to match the dog's blood to that on the clothing (not identify breed or type), have been used to convict a gang member who used his dogs to 'bring down' his victim, before stabbing him to death (Channel 4 News 2010).

- 2.6.5 There is a strong case to be made that a proactive commitment to 'prevention' of animal abuse has been a somewhat marginal concern relative to enforcement and protection in the work, past and present, of the leading animal protection agency in the UK, namely the RSPCA (Lawson, 2010, Hughes and Lawson, 2011). However, the need for a multi-agency (e.g. animal welfare agencies, youth services, police, local authorities), multi-strategy (education, communication, prevention, intervention, legislative) and multi-focus (animal, individual and community welfare) approach to status dogs has been highlighted by the RSPCA in its recent claims that 'it is clear that animal welfare concerns cannot be tackled in isolation of the social ones' and 'perhaps focus should be on engaging with the public...bring people on side and challenging attitudes and behaviour' (Robinson, 2010:6). In turn both the professionals and youths in Maher and Pierpoint's (2011) study identified the need to reduce ignorance through education, as the key response to the problematic ownership and use of dogs. McVie (2007) suggests that her research demonstrates that animal abuse prevention should be 'mainstreamed' alongside other forms of violence education for young people, through group work that challenges attitudes and behaviours. In particular, she proposes an early adolescence prevention strategy in an educational setting, especially for young boys. Animal welfare agencies (e.g. Dogs Trust, RSPCA) currently provide educational programmes, however, the RSPCA advocate a two-pronged approach which would focus on encouraging positive engagement and communication with local communities, in addition to education programmes. Examples of noteworthy programmes specifically tailored to embrace this multifaceted response to the status dogs are discussed below. Note, however, that there is a lack of rigorous, social scientific evaluation and monitoring of such programmes in Britain (see section 5 below).
- 2.6.6 In 2008, BARK (Borough Action for Responsible K9s), facilitated by the RSPCA, SDU, Brent local authority, Metropolitan Police Service, housing association and Mayhew animals home, were awarded for their innovative strategy in tackling status dogs (Local Government 2008). The project focuses on promoting responsible dog ownership as well as tackling anti-social behaviour linked to the use and abuse of dogs. This is achieved through a combination of educating and reassuring the community, increasing intelligence on the problem, and enforcement and intervention to reduce anti-social behaviour and animal abuse³⁴. The London based People With Dogs Project - which includes the Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, RSPCA, local MPS, the GLA, the Blue Cross and the London Borough of Wandsworth - developed an educational pack (i.e. DVD, workshop notes) for young people. The project addresses the issues of irresponsible dog ownership and breeding, and organised dog fighting through education and intervention by challenging attitudes and behaviour (GLA 2009). The GLA (2009) recognises the positive impact dog ownership can have for young people, suggesting future programmes which will involve a wide range of training and education elements. This is supported by Bennett and Rohlf's (2006) research (discussed earlier) who found those who trained their dogs and shared activities with them experienced less problematic forms of behaviour. Therefore a

34 It is recognised that such a resource intensive project such as this one may not be replicable (in terms of feasibility or desirability) for all the stakeholders involved.



strategy designed to increase participation in dog training activities and promote positive socialisation sociability may have significant benefits for both the dog and owner.

- 2.6.7 Project SAFE, a USA programme based on successful gang prevention models, focuses on the link between youth gangs and animal fighting, through prevention, intervention and regulation (Randour and Hardman 2007). The programme combines violence interruption, community mobilisation, faith-based leadership, public education and criminal justice participation. Unlike the former projects, this programme was developed through empirical research with ex-dog fighters and children, in order to fully understand the appeal of dog fighting and develop a targeted approach. The claimed outcomes of the project successfully 'stigmatise rather than glamorise the activity', 'create synergy between public agencies and private citizens', 'bring more sources to the problem' and 'contribute to the safety of families and communities' (Randour and Hardiman 2007:199). It has been suggested that in order to better understand the appeal of status dogs and associated behaviours, such as dog fighting, more needs to be known about the UK dog owners, their motivation for ownership and use, and influences on this behaviour (Kaspersson 2008; Maher and Pierpoint 2011).
- 2.6.8 There are a number of projects and suggested modes of multi-agency preventive working outlined above which may be adapted carefully, taking account of specific contexts and cultures in future strategies for engaging the often demonised young people and associated often harmful lifestyles linked to problematic dog ownership. We return to the possibilities for such creative lesson-drawing from previous projects and innovations in practice in the final section of this report.

2.7 Conclusion

- 2.7.1 In conclusion, it is evident that the news media and political discourses, rather than academic research and commentary, has been the driving force behind establishing the status dog problem in England and Wales and more broadly across the UK. While this perspective has been broadly supported by the key animal welfare agencies, the often mis-identification of the problem (e.g. confusion between and conflation of dangerous dogs and status dogs) is concerning. We shall argue in the next section that in turn the 'official' data which evidences the prevalence and nature of the phenomenon is also problematic. Although research and evidence-based analysis on status dogs and related animal abuse is limited in criminology, evidence can be found in a wide range of academic fields which suggests there is:
- a link between youth engagement in animal abuse and later or concurrent criminality and violence,
 - a link between the ownership of status dogs and violence towards people and animals and criminality,
 - a relationship between status dogs and youth groups-cum-gangs and animal abuse (e.g. dog fighting),
 - dog ownership can be both positive and negative for young people and that status dogs are one part of a larger phenomenon of the 'dark side of ownership'.
- 2.7.2 It is noteworthy, given the dearth of research on status dogs, that there is an extensive range of responses currently in place to manage the status dog problem in England and Wales. Although education, training and communication are identified as vital to a successful project, enforcement and regulation rather than prevention have dominated the UK response.

3. Interpreting the recorded quantitative data on status dogs: an evidential quagmire

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 In this section the available recorded statistical evidence on problematic dog ownership and use of status dogs particularly among young people is described and assessed. In particular we focus on the statistical evidence for dog fighting and dangerous dog offence increases and on the increases in breeding and negligent ownership of status dogs.

Table 2: Overview of quantitative data available on status dogs and related issues

LOCAL		NATIONAL	
Organisation & Data	Details	Organisation & Data	Details
Local Authority:		RSPCA:	
Stray dogs	Recorded annually, but not centrally published.	Animal abuse	Recorded and published annually - some youth specific offences difficult to extract.
Improvement notices	No centralised/recorded data available	Prosecutions	Recorded and published annually - some youth specific offences difficult to extract
Dog registration	Not compulsory - database kept by some individual Councils on their Tenant Housing, where required/desired.	Abandoned/stray dogs	Recorded using kennel data and data requested from Local Councils in England and Wales, reported annually - breeds not
Police:		NHS:	
Animal abuse	Not recordable, not published centrally.	Dog fighting injuries	Recorded annually in RSPCA hospitals, not published
Dog attacks/violent assaults	Violent offences recorded & published annually - dog-related incidents not classified.	DEFRA/ Home Office:	
Dog seizures	Recorded & published by SDU monthly in London, dog and offender characteristics are now being recorded even though not a requirement. Recorded by other police authorities, but practices vary widely.	Finished consultation episodes for dog bites or strikes	Recorded annually - data published for 1997-8 and 2007-8 only. Victim details recorded, breed not recorded (but in any case this would be subjective as the victim may not have breed knowledge).
Other NGOs		Index of exempted dogs	Recorded annually, data published for 2004-9. Offender characteristics not classified.
Abandoned dogs	Specific charities may produce a summary of dogs re-homed annually.	s3 dogs seized	Recordable offence under Home Office counting rules. Full offender profile & dog breed identified.



3.2 Evidence for increase in dog fighting and dangerous dog offences

3.2.1 While there is a perceived growth in the problematic ownership and use of status dogs among young people there is no official measure of the scale of the problem (e.g. through official dog registration). Evidence of the growth in status dogs has largely been supported by statistics from animal welfare agencies (e.g. dog fighting complaints and shelter population), police seizure and prosecution of dangerous dogs data and dog bite statistics from the NHS (see Table 2). The RSPCA (2009b) highlighted a notable rise in dog fighting complaints between 2004 and 2007. 'Rolling' or street dog fighting by young people was of particular concern with complaints rising from 132 to 188 from 2007 to 2008, making up two thirds of all dog fighting reports by the public in England and Wales. The Status Dog Unit [SDU] was established in 2009 in London in response to the rise in dangerous dogs seized from 2004-05 (n=38) to 2008-09 (n=719) to 2009-10 (n=1152). The SDU report seizing over one thousand dogs in its first year of operation (Greenwood 2010). During this time, the SDU have also identified links between the location of knife crimes and the use of dogs and weapons (GLA 2009). Data on the seizure of dangerous dogs nationally is not as readily available from other police authorities (although more data is becoming available all the time - but still remains piecemeal) making it difficult to assess the true extent of this phenomenon. There has been a national increase in the prosecution of offenders under the Dangerous Dog Act [DDA] 1991, with a significant increase in section 1 offences (e.g. prohibited dog types) since 2007 (see Table 3). Dog seizures and prosecutions under s.1 of the DDA 1991 do not classify incidents by offender demographics therefore it is impossible to directly attribute this increase in seizures to youth ownership of status breeds.

Table 3: Breakdown of statistics which identify an increase in dog fighting and dangerous dog offences

Year	RSPCA - All dog fighting complaints*	RSPCA - Youth dog rolling complaints*	MET Police seizure of Dangerous Dogs ^{35*}	A. Persons found guilty under s3**	B. Persons found guilty under s1**	C. Dogs added to Index (actual certificates issued)**
2004	24	n/d	42	547	17	6 (6)
2005	n/d	n/d	38	605	11	1 (1)
2006	137	n/d	173	658	6	6 (6)
2007 ³⁶	358	132	481	703	74	185 (141)
2008	284	188	719	763	115	330 (255)
2009	204	112	1152	n/d	n/d	396 (314)

* (RSPCA 2009b, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c) - number of complaints received from member of the public in England and Wales on (i) dog fighting, (ii), dog 'rolling' or street dog fighting by young people and (iii) seizure of dogs under Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 in London by the Metropolitan police.

** (DEFRA 2010: 9) - number of convictions and sentences under s. 3 (A - e.g. a dog dangerously out of control) and s.1 (B - e.g. prohibited types) of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and the numbers of prohibited dogs added to the Index of Exempted Dogs - 2004 to 2009 for England and Wales (C).

n/d no data available for this period.

3.3 Evidence for the increase in breeding and negligent ownership of status dogs

3.3.1 Evidence for the increase in breeding and negligent ownership of status dogs largely comes from various animal shelters who report increasingly large numbers of 'bull' breeds arriving at the shelter (Dogs Trust 2010). For

³⁵ Met Police stats are by financial year

³⁶ It is noted that on 1st Jan of this year Ellie Lawrenson was killed (which received widespread media coverage) and it is possible this resulted in an increase awareness or attraction with PBTs

example, the London Battersea Dogs & Cats Home reports that bull breeds account for 47 per cent of the dogs (almost double that of five years ago) currently homed at the shelter (cited in GLA 2009). Any speculative link to irresponsible youth ownership of status dog problem is problematic due to the many factors which may influence a rise in abandoned pets (e.g. the economy, fatal dog bite incidents, and negative image of a dog breed). In addition, systematic and coordinated recording of animal abuse is generally lacking in the UK. Animal abuse is not a recordable offence and therefore data on the nature of abusive ownership is not collected or reported on by the Home Office. Pierpoint and Maher's (2010) analysis of RSPCA convictions for animal abuse found youths aged 18 years and over are most frequently convicted for animal abuse. In respect of juveniles and status dogs there is no specific RSPCA data, only those investigated for the broader category of 'cruelty offences', for instance in 2009, 46 cases were referred to the Prosecutions Department. In 5 of these cases there were 'no proceedings', 7 were cautioned and the remainder 34 were prosecuted, with 26 of those male and 8 female (RSPCA 2010d). The data on the animal or breed concerned is not readily available. Although the RSPCA also nationally record reported animal abuse, the data gathered, with the exception of dog fighting offences, therefore lacks the detail required to assess trend in youth offending with dogs.

- 3.3.2 The rise in dog bites across the UK and particularly in London has been linked to the use of status dogs as weapons and irresponsible ownership of these dogs. NHS data indicates a rise in dog bite and strike consultations between 1997-8 and 2007-8 for all ages, with the exception of 0-9 year olds (Table 4 - HES Online 2010). In London alone there was a 119 per cent increase in the number of young people (and 63% increase in adults) admitted to accident and emergency for dog bites over the past five years. At the time status dogs were first recognised in the media as an increasing problem, hospital admissions for dog bites increased by 79% in London and 43% nationally (2006-7) (GLA 2009). An increase in the treatment of dog bites is not clear evidence of an increase in dangerous dogs - according to K9 magazine there is a question over the validity of this information due to the method of recording dog bites³⁷ and the restructuring of the strategic health authority limiting comparison with data prior to 2006 (Green 2008). This increase may reflect a rise in awareness of the 'problem' and possibly false reporting. The failure to record dog bite data by breed also makes it impossible to link this increase to status dogs.

Table 4: Finished consultant episodes for dog bites and strikes

Data year	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	=>90
2007-08	827	671	540	582	690	553	389	250	153	44
1997-98	989	356	245	291	273	287	228	150	86	10

(HES Online 2010)

3.4 Conclusion

- 3.4.1 As is evident from the above description and assessment of the available recorded statistics, there are no accurate and comprehensive quantitative national data sets currently available. Currently there is a dearth of single agency-based systematic intelligence gathering, never mind 'joined', multi-agency information sharing either at the national or local levels. Further investment in cross-agency and inter-incident type monitoring and evaluation of recorded data is urgently needed if the problem of status dogs is to be driven by intelligence-led problem-solving as part of a long-term preventive strategy. Here the emerging field of multi agency animal abuse control may wish to learn from the earlier mistakes of and lessons from crime prevention partnership working in community safety more broadly (Hughes, 2007, and see section 5 below).

37 The data fails to separate dog bites from 'strikes' which may in fact be accidental injury from a non-aggressive dog.



4 Findings from qualitative fieldwork research: the seven case studies of young people

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Given the lack of effective recorded statistical data in this sector noted in section 3 it is impossible to accurately quantify the issue at this time. In turn it may be more productive to both gather and use in-depth qualitative sources of data, supported of course by the available statistical counts from the relevant authorities in arriving at an evidence-based understanding of both what we know and as crucially, in admitting what we do not know at this point in the 'career' of this social problem of status dogs, young people and urban street cultures. This noted, the available qualitative evidence on the specific problem under focus here remains very limited. Furthermore, the broader criminological research into and commentary on youth street cultures and the communities in which these status dog problems have emerged is often unhelpfully polarised. In particular we find on the one hand a criminology of the dangerous 'other' or urban 'underclass' that over-predicts the nature and distribution of pathological gangs, violent crime and anti-social behaviour; and on the other a libertarian criminology which prioritises the punitive 'over-reaction' of social control agencies (including the RSPCA) (and by which the formal reaction becomes 'the problem') and fails to recognise the often negative, self-destructive local adaptations which licence collective violence, machismo and predatory egoism (Hallsworth, 2010).
- 4.1.2 There is thus a telling lack of empirical research on the meanings and lived experiences of such young people which our initial modest 'case studies' fieldwork described here may begin to fill³⁸. But let us not underestimate the difficulties in reaching these young people who are both 'hard to reach' and 'hard to hear' for any 'authority' figures, including academic criminological researchers. Apart from our own qualitative case studies of several young people embroiled to varying degrees in the street culture of status dogs, a recent project by The Campaign Company (funded by the RSPCA) has also begun to open up the hidden worlds of these young people. A summary of the points of comparison raised by our research and that of the Campaign Company may be found in Appendix 1. Taken together as evidence we suggest that some important common findings emerge from these voices which those tasked with responding to the problem need to heed, not least in formulating proactive policies and practices of prevention into this growing social problem. We would hope that the views of both front-line control workers and those tasked with developing longer-term strategies for managing the problem of status dogs, young people and criminalisation in response to the 'street level' accounts here and our criminological analysis of these accounts will contribute to the future refinement of both our policy engagement in this field and that of the RSPCA as sponsor of this independent research project.
- 4.1.3 The following sub-section outlines both the methodological rationale of this small scale study and its strengths and limitations in terms of its scope and depth. Following this overview of the methodology of the study, we present the key findings in appropriate depth and giving authentic voice to the participants. The findings discussed in part necessarily reflect the issues the young research participants identified as important in understanding their experiences and behaviours as dog owners. These young people were also

38 We should also note that we lack research findings with regard to the daily experiences of 'front-line' workers involved in both the protection and control of status dogs. There is a pressing need for an ethnographic study on status dogs control, towards which, this project alongside our ongoing research programme has made some small steps. The empirical study of animal abuse control remains undeveloped in criminology (but see Hughes and Lawson, 2011; Maher and Pierpoint, 2011).

asked to reflect on the experiences and attitudes of their peers' with regard to dog ownership. Their comments are discussed with supporting reflections and experiences from two of the 'gatekeepers' alongside findings from research by The Campaign Company (see Appendix 1). The gatekeepers' accounts usefully establish patterns and changes in youth dog ownership and behaviour in their areas. Young people's accounts in the Campaign Company's small-scale research, which collected information from focus groups, surveys and in-depth interviews into the behaviour values and motivations of young people who own status dogs, support the integrity and authenticity of the attitudes and experiences documented among the participants of this study.

4.1.4 In line with the central objectives of the project, particular attention was paid during analysis to a number of types of negative dog ownership behaviour identified by the RSPCA, such as an increase in the number of dog fighting complaints reported by members of the public, over-breeding and abandonment of status dogs, an increase in 'dog fighting' injuries recorded by RSPCA vets and a rise in convictions for dangerous dog offences in the UK³⁹. Sub-sections 4.3-4.12 identify various aspects of youth dog ownership - for example, access to dogs, the motivation for and influences on ownership, and attitudes towards and involvement in both positive and negative forms of behaviour associated with status dog ownership. Sub-sections 4.13-4.14 reflect on the possible responses to problematic dog ownership raised by the findings in this project and these youths and their recommendations for future responses. In conclusion, the five key findings are summarised. The findings are supported throughout with detailed extracts from the interviews with young people. Six cameos also appear at various points in the discussion detailing case studies which provide a more in-depth view of the issues identified.

4.1.5 'Health warning': as we noted earlier in the report (see section 1.2, para. 6), it is very probable that these young people and some of the 'gatekeepers' may hold views and perceptions which regulatory and law enforcement agencies will find both inaccurate and troubling. As a consequence, a 'health warning' may be required when reading this 'evidence'. We need to be clear that our task in this research is not to adjudicate between the truth claims of the various parties; rather we aim to present rarely heard voices 'on their own terms'. We should remember the wise counsel of two famous social scientists at the beginning of the twentieth century, Thomas and Znaniecki who famously noted that 'it is not important whether or not the interpretation is correct - if men (sic.) define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'. Our concern in this section of the report therefore is to record accurately and non-judgmentally the knowledge base of young people variously involved in the status dogs phenomenon.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 This project aimed to explore the attitudes and experiences of youth status dog owners and place their accounts in the context of the wider academic and professional literature on status dogs. This was achieved by first conducting an in-depth literature review on status dogs, dangerous dogs and dog ownership, followed by informal interviews with gatekeepers from a wide range of backgrounds, including members of public and private regulatory agencies as well as participants in criminal subcultures and finally semi-structured interviews with the young status dog owners (aged 11-25 years) who were introduced to us by the said gatekeepers. Young status dog owners are a statistically unrepresented sample; therefore, this project was not intended to be representative of young dog owners. Rather, the data collected targeted hard-to-reach owners whose experiences and attitudes have seldom been given voice to. Clearly many conventional research methods are not conducive to doing research with vulnerable groups (youths) and on

9 See Appendix 3, the interview schedule, for a complete list of issues identified in the literature by the researchers.



Research Project Report: Status dogs, young people and criminalisation: towards a preventative strategy

sensitive topics (offending behaviour); careful consideration was given to establishing a route to communicate with and understand these youths. A qualitative approach (semi-structured interviews) was adopted in order to collect data that could provide this in-depth understanding of owners' behaviours. This strategy was particularly useful for allowing the youths to focus the research on issues important to them and their ownership (rather than focusing specifically on what the literature suggests is important). Given the limited availability of accurate and detailed data on status dog ownership, an exploratory and holistic approach was important. It also provided the flexibility required to research young people who often lead chaotic and uncertain lives. We originally planned to conduct repeated short semi-structured interviews with six participants, which would involve conducting three interviews with each participant, with the third interview video-taped and used to develop a training and educational resource for the RSPCA. The interviews were scheduled to take place across the UK in 5 key locations identified through RSPCA data. This process was amended repeatedly to accommodate participants' availability and the time and financial constraints of the project. The resulting strategy involved conducting one long (approximately 2 hours) interview with 7 participants. A separate date was to be organised with participants who wanted to take part in the video-recording. Table 5 provides a summary of the proposed strategy and the actual methods used.

Table 5: Proposed and actual research strategy employed

	Proposed	Actual
Participants	6	7 (13 contacted)
Location	5 localities	2 localities
Interviews	Semi-structured Repeated & face to Face	Semi-structured Single & Group, Face to face & Phone
Targets	Purposive Sampling & Snowballing Male & Female ,11-25yrs, BME & White British, Types of interviews: owner of illegal breed, involved with: breeding, training, dog fighting, offending with dog, gang and non-gang	Purposive Sampling & Snowballing 2 Female & 5 Male, 15-22yrs, 4 BME & 3 W British, All categories covered

4.2.2 In summary, the research involved conducting semi-structured face to face interviews with seven young people (aged 11-25 years) in two locations across the UK. A detailed account of the data collection method is provided below, with a discussion on the ethical and safety issues encountered in the study. Participants were selected for their involvement in behaviours such as ownership of, breeding, selling and buying illegal dog breeds; dog fighting, offending with a dog, abusive training and ownership of a status dog and involvement in gangs. These key characteristics were identified through the literature as central to the status dog problem. Participants were located through gatekeepers using purposive sampling and snowballing. First, two researchers established contact with key practitioners who worked closely with youth status dog owners through their role as researchers, law enforcement officers, youth offending team officers, dog handlers, youth workers and the RSPCA. Through these contacts three gatekeepers were identified - a youth worker, an ex-offender and the operations director of a private company specialising in community services. Project aims and details (including a mobile phone number purchased for the project) were distributed to potential interviewees by gatekeepers through Facebook, community events, youth projects and personal contacts. As the project progressed, feedback from youths and gatekeepers indicated that the

negative stereotyping by the media of youths and their dogs in a number of recent documentaries and media reports, prior to our research, created a general mistrust of researchers and, thereby, youths refused to participate. In part, as a result of this, the research team offered participants a mobile phone top-up voucher (worth £15⁴⁰), in recognition of their willingness to take part and their efforts in contacting and meeting the researchers.

4.2.3 Thirteen youths, spread amongst the five research locations, agreed to participate and were contacted to arrange an interview. Due to personal circumstances⁴¹ and concerns about the research⁴² 6 participants were unable to or refused to take part in the study. In Birmingham, the research team faced considerable difficulty in making contact with youth status dog owners, possibly due to the reportedly organised and covert nature of dog fighting in this locality. Two interviews took place in Manchester in separate locations and five interviews took place in London, in four locations (see Table 6 for participant's demographics). These seven interviews were largely facilitated by the gatekeepers who played a significant role in arranging the meetings and reassuring the youths that the researchers were trustworthy. The primary researcher (Maher) had successfully conducted research into gangs, peer violence and weapon use over the past 6 years through the use of gatekeepers. These individuals played a central role in the research process. They assisted in making contact with target youths, developed an open and honest dialogue between interviewer and interviewee and provided insightful reflections on youth dog ownership in their localities. In light of the strong distrust among youth dog owners, owing in part to the heightened attention to status dogs by law enforcement - through the development of the SDU and the publicised increase in seizures of illegal and dangerous dogs - establishing trust at the recruitment stage was essential for conducting these in-depth interviews.

4.2.4 Prior to conducting the youth interviews, the gatekeepers invited the researchers to spend time with them to discuss their experiences and observations on the status dog problem. Contact with gatekeepers ranged from informal chats, recorded discussions, and observations from guided tours of localities and shadowing youth provision patrols. These encounters, although unplanned, were extremely insightful, furthering our understanding of youth dog owners' experiences and attitudes. Youth interviews were organised in public places (e.g. quiet cafe) or in agency facilities (e.g. YOT and youth club). Youths were asked to leave their dog/s at home as a safety measure and to avoid distractions. Contact was re-established both a week and then a day prior to the meeting, to confirm details with the participants. These measures were taken to ensure both time and financial resources were used most effectively. Six face-to-face interviews were conducted in the research location. Initial contact with the seventh youth was made on the street and completed over the phone. Interviews lasted for up to two hours and were facilitated by two researchers (Maher and Lawson). Gatekeepers were also present in the interview room on three occasions. Although this was neither expected nor agreed prior to the interview, their presence was accepted as it was mutually desired by the youth and gatekeeper. All interviews began with a brief introduction from the researchers on the aims and intentions of the project, ethical issues, the layout of the interview and a request to use a recording device. Six of the interviews were recorded, permission was refused by one youth. An interview

40 This value was determined as providing an appropriate incentive and reimbursement for time and efforts made during participation, while not being significant enough to attract time wasters.

41 For example, the researchers journeyed to Liverpool to interview a female and male youth (not connected to each other), however, 30 minutes prior to their arrival the male youth contacted them to say he had been made homeless due to family problems and was unable to meet us as he was walking to Manchester to a friend's house. The female's mobile phone number stopped working that day and no further attempts at contact with her were successful during the research.

42 One male youth in Birmingham agreed to do the interview, and then withdrew, due to pressure from his peers and fear that the interview would be seen as breaching their 'code of silence'.



schedule was used to manage and focus the discussion; however, the youths were also encouraged to introduce other issues that concerned their experiences as dog owners. Breaks were offered to participants throughout the interview and refreshments were made available where possible. While the primary researcher led the interview, the second researcher's role was to interject if further information or clarification was required. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using NVIVO 8. The detailed analysis of both youth's and gatekeeper's data involved coding up from the data (identifying themes in the data) and coding interviews to the themes previously identified in the literature review.

- 4.2.5 Each interview proceeded according to the ethical guidelines established by Cardiff University's SOCSI Research Ethics Committee and the British Society of Criminology (2006). As this research involves young people, the 'Guidelines for Research among Children and Young People' was also consulted (Market Research Society, 2000). The project also complied with the new approaches regarding safeguarding research with children (e.g. the Independent Safeguarding Association - both researchers were CRB checked). Prior to conducting the field work the project was submitted to and approved by an ethics panel in Cardiff University. The key ethical issues identified were confidentiality, consent, data storage and duty of care to youth participants and researchers. Participants were advised that the information provided would be treated as confidential (except in the case where information could be used to prevent serious harm to the participant or other persons); participants choose pseudonyms to ensure their information was not identifiable. Youths were informed that they could stop the interview process, ignore questions and request their data be destroyed, at any time. Our efforts to ensure data protection were also detailed: interview data would not be made available to anyone outside the research team and would be stored on encrypted work computers and in locked rooms at all times, and a private, Cardiff University approved, company would be used to transcribe the interview data. In terms of our duty of care to youth participants, each youth was debriefed after their interview and offered contact information for relevant agencies, should they feel upset or anxious as a result of their participation in the research. Researcher safety was managed by ensuring the researchers met with participants in public areas, often accompanied by gatekeepers. Additionally, the researchers' location and activities were monitored by the research co-ordinator by phoning in pre- and post-interview.
- 4.2.6 There are of course limitations to what can be gleaned and generalised from a small number of interviews and the associated experiences of doing fieldwork accessing such 'deviant', 'outsider' cultures within mainstream UK society. It is no exaggeration to say that the fieldwork experience, often involving protracted negotiations with key third parties, was not dissimilar to reconnoitre missions popularised in military narratives. As a result of the lengthy processes necessitated in gaining access (or not) the fieldwork process opened up the broader cultural contexts in which these young people lived, not least the very visible encounters of the cultures of the street where one looks after 'one's own', including 'your' dog versus other dogs.
- 4.2.7 The fieldwork focused on the bigger cities across England and Wales and as a consequence has little direct evidence for smaller cities, towns and rural neighbourhoods. From conversations with police and RSPCA inspectors⁴³, both bull-breed types and other valued 'status' dogs such as Patterdale terriers and cross Lurcher-bulls are a growing phenomenon in these communities.

4.3 Terminology

- 4.3.1. The term 'status dogs' is frequently used to refer to the problem of youth dog ownership of dangerous dogs and anti-social and violent behaviour with these dogs. However, this term does little to clarify and explain the

43 At the RSPCA's November 2010 Status Dogs Conference, Warwick University.

plethora of issues it refers to. When asked to define or explain the terminology commonly associated with youth dog ownership - such as 'status dogs', 'weapon dogs', 'chaining' and 'rolling' the interviewees were unable to comment or referred to the media. These terms are not used by young people themselves and therefore confuse rather than aid in understanding youth dog ownership.

[So you guys don't really talk about status dogs, that's not a term you would use?] No. I only think the media uses those types of terms. [So you only know it from the media?] Yeah" (Jet, male, 17yrs).⁴⁴

It's because.... no, it's because when they say status, that's what they mean. They mean like a Rottweiler or a big Mastiff, or a Staff, or something that people are more afraid of, when they shouldn't be, you know what I mean ... It's like basically, like if they were to go, say if they were to go and get in a fight with someone, they'll be like I'll bring my dog, they'll go yeah do you want a fight, I mean that sort of thing. Like I've never experienced that, but that's just what I'm guessing, you know what I mean (Lauren, female, 20yrs).

- 4.3.2 These terms were most frequently identified by the interviewees as unfair labels attributed to young people and specific dog breeds, applicable to only some irresponsible dog owners. In particular, these terms suggest the motivation for dog ownership and the role the dog plays is simply negative - in terms of image or weapon - while the opposite is often true, as discussed below.

4.4 Dog ownership

- 4.4.1 Status Dogs (as defined on page 8) were reportedly prevalent in each of the localities in which the interviewees lived (with the exception of Emanuel in his previous home - a predominantly Muslim area). A variety of dog breeds were identified in each locality (see Table 6 below). However bull and large breeds were most commonly owned by young people. Each of the dog owners interviewed owned a bull breed and reported that their friends also predominantly owned bull breeds or other large breeds (e.g. Akita, Rottweiler, German Shepherd, Rhodesian Ridgeback). According to the interviewees these breeds of dog are not new to these areas, yet those in London suggested they were now much more common. In Manchester both the interviewee and gatekeeper explained their understanding that these breeds were less common now than approximately three years previous, since when there had been a significant decrease in youth ownership of dogs (this decline coincides with the much publicised death of 5 year old Ellie Lawrenson in Merseyside in 2007):

[Snoop indicated that there are less young people with dogs around now, probably because of the media. I asked him what the media had done and he said "it's the put-offs" - put-offs and also public awareness of dog fighting and attacks on people. He felt people were a little more wary of these dogs around kids.]

- 4.4.2 Emanuel indicates that the rise and fall in dog ownership among youths was due to a fad, which declined when dog ownership became problematic:

I don't know. They've not got the time to look after dogs, or the place to keep them. My mum must be understanding to have a dog because most parents are just bickering all the time about, 'The dog this, the dog that.' It's too much hassle." (Emanuel, male, 16yrs)

- 4.4.3 Both Kal and Dee (gatekeepers) appear to play an ad hoc role in managing the surplus of puppies bred or abandoned in their localities by acting as intermediary between youths looking for puppies and those looking

44 Text in square brackets indicates the interviewer's questions and comments - all other text is the respondent.



to get rid of puppies and young dogs. Dee acknowledged that “dogs exchange hands really quickly - I’ll just get rung up and they’ll say ‘Dee have you got any more dogs’, or ‘Dee my mum won’t let me have this dog in the house anymore can you take it?’”.

- 4.4.4 Reportedly, the dogs owned by five of the interviewees and the majority of their friends were under two years old, having been acquired as puppies (see Table 6 below). James commented that all the bull breeds he knew were less than three years old. This suggests that the ownership of these dogs is a new or growing phenomenon among young people and/or these dogs do not remain with their owners for very long (perhaps this explains the sharp rise in abandoned dogs). In fact, during the research it was very difficult to determine the life-cycle of dogs owned by young people and their friends. When they mentioned friends no longer had dogs or that their family or friend’s pets ‘went’, explanations and details were very vague. Snoop, for example, indicated that he ‘passed on’ three dogs - one to a lady he met on the street, another to a family (also unknown to him) in the country and the last to a family member. Puppies are particularly sought after, Snoop suggests, because ‘people think if you don’t get a dog as a puppy it won’t be obedient’. There was much commentary and mythology on the bond between owner and dogs, with the dominant belief being certain breeds were so loyal to their original owner that could not adapt to another. Loyalty was clearly pivotal in the relationship between youths and their dogs. Kal (gatekeeper) supported this myth, suggesting adult dogs were more likely to bite their new owner, while youths formed a special bond with their puppies (and vice versa) due to the responsibility they represented to the young person:

But the ones that go and buy an adult dog off somebody else, they get the truth, ‘what are you doing with that - that dog will end up biting you, bruv’. That’s how I speak to them. ‘That dog’s more likely to bite you than it is any other individual’, or anything like that, you know what I mean. So in that respect, if you are going to go for a puppy, then again, it gives them something....it gives them responsibility. It really does, it gives them responsibility. And I love that as well, you know what I mean.

Table 6: Details of interviewees and their dogs

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Gang member	Living with	Dog type	Age acquired	Most common dog in locality
Lauren	20	Female	Iranian/Welsh	No	Mum & sib	SBT& PBT	Under 2mts	SBT
Glen	15	Male	W/British	Yes	Mum	PBT/cross	Under 2mts	SBT
Katie	18	Female	W/British	Yes	Mum & sib	SBT	Under 2mts	SBT
Emanuel	16	Male	B/Caribbean	No	Mum	PBT/cross	Under 2mts	SBT
Jet	17	Male	B/British	No	Mum & sib	Bull/cross	Under 2mts	PBT/cross
Snoop	22	Male	B/Jamaican	Yes	Mum & sib	Bull/cross	1 yr	Bull/cross
James	20	Male	W/British	Yes	Mum & Dad	PBT/cross	Under 2mts	SBT

(PBT - Pit Bull Terrier & SBT - Staffordshire Bull Terrier)

- 4.4.5 In terms of interviewee’s dog ownership, the following issues are discussed below: the general accessibility of dogs for young people, how dogs are acquired, the motivations and influences on dog and breed ownership, responsibilities of a dog ownership, the role of the dog and the behaviours associated with dog ownership and links between ownership and criminality.

4.5 Access

- 4.5.1. In general, young people both in London and Manchester felt it was easy to locate and purchase 'status' type dogs (including illegal breeds). The ease of access was dependant on the type of dog sought, with Blue SBT's, pure white SBT's and 'red nosed' SBT (often because they are identifiers of a 'pit' type dog⁴⁵) and dogs with a good bloodline being less common and therefore more difficult to find and expensive to buy. In London, there was believed to be a surplus of these dogs available:

You just make a few phone calls today and then I'm sure you'll come across a dog tomorrow, man, for sure. [Really? And would that be any dog - could you get a good Pit?] Yeah, you could get a specific dog if you wanted one. Like if you wanted a blue Pit, you could ask for that and within a week you would get a blue Pit (James, male, 20yrs).

- 4.5.2 Kal (gatekeeper) indicates there has been a significant change in the accessibility of bull breeds and suggests breeders have played a significant role in creating a prevalent Pit Bull Terrier (PBT) population:

...from a breeder's point of view, there was a time when we used to get £500 to £1000 a puppy. Dogs were, you couldn't sell a lot of dogs... Every dog we had, when I was younger, we used to have to drive for miles, to walk to God knows where, to some little house in the middle of nowhere, and that's what they do, do you know what I mean sort of thing. But all these people who are breeders, from the '80s, what did they think was going to happen if they keep selling all these dogs? You know what I mean, you can say... you can all stand there and say well we only sell Staffs and we're nothing to do with BSL and all this, but you've provided the foundation. And let's face it, we all know that Staffs can give birth to Pit Bulls.

- 4.5.3 In London access to dogs was predominantly through family, friends and the internet. Dogs were either bought from internet sites such as Gumtree and Facebook, from local 'backroom breeders'⁴⁶ or from 'ad hoc breeders'⁴⁷ or they received it as a present from a family member. No mention was made of puppy farms⁴⁸, Kennel Club breeders or animal rescues.

Chance came from my auntie. Like she'll get a dog and then if it doesn't get toilet trained when she wants it to get, like, toilet trained then she doesn't want them no more so.... (Katie, female, 18yrs).

My friend knew someone and then one day after school...like a couple of days before my birthday we went and picked him up. [So did you go in with her and pick the puppy out of a litter?] Yeah, there were loads. [Was it one litter of puppies or did they have a couple of dogs?] About seven dogs. [Was it at someone's house?] Yeah. [And they had seven puppies or seven dogs?] Seven puppies and two dogs outside [Do you know how much your mum paid for him] It was £250 (Emanuel, male, 16).

- 4.5.4 In Manchester, dogs were more frequently sourced through personal contacts and from known dog breeders - 'it's who you know'. Specifically two Irish families in Manchester and breeders in Liverpool who specialised in bull breeds were recognised as dog breed experts; with strong bloodlines (they were also identified as key

45 The researchers acknowledge that these are deemed to be pseudonyms for PBTs in dog fighting, however the use of such terminology cannot be deemed proof of a connection between young dog owners and organised dog fighting.

46 People who breed a small number of dogs regularly for profit.

47 People whose dogs accidentally breed or who breed a one-off litter of puppies.

48 The RSPCA defines these as large scale, illegal unlicensed breeders.



players in organised dog fighting). Snoop's friend is a backroom breeder who, through his reputation, could apparently⁴⁹ demand high fees for his dogs:

that's his business...he gets 4 ton, 8 ton, 12 ton for these dogs depending on the quality, because this guy's got a reputation for it.

4.5.5 According to Snoop, Facebook is also used extensively by sellers and buyers in Manchester. He is personally cautious about police monitoring of these sites and prefers to 'pass on' dogs in person.

4.5.6 Each of the interviewees lived with their parent/s and required consent from their parents to bring their dog's home. Hence, friends without dogs or who gave up their dog were often banned from owning one by their parents. Although some of the interviewees mentioned purchasing a puppy prior to telling their parents, it is clear their parents played a central role in facilitating ownership. Nonetheless, parental influence also appeared to ensure that most young people could own only one dog⁵⁰.

Yeah, it's... Yeah, mainly one dog between each person, man. [Why is that? Why wouldn't you get more than one?] I would have more dogs if I could have another dog, but my mum and that wouldn't allow me to have another dog (James, male, 20).

4.5.7 Each young person generally had an ideal type or breed of dog in mind when they acquired their dog. Particular characteristics - such as, cuteness, boisterousness and potential (e.g. Snoop suggests this indicates a dog that it will grow large, obedient, loyal, enthusiastic and tough) were indicated as important in choosing a puppy. However, the actual choice of dog was largely influenced by chance - for example, the choice of the present giver, the last available pup in the litter and the cost.

Yeah. I can even see in a puppy's face when I look on the internet for dogs, I looked in...like now I could see what a dog would be like as it grew up... You can tell which ones are going to be the ones that, just from a picture you can tell which ones are going to be the quiet ones or which ones are going to be the loud, like I'm all guns blazing type of dog. [Yeah, so how can you tell this?]. It's like in someone's face, if someone's looking at you angry you can tell that they're an angry person or if they're looking a bit shy they're quiet. In a picture you see them, like even just their facial expressions. [Really - so is that why you picked your puppy? Were you aware of these things at the time?] No I didn't pick her up because of anything she just ... she was the last one to go but she was the best one out of the litter basically, the guy said (Glen, male, 15yrs).

4.5.8 Puppies were most commonly sought after; however, the reality of owning and caring for a young dog was reportedly stressful for most of the interviewees and their families. The care and attention required by these young dogs was perhaps particularly problematic as it was commonplace for puppies to be sold before six weeks of age (eight weeks is recommended by the RSPCA). Those youths without a history of dog ownership were particularly unprepared for their puppy's destructive and unhygienic behaviour. Although each of the young people identified themselves as the primary owner of their dog, it was evident that their mothers often played the principal role of carer (cleaning and feeding) and financier (paying vets bills and insurance) for their children's pets. Taking up this responsibility establishes them as key players in the ownership of status dogs.

49 The importance of the reputation of breeders is evident in the reported use of tagging on Facebook to link the reputation of known breeders for marketing dogs and the higher charges demanded by these sellers.

50 All too often studies of 'street youth' fail to locate these people in terms of wider familial settings. See as a counter to this Levitt and Dubner's (2005) provocative essay on US street drug dealers entitled 'Why do drug dealers still live with their moms?'

He was chewing like the skirting boards and the wallpaper and just peeing and weeing everywhere. [So was that kind of problematic in the house when he first came home? Was your mum annoyed at these things?] Yeah I kept on arguing with my mum all the time, like, I don't want to clean up that. She said it's my dog so ... But she helped most of the time, she did most of the work, so(Emanuel, male, 16yrs. See Case Study 3).

Yeah I took a few days off school and because she was so small we had to put her in the kitchen and just shut the door so she had plenty of like ... I threw all her toys and food and water in there and she was just like ... throughout the day the neighbours complained that she howled. So we just told them to shut up ... When she was little so, you know, because she was a new puppy, she'd probably cry all night. And she slept on my bed. And in the morning she used to bite my nose and pull my hair to wake me up. [Did she ever chew things?] She chewed the corner of my wall like this. And she chewed ... I thought she was chewing a bone so I could sleep in through the night, in the morning, sorry. I woke up and there was half my wall missing, literally, the wall was like that and it went in. [Did you ever have trouble with your mum over her behaviour?] A few times when she was little, there was the debate of whether to keep her if she carries on like that (Glen, male, 15yrs).

So much hard work. Because I don't have a garden, we live on the first floor, a maisonette. And it was a struggle to toilet train them...it's just they were like pissing everywhere like, just everywhere. Yeah, we had to get our whole house redecorated after them. And yeah, like obviously, because we didn't have a garden, we couldn't just like show them yeah this is outside. We used to have to, like, bring their mattress [training pads] to the door, and then going down the balconies (Lauren, female, 20yrs).

- 4.5.9 The young people acted as primary exercisers and trainers. After the initial difficulty in caring for a puppy, they each demonstrated a level of awareness of the health and hygiene requirements of a dog - including getting their dogs vaccinated and micro-chipped. Each of the young people interviewed viewed their dog as a long-term commitment and responsibility. This point of view, reportedly, was not always shared by their peers, who were sometimes portrayed as unpredictable and indifferent to their pets. Boredom, nuisance and laziness were viewed as the main reason their peers gave up their dogs.

4.6 Motivations for and influences on ownership

- 4.6.1 It is difficult to identify what the primary motivator or influence was for the interviewees getting a 'status' dog. The motivation for getting a dog appears to be different from the motivation for choosing a specific breed of dog. The motivation given for getting a dog was simply 'I always really wanted a dog' or 'I always had dogs', suggesting that the decision to get a dog was not impulsive. Each young person was certain about the type of dog they wanted, if not the exact breed they wanted. This decision was influenced by: family members and adults known to the young person, peers who were already owners of the breed type, the media portrayal of these dogs, and personal beliefs and attitudes toward these breeds. For some, even the gender of the dog was influenced by certain beliefs about gender specific characteristics. For example, female dogs were believed to be more loyal, trainable and protective of women (e.g. would look after girlfriends or mother), while males were believed to be more aggressive and capable of protecting their owner. Evidently, the general perceptions of dog breeds played a significant role in their motivation for a breed - as indicated by James description of the PBT:

Because a Pit Bull, a Pit Bull, there is no breed like a Pit Bull like. A Pit Bull is a lot of the dogs put into one, you know what I mean? And, to be honest with you, from what my dog I've seen is they are ... and if you ain't got a Pit your name is shit, man. You know what I mean? Because



a Pit Bull is just the one, it's just...it's just the best all round, you know what I am trying to say like. It's just... like that's what I feel anyway, like it looks like the bestest dog ever, man. Do you see what I'm trying to say? He's strong, fast, you know what I mean? All of that shit, man. All the stuff that the fighters look for, that's what it's got, you know what I mean? (James, male, 20yrs).

4.6.2 Katie and Lauren attributed their choice of the SBT to the energy, spirit and loyal nature of this breed:

I've always wanted a Staff because they don't give up, like they'll play and play for hours. They keep you company". (Katie, female, 18yrs)

Because they're so ... I don't know they've got so much energy like they keep you out, like they make you busy all day like you're never bored. (Lauren, female, 20yrs)

4.6.3 However, both these girls and a few of the boys suggested the colour of the dog was very important as 'blue' or 'red nosed' dogs were more difficult to get hold of (and thus conferred a type of status). Kal (gatekeeper) suggested this motivation is particularly problematic and prevalent among 'youths':

... do not come to me because your dog is pretty. Red nose is not a colour. Red nose is a breed, a way of life and an attitude. You do not buy red nose because it's pretty, especially if you've got two little babies in the house as well. I've seen all sorts of problems there as well. Blue is not a colour that goes with your carpet. Do not buy a blue Staff.⁵¹ The over-breeding... there is no such thing as a blue Staff, as you well know. It's a colour variation that is just stuck, you know what I mean. But yeah, it bothers me.

4.6.4 The key motivations cited for dog ownership were companionship and protection, socialising with friends was also repeatedly mentioned. Although dogs could also provide financial gain and entertainment for their owners, these were not identified by the participants as motivations for getting the dog. It was argued that many, often bad, (other) young owners got their dog for these reasons. Some motivations were clearly stated, such as the desire for companionship, while others were revealed while discussing the process of acquiring and owning the dog. Snoop, for example, suggests that the control achieved through training a dog and knowing it will protect you enhances self-confidence: 'a gun does not make you a man but a dog makes you feel good'. Protection is central to his idea of a dog having 'potential'. Glen also emphasises protection:

[So, owning your dog, it's about companionship...but do you get anything else out of having your dog?] You get the sense of protection. You get like guarding the house, things like that. You get the, you just know that someone's there to look out for you who's going to defend you. And it's not going to judge you for who you are or what you've done. (Glen, male, 15yrs)

4.6.5 The desire for the status was identified as motivating some young people's choice of dog; however, this was viewed as a particularly negative motivation. James believed that owning dogs to enhance status was a 'white kids thing', he suggested they breed SBTs and PBTs to enhance their image, however, they were inferior to his gang as 'black kids can handle their dogs, are in control and were doing it for the right reasons not like the white kids'.

People...people don't care about dogs and they get them just for the name and the look, and you know what I'm saying? Like I said, it's them people there that should be banned for the dogs, you know what I mean? The dogs shouldn't be banned it should be them people there that's banned from having dogs, you know what I mean? (James, male, 20yrs).

51 This is perhaps suggestive of a link to dog fighting, and certainly other links were identified elsewhere in this research, however the use of the terminology and a demonstration of some knowledge of this area should not be considered conclusive proof.

[The fact that they are a banned breed and that they're seen as dangerous dogs, do you think that makes them more attractive to some people?] Some, yeah. [What type of people do you think will be more attracted to them because of that?] People in gangs. People that think they're big and they're not. They just want their dogs to make them look big. [Okay. What are they getting out of having those kind of dogs?] They try and get a rep. [It's like a status type of thing, reputation?] Yeah. (Katie, female, 18yrs).

- 4.6.6 Snoop clearly differentiated between the motivation of his crew and the younger generation of dog owners - 'they've been brought up different and there's quite a few of them' - who demonstrated less respect for their dogs and were primarily motivated by status - 'these guys are using their dogs to actually help them along the way to be wannabe gangster members'. This change in attitudes is also reflected in Kal's (gatekeeper) account that recently young dog owners have been tagging him on Facebook to link his seemingly well-known and 'respected' name (it would appear within the subcultural world of these young people) to their dog for status and puppies for marketing:

...to answer your question on a serious level, it definitely is a mark of now, since all this has began, there's a mark of pride to have a dog from me, or a mark of pride to have a dog that's connected to me. I get tagged daily. I'll show you the latest letter. This guy, I don't even know this guy really, and what he's done is a bit of a liberty. He's tagged me in a picture with some puppies, which he's trying to sell. [Like a brand name almost] Exactly. Exactly that. That's how I felt about it.

- 4.6.7 The choice of breed is also largely influenced by what appears to be a general consensus among peers, that bull and large breeds are the dog of choice:

Some people they don't care what their dog is, you know, if they've got a family and they just want a dog like a Staff they'll pick, just take any dog, they're not bothered. But if you've got someone like me, when I went to look for a dog I was looking for basically which was going to be quite big, going to be protective, things like that. (Glen, male, 15yrs)

- 4.6.8 Emanuel's dog choice was determined by his friend who brought him to a PBT breeder when he asked about buying a dog. In hindsight, Emanuel commented that he would not have chosen this breed had he been aware of their wilfulness and strength. In fact, he argued strongly that PBT's are inappropriate pets for young people.

It depends what type of person. If they're a person that's involved in a gang then they'd probably get a dog that's aggressive, that's got a bad temperament, but if it's like ... say like you, you'd probably get a dog like one of those little house dogs like, Like I wouldn't even mind getting one of them. I just like dogs. I don't want a dog because it's tough and that. And my mum wants to get one of them as well. (Emanuel, male, 16yrs)

- 4.6.9 Dee (gatekeeper) identified how closely the dog's street image equated to the respect for and status of the owner. 'If it (the dog) is weighted (rated as tough and strong), yeah ok, but they do that (disrespecting) to your dog, that's shit that'. This 'claiming' and 'dissing' of dogs among peers clearly influences young people's breed choice. Dogs are targets of humorous banter and verbal abuse on the street and can be used as a vehicle to taunt owners about their status. This threat may enforce the need for young people to have the 'right' dog. By having a large, tough and strong breed, it is possible to ignore or retaliate against such comments. For example, each interviewee identified occasions when their peers 'claimed' their dog was a good bloodline or would be able to 'take' their dog or attack them. Glen, confident in his dog's size and ability, in response would claim his dog could 'rip yours to pieces'. Emanuel (hoping to avoid attention) would choose to ignore these comments and refused to confirm his dog was a PBT by replying 'yeah, my dog is whatever you want it to be'.



4.7 The role of dogs

- 4.7.1 In addition to the original motivation to become a dog owner, identified by the participants, a number of roles became apparent in the dog-owner relationship, for example, protector, companion, and entertainer. It is difficult to determine how closely these roles influence the motivation to own the dog in the first place. For example, Glen was clearly motivated to get a dog for companionship; however, his dog acts as companion, protector, status enhancer and entertainer. Similarly, Lauren's motivation for getting her dogs was companionship; however, her dogs are both companions and protectors.

[...you said your brother got a dog for protection, do you feel that way about your dogs at all?] No, not at all. I see them...I just see them as, like I said, my kids. I don't see them for protection at all, so. Like I don't think I need protection from anything really, like yeah, so no" [They don't make you feel safer?] No, it does...No it does make me feel a lot safer at night, because like I know, if I do have the dogs, no one will come towards me. I didn't get them for that reason, I just got them because obviously I love them. But obviously, if I am walking them out late, like I do walk them like one or two o'clock in the morning for their night walks, and yeah I do feel a lot safer. I think if I was out on the street, really I'd be a bit paranoid sort of thing. But when I have them, I feel, obviously, more safe. Even though I know my dogs would never attack anyone, I just feel more safe that everyone would be like 'Ooh. No' (Lauren, female, 20yrs).

- 4.7.2 The role of companion reportedly involved sleeping on the owner's bed, accompanying them wherever they went and their owners confiding/trusting in them and caring for them like a family member or loyal friend. The caring role was particularly evident in Glen, James, Katie, Lauren and Emanuel's accounts with each of them identifying their dog as family or friend. With the exception of Jet, each youth brought their dogs with them wherever it was possible to do so. As a consequence this was an important aspect of their dog ownership [see case study 1 below].

The best thing is company really, sometimes if you're...if no-one wants to come out, it's raining or something, no-one comes out you've got the dog there and they'll just be like 'oh do you want to do something' and they'll just look at you as if to say 'let's play'. [Yeah?] So yeah there's always something to do with a dog, even if they're sleeping you can just stare at them for ages. (Glen, male, 15yrs).

Like...it doesn't bring the house alive, but it's more like...I don't know, it's like...a dog's like a best friend. It's not human and you can't...you can talk to it, but it's not really going to say nothing back, but it's more...it's like company isn't it? (James, male, 20yrs).

- 4.7.3 The role of companion is in line with the key motivation for getting the dog, as detailed above. The importance of developing an exclusive bond with their dog became a dominant theme among most of the interviewees. For example, neither Katie, nor Glen would allow their dog to be looked after by anyone else to ensure their bond remained strong. This belief is consistent with the idea that dogs must be bought as puppies in order to create a close bond.

My friends love my dog as well, but they class ... I don't like letting them walk off with my dog, but if they go the shop and like they'll be like, 'Oh can I take Sensai and' ... I won't let them go far with her. 'That's my dog.' I don't want her getting too used to other people like I want her to know that I'm her owner, nobody else is. (Katie, female, 18yrs)

- 4.7.4 This belief may limit the amount of positive socialisation experienced by the dog and thereby exacerbate or instigate aggressive tendencies, such as the 'natural' over-protectiveness, reported by the interviewee. Although it was not discussed as such by the interviewees, the desire for a close bond appears closely linked to the desire for protection.

4.7.5 Each youth, with the exception of Jet, felt safer and more confident with their dog alongside them. All the interviewees perceived their dog to be a form of protection and this was an important aspect of their relationship. The role of protector was generally discussed as a belief in how their dog would react to perceived threats, rather than an actual reaction. Three of the youths were able to support this belief with an example where their dog protected them. James for example, detailed an incident where the presence of his dog prevented a gang robbing him, while Jet recalled his dog placing himself in front of him and snarling and barking loudly at a group who were verbally abusing him. In contrast, Emanuel and Snoop were confident in their belief that their dog would protect them without the need of a demonstration. Emanuel will not 'claim' over his dog, but he is willing to capitalise on people's perceptions of his dog as protector:

[What do you think they're thinking when they look at you?] Gang member, a dog that attacks probably. Like I have my dog as a weapon basically. [How does that make you feel?] It depends where I am... Sometimes it's handy that I can go anywhere with my dog. But I'd rather tell some people that my dog... rather tell some people that my dog's not friendly just to keep myself safe than say yeah my dog's friendly, he won't do anything. Just like... so it doesn't get me in trouble. [So have you done that before where someone... you felt maybe you need a bit ...?] Yeah, once when I was in Hackney, some guy came up to me and said does my dog bite? So there were a lot of them so I just said yeah and they just walked off (Emanuel, male, 16yrs).

4.7.6 Overall, the role of the dog as protector seems less purposeful (e.g. with training involved) and more a consequence of the dogs breed types and the actions of the owner (e.g. the dog naturally reacts to their owners anxiety). Kal (gatekeeper) suggests this perceived need for protection is not youth specific and is fuelled by media invoked fear of victimisation:

*...most of these guys want a dog for security. You know that don't you, because of the area that we live in? ...Of course it is for protection, do you know what I mean. I hear what happens to them and I know shortly after, they're going to get a dog, you know what I mean, **** happens, as you well know. It's worrying, isn't it? It is worry, isn't it? In your house, on your property, kids go missing out of back gardens these days, or front gardens. Do you know how much people phone me up and ask for dogs, because it only takes there to be a little child abducted, my phone lights up... It only takes a child to be abducted, random shootings, stabbings. You know like when it's silly, like child on child, or gang related stuff, my phone lights up for puppies, always. And I tell them no...no, no, no I can't be dealing with it, you're not phoning me in the right frame of mine; you're not in the right frame of mind. Give me a week, phone me back. I don't hear from them, 'til the next shooting or the next thing.*

4.7.7 Although seldom presented as such, the role of protector can also be proactive; young people indicated the use of their dogs to attack people (prior to a perceived threat). This involved training the dog to react aggressively when commanded to do so. Glen indicated he trained his dog to a cue word to ensure he would react quickly if threatened. James also boasted that he had trained his dog to attack on command (see Case Study 1 below). The ability to control a dog's reaction in this way enhances status and confidence in their owners. James suggests his confidence in his dogs ability to react to and protect him, reduced his involvement in offending, especially violence, as the presence of the dog prevented incidents from occurring in the first place. Snoop indicated that he did not use his dog as a weapon 'but, I could if I wanted to, but I don't' (Snoop, male, 22).

4.7.8 Dogs were used as weapons by her peers, according to Katie. She refused to take her dog out with her gang when they were using their dogs in a rival fight (see below). All of the youths (including James, who made a distinction between his behaviour and this) suggested the use of a dog as a weapon (as highlighted by the media) was a negative and disturbing behaviour, especially if this was the key motivation for getting a dog.



I just kept my dog out of it. I never used to take my dog out with them. If it was just a couple of us and we went to the park I'd take her. [But not out, there's a difference. Did anyone else bring their dogs out?] A few of them, like three of them would bring their dogs out, or four... (Katie, female, 18yrs).

CASE STUDY 1. Dog Ownership - Relationship with Dog - companionship and protection - James, 20 year old male, London.

James owns a registered PBT. His girlfriend gave it to him when her dog had puppies. James particularly enjoys caring for his dog - viewings him as a 'son', 'brother' and one of the boys. James has a close, positive relationship with his dog and clearly cares for his welfare and safety. His dog goes everywhere with him, especially since he was returned from the police (after being seized for x months and placed in police kennels). James is committed to protecting his dog, but also feels that his dog provides him with protection and security and that this is a pivotal part of their relationship. The role of his dog as loving companion (the motivation for ownership) contrasts starkly with that of protector, especially when his dog becomes a possible weapon:

"...we don't abuse our dogs, or none of that, you know what I'm trying to say? Just like the friendship is about...with the boys the friendship is the same with the dogs, do you see what I'm trying to say? So, obviously, now I see the way that like their responsibility, like I have to feed him and I have to walk him and it was like having a son or something."

"You know what, I don't know, he's just like, he's there, you see what I'm trying to say? He's just like another person who's there like. And, yeah, maybe that... maybe...Oh, what can I say? To me he's...I kind of feel for him like a human, you know what I mean?"

"...the dog knows who its owner is and a dog knows...You know what I'm trying to say? Because obviously when they do something [use a command word], the dog just does it, do you see what I'm trying to say? So, you've grab 'em man and you show the dog how to grab the man, do you know what I mean?...The dog will never do it off his own back though, man, he'll never sit there and just kill a man out of the blue - snack on a man...It's only when I say something, do you see what I'm trying to say?"

"To be honest with you, I do feel a lot safer when I've got my dog with me. Because, like I said, I've got a dog there and I've got my chain there, do you see what I'm trying to say? So it's like I've got a lot of protection around me, do you see what I'm trying to say? And I can't get in trouble with having his protection on me, do you see what I'm trying to say? So it's not the fact that I love going out with my dog, because I'm with my dog, right, I'm just with him. I don't wake up or nothing without Reg, you've got to come out with me today because I might get trouble. I think Reg, I'm going to take you out for a nice long walk. I don't expect to roll into trouble, I don't want to roll into trouble, I just want to do my day-to-day things, you see what I'm trying to say? But sometimes trouble finds you and you just have to... do you know what I mean? You have to just be there ready for when the trouble does find you, man."

4.8 The humanisation of dogs and canine-isation of youth

- 4.8.1 The significant role dogs play in young people's lives is evident in the frequent attribution of human forms of behaviour, motivations and characteristics to dogs and vice-versa. The language of masculinity and street-smart is entrenched in male youths' (rather than the females') understanding of their dogs and the role they play. Dee portrays the development of 'urban youth' (e.g. modern youth groups and gangs) and the escalation of drug sales among these gangs as similar to the formation of a dog pack. He suggests these youths lack respect and are unpredictable - like many of their dogs:

[He likened this graduation process from groups of school friends to gangs - that is, if one individual starts selling a bit of weed, 'he must then share it out amongst friends because if he don't they will want a piece of it and that's the same with dogs, dogs will get in the middle if they feel one dog's got more food than the other or something like that. If there was one dog eating loads of food and there were three others that weren't getting any food, at some stage those three dogs are going to jump on that one dog and eat the food...So once they become part of it, you know, and by joining together they can make more money together. Then other groups see them doing that and that's when rivalries start'. Similarly, dogs become a pack and work together and will fight rivals for their territory.]

- 4.8.2 Glen equates his fear of confronting a large man who was abusing his dog to the fearful respect dogs often have for each other on the street:

Yeah it's just like the same as the dog, like between dogs. Me and that big guy I wouldn't want to mess with him...It's like another dog and my dog, they don't want to get into a fight but they're just like alright I'll let you be the boss here. (Glen, male 15yrs)

- 4.8.3 James suggests his dog must live by the code of the street in the way he and his friends do. In particular, he suggests Reg (his dog) fights to prove himself and to develop confidence, in the same way James and his friends fight and defend their streets against rival gangs:

we don't provoke no fighting and we don't organise no fighting. But if two dogs want to fight then let them fight, because at the end of the day it's just like me punching my friend and saying 'Have that in your drawer'. And he ain't just going to stand there and just say 'Oh right then, thanks for giving me that', he's going to punch me back. So you know what I'm saying? So it's like the dog like they'll...one of them might feel like it's their territory and won't want have it, and they just have it out, innit? And they just stop, that's it, do you see what I'm trying to say? There's never no murders, or no deaths, or none of that. It's just a little scrap and then that's it, it stops...I never know it to be serious, we'd never let it reach no serious level anyway... [and is Reg ok after a fight] Yeah, he kind of makes out a bit more like...it makes him a bit more proud of himself, you know what I mean like? You can see him walk down the street, yeah, more confident and my friend has said. Well, my friend has got a dog as well with him and going through the same thing, you see what I'm trying to say? So obviously it does make the dog feel more confident about itself and, yeah. [So do you think it's good for them to get into those little scraps, kind of to boost their own confidence?] Yeah, it is good...That's the way I see it. Yeah, like just like making himself a man, do you know what I mean? (James, male, 20yrs)

4.9 Problematic Forms of Behaviour among Dog Owners

- 4.9.1 For each of the interviewees, dog ownership was predominantly a positive experience. As discussed above, young people reported that this companionship enhanced safety, trust and confidence. When asked if they were responsible owners, all youths argued that they were (justified by their provision of exercise, training, love,



companionship, food and warmth). They recognised that many of their peers were also responsible owners. Nonetheless, their accounts and observations of youth ownership evidence both problematic forms of behaviour and problematic owners among their peers. Dog ownership especially that of large and illegal breeds brings with it the responsibility of ensuring your dog is both under control and safe as well as being cared for properly. Failure to do this has led to a number of problematic behaviours being identified among youth owners, such as irresponsible breeding, training and the use (and abuse) of dogs for status, dog fighting and offending. Many of these forms of behaviour are evident in wider society, but they are particularly visible amongst these young people's accounts. This may indicate that these issues are more serious and concentrated in nature among some youth groups. In addition to the problematic behaviours perpetrated by young people, the considerable impact of adults upon young people's experiences of ownership (e.g. media influence, public opinion of youth dog owners and dog-related legislation) are also considered below.

4.10 Breeding

- 4.10.1 Breeding dogs can be lucrative (see Case Study 2, below) - healthy profits are possible as puppies reportedly sell for between £250 and £450 each, with little expense to the breeder. Yet, financial gain was not the dominant motivation for breeding according to the interviewees, with the exception of Snoop. Snoop indicated his efforts to breed well were solely in order to make a profit. In general young males were identified as negligent ad-hoc breeders, focused on profit, at the expense of the dog:

I know people that attempt to breed but they're...The fact that they just keep their dog outdoors 24/7, they're never indoors. [Is it males and females?] Just males. [And how do they find a dog to breed with?] Just see a dog on the street innit and they'll just ask innit, 'Do you want to breed your dog with my dog?' [And would they normally have someone say - 'Yeah, sure.'?] Yeah, some responses. Obviously if it was a female dog owner, she wants to see the dog, but obviously males are more open-minded to the possibilities, they'll just think about the money or the number of pups. [So you're saying girls with dogs usually want to see the dog?] Yeah. [But guys are a bit less interested] Yeah. [And do they normally do deals? You hear like sometimes they'll get a pup or a certain amount of money?] Yeah, they'll get pick of the litter or like half the money on every pup that's sold innit (Jet, male, 17yrs).

- 4.10.2 All interviewees, with the exception of James, intended to (or have) breed their dog once to continue the bloodline of their 'prized' pet. Glen suggested he would breed his dog only to make enough money to neuter her. Each youth had found or was confident of finding a good dog to breed with (usually belonging to a friend) and good homes for the puppies (mostly with friends and family or through enquiries on internet websites [see Case study 2]). Dog breeding is clearly fuelled by demand, or more accurately the perceived demand, for puppies of specific breeds. There were many rules identified for breeding dogs - for example, the ideal age at which dogs should be mated. Although this varied from 2 to 6 years - 2.5 years was most commonly identified. The purpose of breeding from a more mature bitch was to ensure healthy puppies, which would be well cared for by the bitch. The interviewees suggested that the size, colour and the 'potential' of the dogs, was more important than the breed type when selling puppies. This inevitably resulted in various bull mixes, which were commonly mislabelled - with PBT types given code names such as 'Irish Staff', 'Long-legged Staff', 'Red nosed Staff' or 'Staff cross' in ignorance or to avoid detection (see Case Study 2 below). This unchecked mating of dogs - especially the larger dogs and those who demonstrated 'potential' - could possibly result in larger, tougher and more aggressive breeds (than the traditional Pit Bull).

Nowadays I don't think anyone would (be able to identify a PBT)...I'd probably say I would be able to tell, but because people are just mixing dogs up so much nowadays, yeah it's like they're just getting all mixed up (Emanuel, male, 16yrs).

Some people you can charge £300 or £400 just because, like, the red nose, things like that...A lot of people like red-nosed dogs because they're a lot scarier than any other dog [Really? Why?] Yeah. I don't know people like the Pit Bull, that's a common sign in a Pit Bull, its red nose and people like that in a dog because it's unique to so many dogs. [So what you're saying is that people really do want them to look Pit-ty?] It's what people want, basically yeah (Glen, male, 15yrs).

96. That said, both James and Emanuel specifically choose dogs for mating to avoid their puppies appearing too 'Pit-ty' or aggressive. Most of the interviewees indicated they felt responsible for the puppies they produced and would ideally get background information on potential buyers. James and Katie supported this notion by remaining in contact with some of their buyers and indicated that they would take the puppy back if they felt the owner was abusive.

CASE STUDY 2. Breeding dogs and 'The Breeding Cycle'- Lauren, female aged 20 years, London.

Lauren owns one SBT and PBT and co-owns one PBT cross with her mother. She purchased each of these dogs as puppies from different sellers - an internet breeder, a local breeder and a friend's friend. She didn't realise the first pup - a male - was a pit bull cross until it grew older and much larger than expected. She then bought a female SBT and PBT. Lauren was asked by the RSPCA (while her dogs received treatment) to get her dogs neutered however, she wanted to have one litter from each when they were older and refused to do so. Although she knew she should keep the dogs separated when the females were in heat, within the year, both female dogs accidentally fell pregnant by the male PBT cross. Lauren detailed how she sold the pups - all of which were pit bull crosses - for large sums of money (up to £450 per pup), pretending to most buyers that these pups were pure SBTs. This is a prime example of why PBTs continue to exist in the UK and why it is so easy for young people to acquire a 'status' dog:

"Yeah, it was advertised as a staff, and then obviously, start growing up a bit more and we realised he wasn't a staff. We found it on Gumtree and we bought him from Southall... it was a family environment, that's why like because he's a friend.... he's a sappy little boy. He was brought up around cats, children and yeah it was a nice environment where he was brought up."

"I want a Blue Staffy, because I've always liked grey like cats and dogs and all that. So I thought I want a.... no first, actually, I wanted a pure white one. And I found an ad, I went to Pets At Home, and I found an ad. And I rung up, went there, and he had a white blue and there was a blue one. So I went there, and the white one was pretty, because he kept them.... he had them outside in a cage, so obviously.... and he was a breeder. Because when I went there, he had her litter, he had another litter in the kitchen, and another litter in the living room."

"My last dog, I was at my friend's house, she lives in a block of flats in Sudbury, and there were people down her hallway that had puppies. And like they knew them and obviously, I used to go in there now and again, and I used to see the puppies and I used to play with them. And then I told my mum, yeah mum come and look at these puppies. And she was like alright but I'm not buying any. I was like yeah, yeah, no that's cool...But you've got to look at her. And then, she went and looked at her and then she fell in love with my one, and my mum's like this, yeah I have to have her. [What were the mums and dads, were they Staffs?] No, they were Pits. Them ones, I knew they were Pits."



"Like when I had my puppies, because obviously, I had two litters of puppies....Mia had nine puppies. I sold eight....no, seven of them, and I got stuck with two. And then, Tila had her litter, she had six. But all my dogs, I'm still in contact with people who have got my dogs, and they're being treated so well... I sold them at all different prices. Because obviously, they were different colours...Yeah, blues. I had two pure blues. They were 450 each. I had two white ones with blue patches. One of them, I sold for 400, the other one I still had. I had three brindles. I sold them for like 300, 250, and like 280. I had two white ones with like patches on them. They went for roughly about 300, 250 as well."

[Did people want to see the mum and dad when they came?] "Yeah. The mum, because obviously the dad was a Pit Bull, I didn't show them. I just said yeah she got...she got mated with a male in the field, a male just jumped her. Like some of them met the dad because, obviously, they were saying I have got a dog at home that's like half Staff and half Pit, I was like oh okay then, I was like here's the dad like...but one person actually bought a puppy off me, they rung me back the next day, they said they'd took her to the vet and the vet said it had some sort of Pit Bull in it...And I was just like...I was like oh well, I was like mine got bred by a Staff in the field. And they was like oh do you know what breed that was? I was like well it looked like a Staffy to me. And they was like oh so you don't know for sure? I was like no. And then, they asked to bring it back and I said sorry, I've spent your money already, so."

4.11 Training

- 4.11.1 No interviewee reported attending training classes or having official training, prior to or during their dog ownership. Training techniques used were most often passed on by peers or self-taught. Snoop, for example, believed he had a natural ability to train dogs and was locally regarded for his ability to handle dogs (which enhanced prestige). As discussed above, these young people were largely unprepared for their puppies and the training they required. Surprisingly, given this ignorance, each dog was successfully house trained by their owner, albeit in a controversial manner:

Yeah, you just have to let it (puppy) know its boundaries and its territories. [And how do you do that?] Every time he wee'd on the floor we'd rub his nose in it and that. If he poohs on the floor, tell him it's wrong... It worked. As a puppy, obviously, he's in fear innit, he's confused innit, everyone's bigger than him. (Glen, male, 15yrs)

- 4.11.2 The management of behaviours commonly focused on in training (e.g. walking calmly on the lead to heel, recall off-lead, basic obedience and socialisation) were detailed among the female interviewees, but less-so among male youths. Reportedly Emanuel, like many of his peers, had particular problems with recall and walking his dog on the lead (see case study 3 below). Other youths, such as Snoop focused on non-conventional training behaviours such as displays of strength and aggression. Attempts at training frequently include punishment and other harsh measures, even by those who had a well-trained dog (e.g. James).

Obviously, you know, he's a determined dog, do you know what I mean? He's a big dog. So obviously like the levels of hitting him have to be to a powerful level, do you know what I mean? To break him, to let him know that he's not going to break me, because he...since he's come out he's started to snap back... So, and before he went...before he was taken away he never used to do that, he used to understand no, is no, do you know what I mean? And then when he come out of there he tried to... go back at me, so I've had to just step it up a bit of a powerful level, you see what I'm saying? To let him know. But I don't have to do no more discipline anyway, man, because...and actually like he walks off from me, and I'll say to him 'Reg, come here' and he doesn't come, you see what I'm saying? I'll just give him a little smack and that. (James, male, 20)

- 4.11.3 Problematic training methods identified ranged from brutal and irresponsible training - which included training dogs for dog fighting and attacking people by encouraging them hang off tree branches, pull heavy objects, bite people and feeding them raw meat [see Case study 4 below] - to a general lack of training which resulted in anti-social and dangerous behaviour towards people and animals [see Case Study 3 below]:

If they think they're good for fighting they'll just make them fight. If they think they're good dogs for fighting then they'll just go and buy them and make them fight. Like some people feed them raw meat to make them vicious. Some people like they fight their dog to make it vicious. Like them themselves fight their dog. (Katie, female, 18)

You can tell that they fight because they'll just go in the park and then they'll let their dog jump up the tree and that. (Emanuel, male, 16yrs)

CASE STUDY 3. Dog Control & Training - Emanuel, 16 year old male, London.

Emanuel's mother bought him a dog for his birthday. It was his first dog and Emanuel thought he would be able to train his dog, just like his cousins, to be obedient and well-behaved. Advised by his friend to go to a breeder, he unknowingly bought a Pit-bull cross rather than a SBT. As his dog grew bigger and stronger, Emanuel found he was unable to control him in the house or on and off the lead. This resulted in Emanuel taking his dog for walks late at night to avoid meeting people or other dogs. His dog is not aggressive, however, he was afraid of what his out of control dog would do and was particularly worried that he would be identified as a dangerous dog and taken by the police. Emanuel did not look for training classes or receive any training to correct his dog until Parkguard⁵² stopped him on the street. Parkguard showed Emanuel how to get his dog to walk without pulling and provided him with a more suitable lead and collar⁵³. Emanuel indicated there were many types of negative training practices he had been advised of and witnessed among peers - for example, training dogs to hang off trees to strengthen their jaws, training dogs to fight owners and other dogs to make them more aggressive and kicking and hitting the dog for disobedience:

"I thought that...my cousin has a dog and the dog's like well behaved like if you walk it and you have it off the lead it'll just walk all right. I thought yeah, my dog's going to be like that and people saying you have to train a dog. Like I thought I was training it the right way, then when I used to take him like he just used to pull to get anywhere rather than letting him off the lead...Yeah, he would come back but he ran off like after people so...My dog doesn't bite. He's just excited, but people get the wrong impression because he's jumping up."

"Yeah, I think that's the best thing. If you have a dog I think that should be a rule, that you shouldn't be able to walk a Pit in the daytime...Because they're just...not the right dogs to be walking around...I don't know, I think a Pit's more of a growing-up like person's dog, it's not like a dog for me...I think it's the strength of the dog, but it is alright for an older person who can train it and like have proper discipline for the dog. Like me I know I am still growing."

52 Parkguard is a Police accredited private company that supplies a diverse variety of community safety focused functions in the form of public services - including education, training and enforcement for status dogs and problematic dog owners - see <http://www.parkguard.co.uk/status-dogs.asp>. The work of this company, and the training methods employed, as described above, have not been independently evaluated at the time of writing.

53 The researchers do not make any assessment of such measures and acknowledge training methodologies of 'experts' vary greatly.



"Yeah kind of, but now I've got some lead yeah so...it's easier. I've got a lead that's not long, so it's easier so the dog's more closer to me so then I've got...but the harness, the dog was in front, like the dog was walking me basically. Now I've got the lead short so the dog stays more ..."⁵⁴

"Yes, a man asked me if I want my dog to have a scrap with his [dog]...He was older. He looked about in his 30s. He wanted the dog to have a scrap and he was being serious...He was a black guy. He said everyone's going to have their dog off the lead, so he was like everyone's going to have their dog off the lead so if the dog wants to fight the dog will be able to defend itself, but...[He was telling you it was a training method?] Yeah, but I don't want no dog as a weapon...If I wanted a weapon then I'd go and buy a proper weapon instead of a pet."

Emanuel suggests that PBTs are not suitable pets for young people due to their headstrong nature. This fear is echoed by Kal who also suggests that they should not be kept around children - not because of their supposed aggression, but due to their ability to cause harm, even unintentionally:

*No dog, whether it's your kid, someone else's, no, these dogs are too powerful to be around children. And it seems that they're soft as ****, sometimes they don't even know what they're doing. She [PBT] was unmanageable when she came here, you know that, couldn't touch her. She was outside for a reason, because she was my dad's dog and no one else's. She would not listen, she would not do anything. But a lot of instances, like when the police have got involved is when someone has let their child go and touch a dog, but a child's just finished a piece of chocolate, in 90 degree heat, the child's hand is covered in chocolate, or KFC, or MacDonalds. What do you expect the dog to do? And I don't mean snap, even just a mouth is enough for a parent to have shock horror.*

4.12 The link to criminality

4.12.1 In the media status dog owners are reported to be involved in criminality relating to their dog ownership. Criminality was linked to youth's dog ownership in four broad ways: 1) committing an offence with the dog, 2) committing an offence on the dog, 3) theft of a dog and 4) committing an offence to protect or avenge their dog. The first category of committing an offence with a dog includes offences under the Dangerous Dog Act [DDA] - s1 (ownership, sale or breeding of banned breed) [see Case Study 4] and s3 (dog dangerously out of control), using a dog as a weapon, using dog paraphernalia as a weapon or using a dog in an offence. At least four of the interviewees (and possibly six) were in breach of s1 and s3 due to their illegal ownership of PBT-type dogs and their accounts of their dog out of control in public space.

4.12.2 One interviewee was accused by the police of using his dog in a street robbery (Glen), although he suggests:

As I've got the dog I've, I've not really caused much trouble as I used to... Yeah it's stopped me because, you know, it's harder running from someone when you've got a dog in your hand...It gets a bit easier to spot who you are. (Glen, male, 15yrs)

4.12.3 Three of the males may be viewed as using their dog as a weapon with regard to training their dogs to attack on command. Snoop discussed a number of training techniques used to increase his dog's aggressive drive [See Case Study 5]. Dee noted that previously the gang he works with 'went on missions' (to another area to commit an offence) with their dogs. They would release them from their chain to chase and attack rival gang members. He notes this is not currently a problem in the Manchester area, possibly due to the

54 The researchers do not make any assessment of such measures and acknowledge training methodologies of 'experts' vary greatly.

availability of weapons such as guns in the area. He suggests that using a dog as a weapon, rather than a gun, demonstrates control and respect: 'using a gun is fear respect, but having a dog do things for you, that that's real respect. If you control the dog you could say 'go and get 'em' and then you can go 'come here I've changed my mind', you can't change your mind when you've shot the bullet out of the gun'. In contrast to these youths, James reportedly used his metal dog chain, rather than his dog, as a weapon for protection.

CASE STUDY 4. Responding to the Status Dog Problem and 'The Status Dog Unit' - Lauren, female aged 20 years, London⁵⁵.

Lauren describes her three dogs - including two pit bull types (as detailed above) - as friendly and playful towards dogs and people and trained and well behaved on and off-lead. Early one morning her family were awoken by the Status Dog Unit, who were responding to a report that the family were breeding from and owned an illegal breed of dog. Lauren had clearly broken the law by knowingly purchasing a pit bull, allowing her dogs to breed and then selling on the pups, however, her dogs were never reportedly involved in an aggressive or dangerous incident. According to the young woman this stressful incident resulted in eight pups being euthanised and two of the dogs being confiscated for two months, while she and her mother attempted to get their dogs home:

"it was about probably six, seven in the morning. And all I hear is yeah, they're in there. Like that. And I was like oh my God, like I just knew it was the police straightaway. And obviously, I'm getting scared, like holding my dogs, like oh my God, I know what's happened, basically...My brother's gone downstairs, opened the door. And they thought my dogs were vicious, and they was like hold your dogs, hold your dogs, like this, and they were trying to bang down my door with one of those clamps...ramp, sorry. And yeah anyway, so basically like oh hold your dogs. Like because we was in...I was in my room with my two girls, and my mum was in with hers, and they come in. They had the poles with the thingy, and I was like they're not vicious, or whatever. So they come, they put them on the lead, and my dogs are like all happy, like hi people, hi, like. And yeah, and literally they were just there, taking them out of my house, yeah. And obviously, my mum was in tears, I was in tears. My mum was saying bye to her boy, to Yayo. And I remember, they didn't even put...connect the lead onto their collar, they wrapped it around his throat, and the way they had him, it was tight. And my mum was crying her eyes out. She was like it's too tight, it's too tight. And they was like get her away, thinking my mum was trying to release the dog, which she wasn't. She was just getting upset because like they were...yeah it was tight on his neck. I remember, I came down the stairs after they took them two dogs and I seen my Staff on the lead, and I said what are you doing, I said like that's my dog and I got it off the lead, and I put her in the kitchen. And I had her two puppies in the cage in the kitchen. They were going mad in the cage because they could hear all this. And then, I had Tila's puppies, which were only little babies, like four weeks. They was in a little box in the living room. And I remember, they come in, and I let my two puppies out because obviously, they wanted to go to the toilet and that. I let them out, and they come in the kitchen and it was like yeah, we're going to take them two, yeah. And I was just like no, whatever. They took them. And I never saw them go but my mum said she remembers seeing them, because they put them on little leads as well, that they were walking out the door, all happy, like wagging their tail, thinking they were going for a walk...They were roughly three months old..."

55 Readers should note again that this depiction of the SDU's intervention is that of one young person; it is not our concern here to try and interpret what may have 'really' happened in this episode. As with all the evidence collected in this section, there is no attempt to impute that this interpretation of events was the correct one as against that of other actors involved in the episode.



"There was a good like ten officers, police officers...Yeah, they had a warrant, yeah. And then, probably a couple of RSPCA people. But I didn't see them, I just...Yeah, there was loads, all in my house. And like, obviously, they were searching my house, like looking for more dogs or whatever...well the policewoman left my mum a contact number, like to speak to her and all that."

"Basically, the policewoman who was in charge of the case, like what happened, she tried sending another police officer round a couple of days later with a form to sign over the puppies. And when that come, my mum was like no, I'm not signing that. My mum refused to sign it, because my mum was in love with Mia's two puppies. She was actually in love with one of them that she wanted to keep, even though we couldn't, because we already had three dogs. But my mum refused to sign the form. And then, the policewoman rung my mum up and was just like oh you've refused to sign it, if you refuse to sign it, then we will take you to court and we will do it that way, and then you can risk getting your other two dogs put down as well. And obviously...and then she said to us as well, she was like if you sign the puppies over, you can have your two dogs back. So obviously, it's my mum's baby, Yayo. She was like I'm having my boy back, and obviously, Tila's like practically mine. So my mum had to sign the puppies over."

"After a good month and a half, they was like oh...but they kept telling me...because this woman was new to the case, she'd never done anything to do with dogs. It was her first case. And she kept giving us wrong information...she was like we're coming out with the documents, because we have to pay £50 a year as well for insurance for them. And we paid that. And she was like okay, now that's paid, she was like your dogs are going to be neutered, tattooed and that, so you can get them back within a week. Come a week, oh you'll have to wait another certain while. And we kept waiting and waiting and waiting, and then in the end we got them back after two months. And we had to go pick them up from the police station."

4.12.4 The second category involved committing an offence on a dog, which included dog fighting and cruelty and neglect of a dog. Where animal cruelty was discussed by the participants, they usually referred to adults involved in active abuse - 'beat and kick' their dogs or were involved in dog fighting - and passive abuse - neglectful and over-bred their dogs. Young people were not generally perceived as cruel, unless they were involved in dog fighting. The general acceptance of negative training techniques ensured this behaviour was not identified as abusive. Each of the youths recognised that some of their friends didn't make good owners - but they were not usually referring to passive abuse (e.g. neglect) rather active abuse.

4.12.5 A distinction is evident in the accounts of these youths between 'organised', 'ad-hoc' (rolling/chaining) and low-level/accidental dog fighting. The commonly held belief among many of the males is that it is necessary for dogs to work out the pack hierarchy (in terms of the toughest and strongest) in a similar fashion to their human owners - through the use of violence. The key difference between ad-hoc and more organised dog fighting is that these young people believe they don't 'organise' or force the dogs to engage in combat - it is the dog's choice - as James clearly explains:

[What is the difference between what you do and what people who are doing organised dog-fighting do?] People are putting their dog in that position, you know what I mean?...People are taking their dog knowing that the dog can, is about to go and get hurt or murdered, you know what I mean? That, they're specifically taking them out of a boxed cage into their car to a location and letting him fight. Me, I wake up, I get dressed, I put my dog's chain on, I'm walking my dog on the street, if a dog comes across to fight, then my dog will have the fight. Then my dog will have the fight, you know what I mean? I won't put him in that position, I won't...If I

thought that that dog got hurt and it was because of me, that would seriously turn me up, do you know what I mean? But if I thought that my dog got hurt because of something that he did I'd just say alright, well next time you'll have to just be more stronger and a bit more better, you know what I mean? (James, male, 20yrs)

4.12.6 There was a clear divide between those with the above sentiment and one male and the females in the research, who refused to let their dog fight.

One of their dogs had a fight with another dog in the area, but I'd rather keep my dog out of that. They just made the dogs fight. I think that's kind of sad to be making your dog fight. Like I don't see why you would go through that trouble of bringing up your dog, then at the end of the day getting it to fight, and if it dies or something then...it's just heartless. (Emanuel, male, 16yrs).

CASE STUDY 5. Dog as a Weapon - Snoop, male, 22, Manchester

Snoop described one training technique which involved grabbing the dog behind its canine teeth and shaking it around to encourage the dog to growl and become aggressive so it would begin to attack him. Then he would shout 'aah' to teach the dog to open his mouth again. This taught the dog to bite down just enough and hold his bite. He would also squeeze the dog tightly around the muzzle until the dog cried in pain and became aggressive. He would let the dog go and the dog would attack him. He claimed his dog never properly attacked him, but this was his way of making him more aggressive and 'getting him into that frame of mind'. Snoop was very focused on developing this aggressive drive in dogs. Although he did not recognise the terms 'chaining' or 'rolling', when it was explained to him, he commented that he would do this with the dogs for fun and as part of the aggressive drive training. Snoop feels great pride in his ability to train his dog - he feels he has enough control and a 'proper bond'.

Snoop suggested that his dog would automatically jump on to tree branches in the park without being trained to do so. He had actually thought about taking his dog to police dog training classes to learn how to attack on command. He decided not to go because he felt the police would not take his dog or would see it as too aggressive. Instead, Snoop would include it in his own training by rolling a thick jacket onto his arm and taunting his dog to bite it hard. He knew this technique from the police and said he was thinking of buying the proper police equipment to put around his arm. However, his friend felt the dog was so aggressive and powerful that it would tear it apart. Each part of Snoop's training is aimed at making his dog more human aggressive and dangerous. He even refuses to breed his dog to ensure he is 'sexually frustrated because I want him mad in the head'. Snoop also gives his dog large raw bones and practices taking them off him, to demonstrate that the dog respects him as his owner.

Snoop did not indicate if he has used his dog as a weapon yet, however, he clearly believes he will perform for him if he requires a weapon.

4.12.7 This type of fighting was identified by Emanuel as problematic in that it draws negative attention to both these dog breeds and their owners. Glen demonstrates this in his account of an ad-hoc dog fight within his gang [see also Case Study 6]. Youths also presented themselves and their dogs as victims of these ad-hoc fights:



Yeah. I think the dogs should just get taken off of them - even though they're my friends - because they're not responsible enough because that's what's just bringing the dogs to their attention. That's what the media wants people to do so then after they have reason to take people's dogs from them. (Emanuel, male, 16yrs).

Yeah there was one time when I was at the park with my friends and we were like walking the dog and someone set their dog on my mate's dog and it caught onto its neck and it took a chunk of its neck. But lucky enough like we took our jacket off and we just pushed our jacket into the wound so...[So what happened, when they set the dog on your friend's dog what actually happened?] Right, there was an argument...there was a big, massive argument and then it ended up being a fight. (Katie, female, 18yrs)

4.12.8 Katie also linked dog fighting to gang rivalries in that dogs were reportedly used by her gang friends to settle territorial and status battles between warring gangs in London. In Manchester, Snoop indicated the Irish families in specific areas were the main organised dog fighters in Manchester. None of the youths reported being involved in organised dog fighting, however, five of them detailed encounters with older (over 30yrs) males, usually white, who offered to buy their dog and/or fight it professionally. Each of the male interviewees reported seeing organised dog fighting videos on the internet and distributed by mobile phone.

CASE STUDY 6. Dog Fighting - Glen, 15 year old male, London

Glen bought a pup from a backroom breeder on the internet. In the first few weeks of having his dog, an older man, aged approximately 40 years, approached him and asked if he could buy his dog, offering him £1000 (he could see a potential fighter). When Glen refused to sell his pup, he was then invited to place his dog in an organised dog fight. Although Glen was sure his dog would do well in a dog fight, he refused to partake in it on the basis that he felt his dog's life was worth more than the money. Glen decided not to tell his friends about this encounter as he was concerned some of his friends were not as responsible or interested in their dogs and may choose to take up the offer. Glen reported that his dog has been involved in a number of accidental fights with other dogs while out walking. Occasionally, Glen had been approached by other youth dog owners and challenged to a fight to see whose dog is toughest. When approached Glen has warned "look you'd just better walk away or the dog's going to die". Glen believes it is natural for dogs to fight occasionally - "A dog's going to fight at the end of the day. Every dog has a fight at least once in its life". Glen described an ad-hoc dog fight between friend's dogs that resulted in one dog bleeding to death, while the group watched on:

"...my mate's dog had got into a fight with my mate's dog and there was about 10 of us trying to take the dogs apart and they just locked onto each other's ... locking onto each other and then letting go, going back for more. And one of the dogs died from lack of, loss of blood. ..It just died, died on the spot in the park...It was about half an hour the fight went on for. We separated them and we thought oh they were just like...they were a bit intimidated by each other. So we sort of let them split up a bit, brought them back together, it was alright. And then he...there was a stick, that's what they were fighting for, fighting for the stick and we took it away and then they just kept fighting and fighting. And we didn't realise that the dog was pouring from the neck. And we sort of, we just got a cloth and wiped it down just to, because we thought it was just a cut. But then about an hour later the dog went over in the corner and just laid down and the other dog was sort of looking at it, tilting its head as if to say 'why is it over there'. So we went over to it and it was just dead...Yeah. It just bled to death.

We were all quite shocked. We didn't know what to do. So we all just picked it up and carried it walking down the road. Took it to the vet and we didn't know what to do. So we just took it to the vet because the guy was quite far from his house. So we just took it to the nearest vet. [What was he like? Yeah, what was he thinking?] He was just distraught but, but, you know, he couldn't have a grudge on his mate, our mate, because he'd done it, you know... [And what did the vet say when you got there?] They asked loads of questions. They were saying 'oh how did this happen', 'why did it happen' and 'was the dog aggressive', things like that. We just said look there was a fight, we couldn't handle it and the dog died. And they said 'oh well that's the story you've got to stick with now'. So they got the police involved... They brought him in and examined him over and they just said look he's died from loss of blood. They said we're going to have to phone the police obviously because you're all so young and it's quite a, the dog's dead basically, they didn't know what happened to it. They didn't know whether it was us that had beat it up or stabbed it or whatever. They brought the police in and my other mate's dog that killed that dog got put down. [What breed was it?] It was a Pit cross Labrador. [And the one that died was?] It was just a Staff...and we didn't think nothing of it. They thought they're going to show each other dominance, like whose boss and then they would be alright. And then my mate, he got interviewed, and they said...they put an order against him that he's not allowed to have a dog anymore just because of that one incident. [So did they classify that as dog fighting do you think?] Yeah they said they thought we were, we set the dogs on each other. We said no they were just - it's like two people, like in a group of people you barge past someone, nowadays you're just going to cause a massive argument. Even staring at someone, looking at someone, they're 'what you looking at'. That's the same as dogs...Dogs look at each other and if they look away then that's a weakness. [Yeah. So you didn't really think they were fighting or you did but you thought they were working it out?] We, yeah we thought they were just going to battle it out until it was finished and they decided right 'he's the boss, I'll stick to that from now on'. [So is that usually what happens? Is that your experience to date when two dogs meet, let them have it out?] Straight away you've got to let them like basically talk to each other, let them see how they react. If they fight then you've just got to try and separate them but we kept separating these two dogs and they kept getting separated they said they wanted more...we put them on the lead but because they're so powerful they just kept going and going...But we were all just holding them together and just getting brought back in and pulling them together. [Yeah. And they didn't want to just get out of there before the police came?] No, we just thought oh we ain't done...well we didn't do anything wrong so we weren't in trouble."

4.12.9 The third category of offending was theft of a dog, which was introduced through Katie's account of the theft of her puppy from her front garden and the theft and the murder of a dog by a local gang also witnessed by Katie [see Case Study 7 below]. Snoop indicated that at the time status dogs were prevalent in Manchester "there were just balaclavas and robberies and people taking their dogs". Dee (gatekeeper) suggested PBTs and SBTs were particularly targeted - they "take them to show off, train, breed or for protection". Glen indicated he had previously brought a stray dogs home and felt that his peers would also take a 'good looking' dog left tied up or straying on the street.

Yeah just because I know that if people see a Staff of her...like the quality of her and things like that, they'll just take her and won't take any notice of it. [Have you heard of many people stealing dogs like that?] Yeah every...anyone will steal a dog...Not anyone but people who want a dog and they see one they'll think right, they don't...they don't realise that they're going to be taking the dog away from a loving family, things like that. (Glen, male, 16yrs)



CASE STUDY 7. Dog Ownership, Victimisation and Offending with and against dogs - Katie, 20 year old female, London

Katie, an ex-gang member and owner of a SBT, has been a victim of a stabbing and gang beating prior to owning her dog. Although she has now left her gang and finds companionship mostly in her dog, Katie identifies a number of ways in which she has been and could possibly be a victim of violence and crime through her dog. Katie feels protected by her dog, but also feels protecting her dog is an important part of her relationship with her dog. Katie identified a range of offences against dogs and dog owners - in particular she reports an increase in the use of dogs as weapons among local gang members and an increase in dog thefts by gangs and other youths (e.g. for use in dog fighting/breeding). She recently lost an American Bulldog puppy which was stolen from her front garden. Katy details an incident she witnessed where dogs were used as weapons to aid a dog theft by a gang:

"A dog came to attack my dog, but I quickly ran off with her...The dog was quite far down the park, so I just managed to get away, but the dog had followed my dog's scent to my house and it came sitting outside my house. I just kept the door shut, I was too scared. I was too scared to go out and say go away, right...It was the blue one...I think it was a blue Pit or Staffie. [Did you see the owner of that dog? Was he there too?] Yeah, they didn't look very friendly so I just kept my door shut and just stayed in."

"They stabbed his dog and killed it. They stabbed the man's dog and just...They set the dog on the dog as well and the person...They were walking down the road...this gang of boys were walking down the road and then this man was walking down the road with his dog and then he was like [Was he in a gang?] No, he wasn't in a gang. And then he was like just walking and then they wanted his dog and because it was a puppy he said, "No, why should I give you my dog?" And then they pulled out knives and he was like, "If you're going to stab me, stab me," and he couldn't run off because they were all around him and he couldn't go anywhere. And they tried to take the dog and then he grabbed the dog off of one of the boys and then like a few of them stabbed at the dog and then a few of them got the man, but lucky enough the man survived, but the dog didn't."

^{4.12.10} The final category reflects the perceived need by youths to protect their dogs and the lengths they are willing to go to defend them. James' recount of the day his dog was seized by the police explained that had he not been in a police cell, he was likely to have attacked the police officer who took his dog: "I could have done a lot of things that... at that precise moment there, I could have shot a man and not even worried about it really, you know what I mean?". Katie referred to the aftermath of the dog attack on her friend's dog in the park (see page 46), which resulted in her friend and his group engaging in a gang rival attack on the group who owned the offending dog (this reaction may have been the motivation for the attack). Emanuel, described the anxiety he felt when out with his gang after they organised a dog fight as he feared they would try to engage his dog in a fight, which would force him to retaliate.

Yeah. I don't let none of them hold my dog on the lead. I can't trust them round my dog. I don't let my dog fight. [Do you think they might for a laugh like let all their dogs off or anything like that around your dog?] Well my dog, he wouldn't be happy. I'd have to retaliate in some other way...I'd try to stop their dog from like coming towards my dog because I won't let my dog fight. (Emanuel, male, 16yrs)

^{4.12.11} Degrees of victimisation and fear of victimisation characterised the experiences of youth owners. Fear may be relating to their dog being stolen (the majority had micro-chipped their dog in case of this), their dog being attacked or their dog being seized by the authorities (discussed below). Each of the interviewees

displayed some fear for their pet's safety; this was fuelled by their awareness of public perceptions of their dog breed, the offences which occur in their community and the consequences of having an illegal or dangerous dog. Each of the young people were concerned with ensuring their dogs safety by avoiding trouble where possible, by walking away from potential conflict, keeping their dog by their side at all times and attempting to ensure their dog is well behaved in public. This resulted in the development of a secret world of the PBT and SBT owners. Ownership of these dogs involved remaining under the radar as much as possible by walking their dogs late at night in parks and avoiding the need for family members and friends to look after their dogs by staying with them at all times. Emanuel described the stress involved as very disruptive to his life and one of the most significant negative aspects of dog ownership.

4.13 Responding to status dogs

- 4.13.1 Four key responses were identified by young people discussing the responses which had the greatest impact on their dog ownership and the responses they suggested would assist in dealing with the status dog problem. First, the media was identified as an important medium for education and advice on ownership. However, it also played a key role in labelling and stigmatising status dog owners. The second response referred to legislation available to respond to the problem; in particular, the Dangerous Dog Act [DDA] was identified as problematic by interviewees as it focused on stereotyping and labelling certain breeds of dog and their owners. The response from the police and in particular the Met Status Dogs Unit (SDU), who represent 'the system' to these young people, was heavily criticised for being an impenetrable fortress - information was deemed either not available or not decipherable/understood. Their Manchester peers provided a notable difference in their accounts of police response and performance (but the research can take no account of the comparable activity from the respective police units which could account for this difference). Third, education was identified as necessary, but difficult to realise in practice. Finally, the research identified support among interviewees for a national dog registration scheme to assist in monitoring problematic dog owners.

The Impact of the media and the public perspectives on young people's dog ownership

- 4.13.2 The web-based media was repeatedly highlighted by the interviewees as a positive source of information on dogs. The internet and Facebook in particular, were utilised to look for information on dog breeds, the purchase of and advice on caring for a puppy, and information on current dog affairs (e.g. dog seizures, police response). The internet is evidently an important source of information for youths, given the limited contact and advice they reportedly had with animal welfare agencies such as the RSPCA and Dogs Trust. Emanuel suggests that the media (particularly Facebook) is the best strategy for informing youths of the programmes and initiatives available for dog owners. Katie described the advice and support she received from contacts on Facebook as invaluable when her dogs were seized by the Status Dog Unit (in the absence of detailed information or assistance from animal welfare agencies and the police):

she's always there, because obviously I've got her on my Facebook, she's always there, posting things and all that, and like videos. Like I saw one video, I remember when my dogs got taken, she posted a video, I think it was a Pit Bull getting put down in another country. And it just showed you a dog being put down and then an officer just threw it in a black bag, and that was it. And yeah she posts all these videos of people, like obviously things that have happened to people, like all their dogs being taken, their dogs coming back in states, like their tattoos...because obviously, they get tattooed on their leg, their tattoo's massive. Where they've neutered them, they're all infected and just everything like that...Her group, yeah, because obviously like I've looked at her friends list, she's got like over 1,000 friends, which are people that are all like with Pit Bulls, not against them, because they say it like. Which I think it's true;



it's not the breed, it's the deed. So yeah. [So what else has happened within that group? Do you think that people are moving dogs within the group and breeding more dogs in the group?] Yeah, they're trying to re-home dogs as well. Because she rescues dogs and that, and then she posts it on facebook like to people that she knows and all that. (Katie, female, 18yrs)

4.13.3 The size and activity of the Facebook group described, in particular their efforts to effect change on the DDA and the SDU, suggests that the internet may have become a catalyst for discontented youth dog owners who wish to respond to the perceived criminalisation of both youths and their dogs. The perceived problem with authority is greater in London than Manchester (where there was no mention of an online campaign). In fact, the internet was negatively regarded by Snoop as a mode of surveillance.

4.13.4 Katie discussed the impact of watching television documentaries on the destruction and abandonment of dogs in the UK:

I've heard of that, yeah. It makes me sad. When people use their dogs for those things it makes me sick. I have watched it on TV...I've watched something like that and I've watched...when they were at Battersea Dogs' Home and then they were [Panorama?] That's it and I was crying when I watched that. My mum like she was upset. My mum was terrible. Like because there's no point...like dogs haven't been brought into the world for those things; they've been brought up in the world to look after (Katie, female, 18)

4.13.5 The news media was criticised heavily by all youths for profiling PBTs and other Bull breeds in a negative manner and for stigmatising bull breeds and their owners. The image of status dog owners portrayed divided, stigmatised, misrepresented and alienated youths from their communities. Glen links this negative depiction in the media to an uncomfortable experience he had on a bus:

What the media, the way they bring it out is a Pit Bull, so that sort of ... everyone is taught to think of that as a dangerous dog. But a dangerous dog really is someone who has no control over their dog and who will attack for no reason... It's just, everything's a stereotype, and it's like saying that a black person will go out and rob anyone they see. It's not true. Or a white person will be racist to any Indian they see, you know... Because they're killing...they're getting rid of the Pit Bulls by putting them to sleep because of the few bad dogs. But that's like saying alright let's do a survey or how many black people from here or white people from here have been sent here for robbery, alright let's kill ... you know, they don't say let's kill all them off. (Glen, male, 16yrs)

It's a bit different when you've got a dog that is media-ised as someone that will just instantly attack if told. But it's not the case really. [that's what you think they're thinking?] Yeah, everyone thinks that. Even when I jump on a bus and she comes on with me the bus drivers are fine they just say to take her upstairs. ...But people sort of just watch the dog just in case they try and bite them just for no reason. [So do you think that they're thinking the dog is going to bite them or that the young guy with the dog is going to ...] Yeah they probably think both, you know, like a young guy with a dog, one of those typical type of dogs. He's probably trained it to be aggressive. But it's not, if she was here now she'd roll on her back (Glen, male, 16yrs).

4.13.6 It is suggested by Lauren that the media depiction of bull breeds is itself dangerous and problematic, as it may actually increase the desire for these dogs as status objects, among inappropriate owners. The negative image portrayed by the media and the negative comments and reactions by members of the public adversely affected youth dog ownership. Mobile phones and the internet were also identified as commonly used mediums to view dog fighting footage. Although it is illegal to own or show footage of this kind, some of the male youths had videos on their phones and suggested it was commonplace to exchange and view these (even those youths vigorously opposed to dog fighting had examples, yet, at the same time, claimed they couldn't understand the attraction of dog fighting).

Knowledge of Legislation

- 4.13.7 The majority of young people had some understanding of the Dangerous Dog Legislation; however few were aware of other legislation guiding the treatment of companion animals, such as the Animal Welfare Act. The Dangerous Dogs Act was viewed by all as an ineffective and problematic piece of legislation, in particular, the way in which it is being enforced in London received repeated negative comments. Because the legislation and response is viewed as being so problematic, these young people appear to flaunt their offending, and support another cause: the Deed not Breed philosophy:

All of us...yeah, all of us are more into helping like, because like to change the law, because I think the law is ridiculous. Like they should be...they shouldn't be going to people's houses and seizing their dogs, when they're in a family home. They should be looking for the people that are fighting their dogs. So that's what annoys me is they go in and targeting family homes, they're not people that are actually fighting the dogs. (Lauren, female, 20yrs)

- 4.13.8 In general, support for the removal of DDA legislation and a change in the police response to non-aggressive dogs and owners was evident among the interviewees and gatekeepers. The negative impact that this legislation and enforcement is having on these young dog owners is evident in James', Lauren's and Kal's (gatekeeper) accounts of their dog being seized.

But none of this.... if they hadn't come through my door, to cap it off, they have made something now; they created me, the Status Dog Unit. And I will not rest until either things change or I'll be in a position to train kids to get around the law. And I don't want to do that. I want there to be one law that we can all adhere to; RSPCA, Status Dog Unit, me and my gang members. One rule that we can all adhere to, so if that line is crossed, you know you're in trouble. It's that simple. But the breed.... concentrating on the breed that I love is wrong.

- 4.13.9 Both James and Lauren were required to register their dogs as illegal breeds and thereafter abide by the conditions of the legislation - which require the dog to be micro-chipped, neutered and wear a muzzle in public. Both James and Lauren identified the wearing of the muzzle as the most problematic aspect of the legislation due to the perceptions of muzzled dogs among the public and the discomfort for the dog.

*To be honest with you, I just...like honestly I said it so I could just get my dog back, you know what I'm trying to say? I say f**k the muzzle, man, because he can't even breathe. And obviously he can breathe, but when the muzzle's on him he can't even open his mouth and that when he's hot. And I just think why should my boy suffer for what... for his brother and for what? They don't care about him, you see what I'm trying to say? Why should my boy suffer and go through the heat and that, and with this muzzle on his face. Because let me go and put a mask on their face and tie it hard, and let them walk around all day and they aren't going to like it, so why should my dog have to go through that as well. And even got fears as well, do you know what I'm trying to say? They can go and f**k themselves for that. [You think it's unfair because he's a good dog and he doesn't bite people?] Yeah, it's unfair, man.*

- 4.13.10 Glen suggests:

I don't know really but if they were to put a muzzle on everyone's dog it would just prove their point even more that those dogs are aggressive. So that people think right I was right all along. [Ah, so you think a muzzle instantly changes their] Changes, it just looks...the look of putting a muzzle on a dog you think oh that dog must be vicious.[Yeah. You want people and the media and...] ...the government to realise these dogs are nice dogs.



Education

4.13.11 Early education (from home, school or community groups) in dog ownership and animal management was generally lacking in these young people's lives. In order for young people to know what a responsible dog owner should be, they require guidance. As evidenced from the participants' dialogue and in general the large number of abuse complaints to the RSPCA, young people have many examples of irresponsible ownership to learn from and an abundance of myths and misplaced advice to guide their behaviour. The myths and punitive culture around dog training is largely facilitated by the visual and verbal exchange of education and training among youth dog owners and the internet, peers or adults known to them. During the research, interactions between gatekeepers, youth participants and their peers were observed and discussed where abusive and neglectful owners were confronted and advised on how to change their behaviour. Snoop, respected locally for his ability to handle large and problematic dogs, suggested that often people will accept his advice and change the behaviour, however, 'you can't ... force people, can't think of people as always the same, they'll all do their own thing'. The interviewees and gatekeepers identified a strong resistance to formal dog education and training among youths. Even though many problematic dog behaviours were highlighted by youths, the majority suggested that they didn't need advice or training as their dogs were behaving as they wanted them to. Thus, formal education and training for this age group may have little impact. Two positive alternatives were identified: 1) Parkguard's 'Top Dog' programme was identified by Katie and Jet as useful for addressing training and behavioural problems due to the informal and non confrontational approach by the trainers, to both the youths and their dogs. Educational and training programmes can focus on the positive relationship desired by many young people and evident between some youths and their dogs. Dee (gatekeeper) suggests a successful intervention for these youths must be free and 'it can't be preachy though it's very important the style and how that's communicated ... you're doing it wrong if you start with people like that (telling them what to do), it's not gonna work'. 2) The important role and influence of gatekeepers such as Dee and Kal in the lives of youth status dog owners became increasingly evident from both young people's and gatekeepers' accounts. Kal uses his reputation as a breeder and also as a registered Pit bull owner to intervene locally and nationally in problematic youth status dog ownership; his position in the community and online results in young people contacting him for advice on and approval of their dogs. In addition to providing advice on training, breeding, ownership and dog choice, Kal is also campaigning to reduce the rate of ad-hoc breeding by young people. This approach, according to Kal, has already proven to be successful on previous occasions.

Yeah, because it's the respect, it's the respect element. They know how I feel. Like I've already...what I'm leaning towards is with this whole movement thing I'm trying to do, is I want everybody on my Facebook not to do any more breeding this year. That is what I'm planning. Everyone wants to put a picture up, like that one, obviously not his because he hasn't done nothing to me, but a picture like that with their puppies. And the status I want to put up is everyone is on us at the moment for the dogs that we own and what we do with our dogs. Well let's give a bit of a kickback, and I don't want to see anybody, no puppies on Facebook for... 'til next year, 'til at least January/February. And if you feel you can do that, tag yourself in this photograph. And then we'll take it from there and see what the response is, do you know what I mean. I've done that with a few other little things, my views on dog fighting. Most of the people who have tagged themselves still stick to it and stay in contact. Now I'm aiming that at the under-20s really, the under-25s. There's one boy on there, I'm not going to show you his page because I find it quite.... it pisses me off. But his little girl's had three litters this year.

4.13.12 Young people who partake in the culture of the street are most likely to respond favourably to advice and criticism from 'respected elders' like Kal. In fact, the positive role of offenders and ex-offenders in mentoring youths has been highlighted by the Princes Trust (2010⁵⁶) and Safer London Foundation⁵⁷ as well as the experiences across the USA in terms of gang violence prevention and 'desistance' interventions. However this approach is not without its problems. Kal, for example, has a criminal record for a serious offence and lacks certified dog training; therefore his communication methods with both the youths and their dogs may not be acceptable to the public authorities.

Dog registration

4.13.13 Dog Registration which involves compulsory microchipping and registration of all dogs is supported by these youths due to their desire to keep their dogs safe from theft and harm and in order to identify the 'real' offenders, namely those involved in dog fighting and cruelty. It may also force dog owners to become more responsible for their actions. All of the young people agreed with this strategy. However, there was little faith in the success of the programme at dealing with the most irresponsible breeders and owners.

4.14 Lessons for policy and practice to be learnt from the case studies

4.14.1 The young peoples' narratives on dog ownership articulated in this study are clearly at times contradictory and manifest both beneficial and problematic features to the relationship. There is perhaps a case to be made that this relationship might be considered a largely positive influence in their lives and a considerable tool with which to engage with these often 'hard-to-reach' young people. However, at the same time, many of the accounts of their own and peers' behaviour in groups, in the locality and online, are disturbing. This suggests there is a need for targeted interventions. Taking the views articulated in each case study, specific points of intervention are suggested in this final part of the section of this report:

Case Study 1: James - Companionship & Protection

- Focus on the positive nature of the relationship between dog and owner as a way to engage with this youth on being a responsible owner.
- Attempt to expand the care and concern for own dog to other dogs and creatures.

Case Study 2: Lauren - The Breeding Cycle

- Focus on the issues of ad-hoc breeding among young people (and their families) through informational TV programmes and the internet, the role of music, especially that of known rappers and MCs⁵⁸.
- Establish presence on Facebook and develop information and advice - especially information and vouchers on neutering. Make buyers aware of the risk of acquiring a PBT puppy.

Case Study 3: Emanuel - Dog Control and Training

- Hands-on educational programmes for new dog owners - to ensure they know how to care for puppy and early training advice (free advice line).

56 http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about_the_trust/what_we_do/programmes/working_one_to_one.aspx

57 <http://www.saferlondonfoundation.org/aspire.html>

58 For example, see recently released West Midlands Fire Safety Rap song: <http://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/2010/12/03/firefighters-release-rap-song-about-fire-safety-92746-27758462/>



Case Study 4: Snoop - Dog as a weapon

- Welfare and educational information on the impact negative people-aggressive training could have on the dog (PTS at the animal shelter⁵⁹).

Case Study 5: Glen - Dog Fighting

- Establish different response to each layer of dog fighting typology - organised, ad-hoc and low-level accidental.
- Focus on the role of the adults in organised fighting who are recruiting young PBT owners. Also, education and programmes which deal with conflict resolution (e.g. among gangs) for youths who feel their dogs must fight in accordance with the code of the street.

Case Study 6: Katie - Dog Ownership and Victimisation

- Youths can be both offenders and victims and this should be noted. These young people clearly support responses which make their dogs 'safer' - for example, registration and micro-chipping.
- Although there was a consistently negative response to the DDA, youths claimed they would support enforcement of a law which targeted 'bad' owners - those with aggressive, dangerous dogs and those involved in dog fighting - rather than punish good owners with friendly, but banned, types. The consequences of the policing of the DDA are considerable: youths live in fear of their dog being seized, they may fail to contact the police or vet if they/their dog become a victim of an incident and their efforts to avoid police attention (by walking their dogs at night in remote areas) are pushing them closer to the underground world of organised dog fighting and training. Young people need to be included in consultations on dog legislation and local responses to the status dog problem.

Case Study 7: Lauren - Responding to the Status Dog Problem

- Transparent and accessible information from the police when enforcing the DDA which permeates effectively to the young people involved⁶⁰. Governments⁶¹ should require clearer statistics on the type, age and reason for euthanising dogs in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the response and the true nature of the problem. Immediate, independent advice and assistance would benefit owners who have had their dogs seized, to ensure they understand the process involved and are assured of their dogs safety (until a full assessment is done). Early assessment to identify the temperament of the dog and suitability of the owner, with the aim of reducing the stress to dog and owner by swiftly returning the dog to the home (if appropriate) is important⁶².
- Focus on changing public opinion and legislation on types. In particular, the need to focus on 'deeds' and the actions/inactions of the owners.
- Trust and legitimacy play a vital role in state-citizen relations, especially in the use of coercion (see also above comments).

59 Put to sleep - to mean humanely euthanised.

60 Information that is made available when a dog is seized may well be transparent and accessible to the legally responsible adult at the incident but may be indecipherable to the youths who are effectively the owners of the dogs in question.

61 Westminster for England and the Welsh Assembly Government for Wales.

62 We note that the Met have stated they assess all dogs within 48 hours. Also the system for returning suitable banned types to suitable owners (named 4B - from within the DDA) in the SDU takes on average 46 days compared to 226 for a prosecution. Similar data for other police forces is not recorded centrally and is therefore not currently available for this research.

5. Towards a preventative strategy

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This final section looks both back to the specific research findings generated in this project and forwards more speculatively as to what the prospects are for improving the public response to the issues raised by status dog ownership and young people in many of our poorest urban communities. Much of this discussion focuses on the possible gains to be made in moving beyond a predominantly reactive, enforcement-oriented approach to that of a more balanced approach which also prioritises a proactive, prevention-oriented policy programme.
- 5.1.2 It is wise to repeat one of the 'health warnings' already made throughout our review and analysis of existing 'preventive' projects targeted at reducing the harms associated with problematic dog ownership and behaviour among young people: namely even those best known and wisely celebrated projects and programmes (such as BARK, People with Dogs Project - see p.17-18) have not been scientifically evaluated and monitored to the extent that we can be confident in drawing up unequivocal 'best practice', 'what works' exemplars. Our knowledge base in this fast changing and politically 'hot' field is still very immature and in need of serious and sustained attention from the social scientific research and evaluation community in tandem with the practitioner and policy communities (see 5.4 below). Readers will thus be disappointed if they are looking for 'off the shelf' toolkit-type exemplars which are ready for duplication. Rather the discussion here aims to open up a more difficult and exciting policy agenda - providing a channelling focus - for a joined-up and sustained preventive strategy.
- 5.1.3 This final part of the report is organised as follows. Section 5.2 summarises what might be learnt from taking seriously the 'bottom-up' accounts of the simultaneously 'troublesome' and 'troubled' young people themselves and those working on the ground in many of our most 'broken' communities. The problem is evidently not just a dog issue. The accounts in part 4 of this report often make troubling but important reading for any of the agencies, public and private, tasked with making a difference to problems of disorder and quality of life. Of course such voices and perceptions 'from below' should not be expected to tell public authorities 'what is to be done' in any coherent fashion. Accordingly, as well as listening to this particular minority constituency of what are broader neighbourhoods, agencies like the RSPCA also have to take account of other 'accounts' and not least other types of expertise in problem-solving such as those in the criminological research community on youth crime prevention. It is very evident that much of the preventive effort lies beyond the remit and resources of the RSPCA. In broadening out the issue to a multi-agency level at both local and national dimensions, the discussion in 5.3 also seeks to link the particular challenges associated with problematic dog ownership prevention with previous attempts to reduce other social harms usually captured by the terms, youth crime prevention and community safety.
- 5.1.4 Arising out of this discussion of the possible lessons to be drawn from the crime prevention evaluation literature, some concluding remarks about moving the prevention agenda forward across the research, policy and practice communities are presented in 5.4. If successful this report may act as a catalyst for an ongoing exchange and co-production of knowledge between the academic research community and the communities of policy and practice in animal protection.

5.2 Hard to reach populations, bottom-up accounts and the prevention agenda

- 5.2.1 In presenting the views and accounts of a sample of young people in great depth in part 4 it is not intended that there should any romanticisation of these young people's attitudes and imputed behaviour. Put bluntly



they are often engaged in harmful forms of behaviour. They often inhabit difficult familial and communal milieux. This was graphically if very bluntly stated at the RSPCA Summit 2010, when an exasperated police officer argued that the often long-term confinement of seized status dogs in their kennels was arguably a better existence for many of these dogs when compared to 'the scumbag houses they come from'. That noted, the views and (mis-)perceptions of these young people need to be listened to and engaged with, if the critically important engagement between them and the public authorities is to be developed. Readers are referred again to the young people's views on 'responses' and 'solutions;' to the problem in 4.12 and 4.13 above. Such engagement needs to be a two-way process and not one-way traffic, in which 'difficult' actors such as some of the 'gatekeepers' identified in section 4 may have a key role to play in connecting up with these hard to reach groups, and who are often 'outwith' the law and 'respectable' society. The possibility of learning from gang prevention schemes involving ex-gang members may be especially productive here. The media commentator Tom Sutcliffe recently noted that if young people do find pride in gang membership, we need to find a way to satisfy teenagers' pride that knits them into society at large rather than one which is defined by their separateness and self-enclosure (The Independent, 1 February, 2011). Evidence from the evaluation of gang prevention strategies in US cities both challenges the long-term efficacy of what is termed the 'suppression model' of control and supports the development of 'community and opportunity provision' programmes (Spergel and Curry 1990; Spergel et al. 1999; National Youth Gang Centre 2010).

5.3 The challenge of 'joined-up' expertise and multi-agency preventive strategies

'Lies, damned lies and statistics' (Disraeli): the evidential void

- 5.3.1 We have previously referred to the dearth of reliable quantitative counts (section 3 above) and the urgent requirement for agency-specific information gathering and never mind longer-term information sharing or shared strategic 'partnership intelligence'. It remains unclear to key actors in the field as to how one might measure success in this work? In the candid words of one leading RSPCA director, 'We don't know what we mean by it, how to measure it, to put data together' (RSPCA Status Dogs Summit 2010). There are difficult issues to be resolved as to which institution or institutions 'in partnership' may take up the possible coordinating roles and there obviously remains resource implications for whoever is tasked with such work.
- 5.3.2 It is evident from this research that the systematic quantitative mapping of the field has still to be undertaken and we may ask 'by whom'? Apart from greater information sharing across the often self-enclosed agencies, there is scope for a much more productive role of social scientific community as 'critical friend' in co-production of this knowledge base.

Lessons from crime prevention partnership working

- 5.3.3 What lessons may be learnt from community safety and crime prevention partnership working over last 20-30 years? Several 'hallmarks' of successful community safety partnerships (CSPs) were established in 2007, some twenty years after development of multi-agency community safety strategies became statutory duty for all local authorities as a result of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Arising out of the Home Office reform programme for local community safety partnerships in England and Wales, these hallmarks represent a useful template which may help partners in the problematic dog field, both locally and nationally, in their future work. The six hallmarks which emerged from the consultation process with policy makers, practitioners and academic researchers are the following:

- (i) empowered and effective leadership;
- (ii) intelligence-led business processes;
- (iii) effective and responsive delivery structures;
- (iv) engaged communities;
- (v) visible and constructive accountability; and
- (vi) appropriate skills and knowledge.

5.3.4 It may be easy to write these hallmarks off as glib, managerial sound bites and there is no doubt that without serious investment in resources these 'best practice' standards remain 'fine words' rather than deeds (as has been the case in much of the community safety world). That said they do help identify some of the common challenges which await any attempts at seriously 'joined-up' and sustainable partnership working. It may be worthwhile for potential partner agencies in the 'status dog' field to reflect on the extent to which there are any comparable features and processes evident in any existing arrangements in what appears - to the outside observer - to be an often disjointed area of both national policy and local practices.

Targeted anti-social 'harm' prevention and pro-social 'good' promotion

5.3.5 There is some evidence that what we may term a 'preventive mentality' is still by no means centre-stage to the RSPCA's strategy and routine practices as reflected in the views of some of the organisation's key players (Lawson, 2010). Understandably other pressures associated with its mandate as a key enforcement agency have predominated. However, it is also apparent that the turn to prevention is becoming more marked of late (see section 2, pp. 16-17). What lessons are there to be learnt from previous thinking in criminology on the techniques and interventions of youth crime prevention?

5.3.6 It is widely acknowledged that crime prevention interventions may cover a vast and elastic continuum of practices and many aspects of people's lives. It is important then to be clear as to where energy might be most productively deployed which is dependent on both the activities which one wishes to prevent (harms) as well as those one wishes to promote (goods). It is also vital that public authorities are aware of the types of persons and categories of population who are to be targeted. Three forms of preventive intervention may in turn be distinguished. As the terms are currently understood in the crime prevention field:

- 'primary prevention' operates at a broad level to address whole populations and the economic, social or other conditions which could, over the longer term, lead to the development of crime;
- 'secondary crime prevention' focuses more specifically on groups that are directly 'at risk' of becoming offenders;
- and 'tertiary crime prevention' seeks to prevent further offending by individuals already identified as offenders (Hughes et al 2009).

5.3.7 In turn one should ask is the intervention designed to be short-term or 'situational' or longer-term and 'social' in terms of its logic and outcomes. The typology of preventive interventions outlined in Table 7 is derived from existing, cognate, research on young people's relationship to community safety projects⁶³. They are defined in terms of the different social contexts that young people inhabit routinely in the course of their everyday lives: those of family, school, leisure and, for some, entry into and out of the youth justice system. Of course these distinctions are not hard and fast. Rather they should also help one draw connections between young people's family, school and leisure lives and so forth, in order to intervene in these connections.

63 Many thanks to Adam Edwards for his initial conceptualisation of these types of youth crime prevention as part of the Welsh Assembly Government-funded research on youth crime prevention (see Hughes et.al, 2009).



Table 7. Distinguishing and selecting types of youth ‘harm’ prevention projects

Focus of youth crime prevention projects	Examples
Directed leisure-based activities (DL)	Work with young people in the context of organised settings such as youth clubs, organised sports tournaments, outward bounds activities. Note ‘dogs’ would not be allowed in these settings and our population thus ‘excluded’.
Self-directed leisure-based activities (SDL)	Outreach work with street populations in the context of that street life. This appears to be a key context for engaging our population of young people.
Family-based activities (FAM)	Work with young people in the context of their family lives with their guardians, siblings and their own children. Again this appears a key context for understanding both the pro-social and anti-social support systems and resources available to young people with status dogs.
School-based activities (SCH)*	Work with young people in the context of their school lives on educational issues that supplement the core curriculum, such as sexual health, advice on substance misuse, and support for those at risk of suspension, exclusion or truancy. The relevance of this institutional context and projects relating to it will vary according to the age-groups targeted in our particular population, especially older and younger siblings.
Youth Justice-based activities (YJ)	Work with young people known to the youth justice system. YOT projects are emerging in this context targeted at young people and problematic dog ownership and/or guardianship.

* For the older age range of young people, school-based activities would need to be replaced by employment, training, further and higher education, and job-seeker activities.

- 5.3.8 In looking at youth crime prevention interventions across Wales, Hughes et al (2009) concluded that most projects are routinely targeted at DL and YJ activities, and to a lesser extent SCH and FAM activities. SDL activities tend to be low ‘in the mix’. In the case of the young populations associated with often problematic status dog ownership in deprived urban street cultures, it would seem logical that much of the focus of preventive efforts should fall on SDL activities alongside FAM activities, though supplemented by primary SCH prevention interventions (for the younger population in particular) and secondary interventions at DL activities and tertiary interventions at YJ activities.
- 5.3.9 The risks that young people face in engaging in, and/or being victimised by, offending behaviour can be understood in terms of the routine activities they engage in during their everyday lives. Specifically, most young people are under the supervision of the education system most of the time during the working week. School-life therefore provides both a key focus for offending and victimisation (assaults, bullying, theft etc.) and a key focus for intervention, not only to address prolific instances of such school-based offending and victimisation (‘tertiary’ prevention - or dealing with actual offenders, offences and victims - and secondary prevention - targeting those at risk of engaging in such offences or becoming victims), but also to promote primary prevention (e.g. interventions aimed at the whole population of young people in school to educate, advise, counsel, mentor and so forth in avoiding the onset of criminality and victimisation, not only in school but in other aspects of their everyday lives). Here there may be potential to ‘mainstream’ animal abuse awareness with

other forms of anti-violence education in the curriculum. Outside of school, young people are subject to supervision by their families (guardians, siblings etc.), which again provide opportunities both for offending and victimisation (abuse, domestic violence etc.) as well as a focus for preventive policies (e.g. parental guidance and social services support). If not under supervision from their families, young people may be under the supervision of local youth services providing organised educational, sporting, leisure and entertainment opportunities outside of school hours, in the evenings, at weekends and during school vacations.

- 5.3.10 If not subject to any of these basic forms of supervision young people may elect (or be left with no other opportunities than) to engage in self-directed leisure on the streets. This appears to be the key context for status dog-related behaviour among our population of young people. Street-based routine activities of young people are invariably the focal point of public concerns over 'youth annoyance' and professional concerns over the opportunities for engaging in inter-personal violent and property crimes and forms of incivilities provided by unsupervised use of public spaces by young people. As such, those engaged in self-directed leisure can be regarded as at 'high risk' of offending or victimisation. To this end, and given both the pressures on police patrol resources and, in any case, the antipathy that can develop between young people and the police in disputes over the use of public spaces, a premium is placed on the deployment of skilled, professional, youth workers (or equivalent project workers) who are detached (from particular youth centres) to reach-out to street populations of young people to interest them in constructive, non-criminogenic, pro-social activities, whether these are conducted 'in situ' on the street (such as street dance and theatre activities) or back in youth clubs. Where high risk street populations evade any supervision, this can lead to the onset of chronic offending and victimisation (including substance misuse, inter-personal violence, robbery and property offences alongside persistent annoyance associated with perceived incivilities). Such activity acts as a gateway to young people's entry into the youth justice system where they can be subject to various tertiary prevention schemes aimed at their rehabilitation and reintegration. Offenders may, however, be diverted from the youth justice system through various restorative justice schemes aimed at repairing the damage between particular offenders and victims through forms of apology and remuneration.
- 5.3.11 This section has attempted to connect the specific issues associated with young people and status dogs to the broader intervention agenda associated with youth crime prevention activities. We suggest that the key preventive work needs to prioritise what may be termed difficult to reach 'street cultures' of the young people and where possible their familial support systems rather than take the 'easy' option of targeting directed leisure and school-based activities from which these young people are often marginalised if not excluded or absent.

5.4 Moving forward

'It is clear that animal welfare concerns cannot be tackled in isolation of the social ones'
(Robinson 2010)

- 5.4.1 This research report asks more questions than provides answers as to how best to prevent the harms associated with the status dog problem among some of our most troublesome and troubled young people. We conclude by accepting that our findings should be seen as the beginning rather than the end of a much needed conversation, and research and evaluation programme. Such a programme in our view requires partnership work involving the social science community alongside key agencies, both governmental and non-governmental. This represents a significant challenge and opportunity which the above quotation from the RSPCA helps open up. As researchers associated with the Cardiff Centre for Crime, Law and Justice, we look forward to participating in moving this prevention agenda forward.



References

- American Dog Breeders Association. (1977) Standard of Conformation. Pit Bull Gazette, 1
- American Pet Products Association. (2010) Industry Statistics & Trends.
Available at: http://americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp Accessed 30.04.10
- American Psychiatric Association. (1994) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 4th ed. Washington, DC: APA
- American Psychiatric Association. (1987) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 3rd Revised ed. Washington, DC: APA
- Animal Welfare Act (2006) London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents>
- Arluke, A. Levin, J. Luke, C. and Ascione, F. (1999) 'The relationship of animal abuse to violence and other forms of deviant behaviour'. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 9:963-975
- Ascione, F. R. (2001) 'Animal Abuse and Youth Violence'. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Juvenile Justice Bulletin. Washington: US Department of Justice
- Ascione, F.R. (1993) 'Children who are cruel to animals: A review of research and implications for developmental psychopathology'. *Anthrozoos*. 6:226-247
- Barkham, P. (2009) 'Thousands of urban trees mauled and destroyed as 'weapon dog' owners train animals for fighting'. *The Guardian* (11.08.09). Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/11/urban-trees-destroyed-fighting-dogs> Accessed 20.02.10
- Barnes, J.E., Boat, B.W., Putnam, F.W., Dates, H.F. & Mahlman, A.R. (2006) 'Ownership of high risk ("vicious") dogs as a marker for deviant behavior: Implications for risk assessment'. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 21 (12): 1616-1634
- BBC. (2008) Pedigree Dogs Exposed. BBC One (19.08.08)
- BBC News (2005) 'Toddler dies after pet dog attack'. BBC News (12.07.05).
Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/west_yorkshire/4674685.stm Accessed 20.02.10
- BBC News. (2006) 'Dogs are jobs 'weapon of choice''. BBC News (27.04.06).
Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/4952170.stm> Accessed 20.02.10
- Beirne, P. (2004) 'From Animal Abuse to Interhuman Violence? A Critical Review of the Progression Thesis'. *Society & Animals*. 12:1
- Beirne, P. & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2006) *Criminology*, Fourth Edition. Los Angeles: Roxbury
- Bennett, P.C.; Rohlf, V.I. (2006) 'Owner-companion dog interactions: Relationships between demographic variables, potentially problematic behaviours, training engagement and shared activities'. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science Online*
- Beverland, M.B., Farrelly, F. and Ching Lim, E.A. (2008) Exploring the dark side of pet ownership: Status- and control-based pet consumption. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(5):490-496
- British Society of Criminology. (2006) 'Code of Ethics for Researchers in the Field of Criminology'.
Available at: <http://www.britisoccrim.org/ethical.htm> Accessed 03.06.10
- Channel 4 News. (2010) 'Life sentence for 'weapon dog' murderer'. Channel 4. (19.03.10).
Available at: http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/politics/domestic_politics/man+convicted+for+8216weapon+dog8217+murder/3584472 Accessed 19.03.10
- Collier, S. (2006) 'Breed specific legislation and the Pit Bull terrier: Are the laws justified?'. *Journal of Veterinary Behaviour*, 1:17-22
- Crown Prosecution Service. (2010) Legal Guidance: Offences involving domestic and captive animals.
Available at: http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d_to_g/offences_involving_domestic_and_captive_animals/ Accessed 20.03.10
- Dangerous Dogs Act (1991) London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/65/contents>
- Davis, R. (2010) 'Brute Force'. *The Guardian: Society*. pp1
- Degenhardt, B. (2005) Statistical summary of offenders charged with crimes against companion animals. July 2001 - July 2004. Animal Abuse Control Team. Chicago: Chicago Police Department
- Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. (2010) Public Consultation on Dangerous Dogs.
Available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/dangerous-dogs/100309-dangerous-dogs-condoc.pdf> Accessed 20.03.10
- Dogs Trust. (2010) Staffordshire Bull Terriers. Available at: <http://www.dogstrust.org.uk/az/s/staffordshirebullterriers/default.aspx> Accessed 30.04.10

- Drabble, P. (1948) 'Staffords and Baiting Sports' The Stafford Mall.
Available at: <http://www.staffordmall.com/stouthear-westminsterpit.htm> Accessed 20.02.10
- Felthous, A. & Kellert, S. (1987) 'Childhood cruelty to animals and later aggression against people: A review'.
American Journal of Psychiatry, 144:710-17
- Gibson, H. (2005) Dog Fighting Detailed Discussion. Animal Legal and Historical Centre US.
Available at: <http://www.animallaw.info/articles/ddusdogfighting.htm> Accessed 20.02.10
- Goode, E and Ben-Yehuda, N. (1994) *Moral panics: the social construction of deviance*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Great London Authority (2009) *Weapon dogs: the situation in London*.
Available at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Weapon%20dogsfinal.pdf> Accessed 20.02.10
- Green, A. (2008) 'Dog Bite Statistics - Are We Being Lied to by Politicians With a Hidden 'Dangerous Dog' Agenda?'. *Dog Magazine*.
Available at: <http://www.dogmagazine.net/archives/394/dog-bite-statistics-are-we-being-lied-to-by-politicians-with-a-hidden-dangerous-dog-agenda/> Accessed 30.04.10
- Green, G. (2002) The Other Criminalities of Animal Freeze-Killers: Support for a Generality of Deviance. *Society & Animals*. 10(1)
- Greenwood, C. (2010) 'Police unit takes 1,000 dangerous dogs off the street'. *The Independent* (09.03.10).
Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/police-unit-takes-1000-dangerous-dogs-off-the-street-1918659.html>
Accessed 09.03.10
- Grier, K. C. (1999) 'Childhood socialization and companion animals: United States, 1820-1870'. *Society & Animals*. 7 (2): 95-120
- Guardian (2006) 'RSPCA reports year of shocking animal abuse'. *Guardian* (26.07.06)
Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/jul/26/animalwelfare.world>. Accessed 20.02.10
- Hallsworth, S (2011 in press) 'And then they came for the dogs'. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Special Issue
- Harding, S. (2010). 'Status dogs' and gangs. *Safer Communities*. 9(1)
- Hardman, R. (2010) 'After a mother and her puppy were both savaged by bull terriers: The chilling insight into 'status dogs' and their equally feral owners'. *Daily Mail* (05.05.10).
Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1273404/After-mother-puppy-savaged-bull-terriers-The-chilling-insight-status-dogs-equally-feral-owners.htm> Accessed 05.05.10
- Haschman E.C. (1994) 'Consumers and their animal companions', *Journal of Consumer Research*. 20(4):616-632
- Henry, B. C. (2004) 'The relationship between animal cruelty, delinquency and attitudes towards the treatment of animals'
Society & Animals. 12(3): 185-207
- Henry, B.C. and Sanders, C.E. (2007) 'Bullying and Animal Abuse: Is There a Connection?'. *Society & Animals* 15(2):107-126
- Hensley, C. and Tallichet, S. (2009) 'Childhood and Adolescent Animal Cruelty Methods and Their Possible Link to Adult Violent Crimes'. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 24(1):147-158
- HES Online. (2010) 'HES on... dog bites and strikes'. Health and Social Care Information Centre.
Available at: <http://www.hesonline.nhs.uk/Ease/servlet/ContentServer?siteID=1937&categoryID=864> Accessed 20.02.10
- Hirschman, E.C. (1994) 'Consumers and their animal companions'. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 20 (4):616-632
- Hirschman, E.C. (2002) 'Dogs as metaphors: Meaning transfer in a complex product set'. *Semiotica*. 2002(139):125-159
- Home Office. (2010). *ASB FOCUS: For practitioners tackling anti-social behaviour and its causes*. February 2010. 8. London: Home Office
- Hughes, G (2007) *The politics of crime and community*. Basingstoke: Palgrave/MacMillan
- Hughes, G., Case, S., Edwards, A., Haines, K., Liddle, M. And Wright, S. (2009) *Evaluation of the Safer Communities Fund*. Cardiff, WAG
- Hughes, G and Lawson, C (2011 in press) 'RSPCA and the criminology of animal abuse'. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Special Issue
- Humane Society of the United States. (2008) *The University of Chicago and The HSUS Release New Study on the Causes of Urban Dogfighting*.
Available at: http://www.hsus.org/acf/news/pressrel/university_of_chicago_and_hsus_release_dogfighting_study_042008.html
Accessed 20.02.10
- Kasperson, M. (2008) 'On Treating the Symptoms and not the Cause. Reflections on the Dangerous Dogs Act'.
Papers from the British Criminology Conference, 8:205-225
- Kelley, B.T., Loeber, R., Keenan, K and DeLamatre, M. (1997) 'Developmental pathways in boys' disruptive and delinquent behavior'.
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Juvenile Justice Bulletin. Washington: U.S. Department of Justice



- Keung, N. (2010) Pit bull ban hasn't cut dog bites. *The Star.com* (28.04.10)
Available at: <http://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/article/801985--my-pit> Accessed 30.04.10
- Keuster, T. Lamoureux, J. and Kahn, A. (2006) 'Epidemiology of dog bites: A Belgian experience of canine behaviour and public health concerns'. *The Veterinary Journal* 172:482-487
- Lawson, C. (2010) 'Where is the 'P' in RSPCA: A Criminological Case Study of Crime Prevention Within Animal Cruelty.' MSc. Dissertation, Cardiff University
- S Levitt, S. and Dubner, S. (2005) *Freakonomics*. William Morrow, NY
- Lockwood, R. and Ascione, F. R. (Eds.). (1998) *Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence: Readings in Research and Application*. USA: Purdue University Press
- Lockwood, R., and Church, A. (1996) 'Deadly serious: An FBI perspective on animal cruelty.' In R. Lockwood, and F.R. Ascione. (Eds.) *Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence: Readings in Research and Application*. USA: Purdue University Press
- Loeber, R., Farrington, D.P., and Waschbusch, D.A. (1998) 'Serious and violent juvenile offenders'. In R. Loeber and D.P. Farrington. (eds.). *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 13-29
- Maher, J. (2010) 'Youth Gang Crime' In F. Brookman, M. Maguire, H. Pierpoint, and T.H. Bennett. *Handbook of Crime*. Uffculme, Devon: Willan
- Maher, J. and Pierpoint, H. (2011 in press) 'Friends, status symbols and weapons: The use of dogs youth groups and youth gangs.' *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Special Issue
- Mail Online (2008) 'Dog attacks rise by 40% as teenagers use dangerous animals as fashion accessories' *Daily Mail* (15.06.08).
Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-520028/Dog-attacks-rise-40-teenagers-use-dangerous-animals-fashion-accessories.html> Accessed 20.02.10
- Market Research Society. (2000) 'Guidelines for research among Children and Young People'
Available at www.mrs.org.uk/code.htm Accessed 03.03.04
- McVie. S. (2003) *The Edinburgh Study Of Youth Transitions And Crime: Preliminary Findings On Cruelty Towards Animals Special Report* (Commissioned by Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals).
Available at www.law.ed.ac.uk/cls/esytc Accessed 20.02.10
- Metropolitan Police Authority. (2009) *MPS response to dangerous dogs - update report*.
Available at <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/committees/sop/2009/090608/11/> Accessed 20.02.10
- Murray, J.K., Browne, W.J., Roberts, M.A., Whitmarsh, A. and Gruffydd-Jones, T.J. (2010) Number and ownership profiles of cats and dogs in the UK. *Vet Rec*. 2010 (166): 163-169
- National Youth Gang Centre. (2010) *Best Practices to address Community Gang Problems: OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model*. Washington: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programmes
- Ortiz, F. (n/d) *Making the Dogmen Heel: Recommendations for improving the effectiveness of dogfighting laws*. South Texas College of Law. Available at: http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=francesca_ortiz Accessed: 20.04.06
- Panorama (2007) 'Dog-Fighting Undercover'. *Panorama* (31.08.07).
Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6962563.stm> Accessed 20.02.10
- Parliament (2009). Hansard: 24 Apr 2009: Column 1690.
Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldhansrd/text/90424-0001.htm>. Accessed 30.01.11
- Pet Food Review. (2008) *Major UK Pet Food Brands - Who owns which?*
Available at: <http://www.pet-food-choice.co.uk/brands.htm> Accessed 30.04.10
- Philby, C. (2009) 'Pets issue: 'On the street a dog is your muscle' What really makes Dogs Dangerous'. *The Independent Magazine* (04.04.09) pp18
- Pierpoint, H. and Maher, J. (2010) 'Animal Abuse' in Brookman, F., Maguire, M., Pierpoint, H. and Bennett, T. (Eds) *Handbook on Crime*. Uffculme: Willan Publishing. pp.480-501
- Rajecki, D. W., Rasmussen, J. L., & Craft, H. D. (1993) Labels and the treatment of animals: Archival and experimental cases. *Society and Animals*, 1(1)
- Randour, M.L and Hardiman, T. (2007) *Creating Synergy for Gang Prevention: taking a look at animal fighting and gangs*. Humane Society of the United States. *Proceedings of Persistently Safe Schools: The 2007 National Conference on Safe Schools*.
Available at: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/harmfish/merlin-cgi/p/downloadFile/d/19160/n/off/other/1/name/030pdf/> Accessed 20.02.10
- Robinson, C. (2010) 'Enforcing Animal Welfare'. *Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law Veterinary Association*. 14(1) 6

- Rosado B., García-Belenguer S., León M. and Palacio J. (2009) 'A comprehensive study of dog bites in Spain, 1995-2004'. *The Veterinary Journal*. 179(3):383-91
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [RSPCA]. (2009a) Status Dog Summit Proceedings. Available at: http://www.kent.police.uk/About%20Kent%20Police/policies/m/documents/M52_RSPCA_Status_Dog_2009.pdf Accessed 20.02.10
- RSPCA. (2009b) 'New RSPCA Figures Show Shocking Rise In Dog Fighting On Our Streets'. News Bulletin. 21.05.09. Available at: <http://www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?blobcol=urlblob&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=RSPCABlob&blobwhere=1236788694832&ssbinary=true> Accessed 21.05.09
- RSPCA. (2009c) Observations on status dogs and associated cruelty from a veterinary perspective. RSPCA
- RSPCA (2010a) Working for the welfare of pet animals - tackling status and dangerous dogs. RSPCA briefing. Available at: www.politicalanimal.org.uk/RSPCA/files/Status%20&%20dangerous%20dogs%20briefing%20Nov%202010.pdf Accessed: 16.3.11
- RSPCA (2010b) Briefing on Status Dogs. RSPCA. Available at: <http://www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?blobcol=urlblob&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=RSPCABlob&blobwhere=1169720061490&ssbinary=true&Content-Type=application/pdf> Accessed 30.03.10
- RSPCA (2010c) Briefing note on dangerous dogs. RSPCA. Available at: <http://www.politicalanimal.org.uk/assets/files/NewDangerous%20dogs%20brief%2004.03.10.pdf> Accessed 30.03.10
- RSPCA (2010d) Prosecutions Department Annual Report. Available at: <http://www.rspca.org.uk/ImageLocator/LocateAsset?asset=document&assetId=1232721535439&mode=prd> Accessed on 10.8.10
- RSPCA (2011) Get to know a dog. Staffies. RSPCA. Available at: www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaigns/rehomeadog Accessed 31.1.11
- Sacks, J.J., Sinclair, L., Gilchrist, J., Golab, G.C. and Lockwood, R. (2000) 'Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998' *Vet Med Today: Special Report. Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. 217(6):836-840
- Spergel, I.A., and Curry, G.D. (1990) Strategies and Perceived Agency Effectiveness in Dealing With the Youth Gang Problem. In C.R. Huff (ed.), *Gangs in America*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage. pp 288-309
- Spergel, I., Grossman, S. F., Wa, K. M., Choi, S., Jacob, A. (1999) Evaluation of the Little Village gang violence reduction project: The first three years. Chicago, IL: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
- Sanders, C. R. and Hirschman, E. C. (1996) 'Introduction: Involvement with Animals as Consumer Experience'. *Society & Animals* 4(2):111- 119
- Thomas, W.I. and Znaniecki, F.W. (1966) *The Polish peasant in Europe and America*. New York: Dover. First Published 1918-20
- Twining, H. Arluke, A. Patronek, G. (2000) 'Managing the stigma of Outlaw Breeds: A case Study of Pit Bull Owners'. *Society and Animals* 8(1)
- Tyrone J. Burrows Jr. And Fielding, W. J. (2005) 'Views of College Students on Pit Bull "Ownership": New Providence, The Bahamas'. *Society & Animals*. 13(2):139-152
- University of Chicago. (2008) Dog Fighting in Chicago Exploratory Research Survey. Lab. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Upton, M., Bennett, R., Wilmshire, T., Taylor, N., Hanks, J., Allison, K. And Pflug, S (2010) Dog Registration and Licensing in the United Kingdom. Report to the RSPCA.
- Vizek-Vidovic, V., Stetic, V. V., and Bratko, D. (1999) 'Pet ownership, type of pet, and socioemotional development of school children'. *Anthrozoös*, (4):211-217
- Wandsworth Council. (2010) Dogs - Registration. Available at: http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/a_to_z/service/175/dogs-registration Accessed 30.03.10
- Welsh Assembly Government (2011) Statistical Bulletin: 2009-10 pilot for the National Survey for Wales: Further Analysis. 24th February SB 14/2011 Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2011/110224sb142011en.pdf> Accessed on 25.2.11
- Williams, Z. (2010) 'These dogs are fashion victims'. *The Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/mar/10/dogs-fashion-victims-status-labrador> Accessed 10.03.10
- Wilson, P and Norris, G. (2003) 'Relationship Between Criminal Behaviour and Mental Illness in Young Adults: Conduct Disorder, Cruelty to Animals and Young Adult Serious Violence'. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*. 10(1):239-243
- Wright, J. and Hensley, C. (2003) 'From animal cruelty to serial murder: Applying the graduation hypothesis'. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. 47(1):71-88



Appendix A: Findings from the campaign company project

The RSPCA commissioned The Campaign Company (TCC) to conduct an initial small-scale research project into the behaviour values and motivations of young people who own status dogs (Campaign Company, 2010). The overall outcome of the project was to identify a 'direction of travel' that could inform 'behaviour change interventions' targeting young people on a range of issues relating to status dog ownership. These may include ownership patterns, training and obedience, breeding as well as organised or informal fighting, and the welfare of status dogs. The company used the following methods: a focus group of 14 Croydon College Students; survey using PowerQ handsets in three workshops at Croydon College covering 45 students; interviews with professionals from a number of organisations; and 5 in-depth interviews with status dog owners.

Given the concerns over the limited size of the sample of young people interviewed in our fieldwork, it is important to refer to the TCC report as the only other project to date which accesses the first hand accounts of young people involved with status dogs. The following findings from the TCC project lend support to the first-hand accounts of young people uncovered in our interviews and to the interpretation as social scientists we have placed upon them.

1. Terminology

- Supports the finding that the terminology is confusing and not necessarily used by young people: 'The groups were initially asked whether they understood the terminology when reference was made to status dogs and though the majority did, there was a sizeable minority that required clarification.'

2. Dog Ownership:

Access

- Supported the fact that access was predominantly through friends, relatives, ad-hoc breeders & easy access on the internet: 'One had been given a two-year old staffie by his mate because it "was a bit out of control". The other two had bought their pups from relatives or neighbours though they had heard that it was easy to buy these dogs on the internet but didn't know anyone who had used this method - "that way you would pay top dollar". In turn, 'Only five of our thirty-two participants had obtained their dog from a rescue centre, breeder or pet shop. Almost all dogs had been obtained through informal family and friend networks - often as presents'.
- Supported the fact that family members played a significant role in allowing access to dogs and looking after them financially: 'Participants demonstrated low levels of awareness about the true costs of responsible dog ownership even those that owned dogs All of the young people appeared to live at home and relied on goodwill and funding of other family members to help feed and care for their dog'.
- Supports that access is too easy and has influenced desire for dogs: 'the supply of dogs is clearly a contributory factor (for motivation) Any behaviour change programme should seek to tackle the supply issue as part of a holistic approach.'

Ownership - issues identified

- Supported the finding that the majority of dog owners owned a bull-breed.
- Supported the finding that youths were upset and angry about being viewed negatively by public: 'I spoke out in the conference but I felt bad about it coz everyone thinks now that all pit owners are the same. Every time I walk down the street I get funny looks or people cross over, I don't want that, I just want to be protected'.

- Supported finding that people had misconceptions of their dog due to the prevailing media stereotype: 'What I was thinking was if they could have watched that film but then seen my dog and how she's soft as a brush, they would have thought differently.'
- Supported the finding that some of these youths also reported victimisation at the hands of other dog owners: '...several participants recounted tales of when they or their families have felt intimidated by dogs that have been unleashed and had been running at them.'

Motivations for and Influences on Ownership

- Supports various reasons for dog ownership - including status among some young people: 'This means that people own dogs for a variety of reasons however there is a dominance of the 'prospector' values. The result of this is that the dominant narrative in areas of high status dog ownership is that many people often behave in a way that seeks to enhance their status within their community. Their behaviour, and underpinning perceptions, opinions and attitudes, reflects their need for the esteem of others. This will be key when designing any behaviour change strategy.'
- Supports the finding that protection is a key motivation for ownership, and that this is not necessarily a bad thing: 'Settler dog owners: people who own dogs because it provides a real sense of security for them personally and their family... The dog therefore fulfils the sustenance need for order in addition to that of physical safety.'
- Supports the need for basic needs - e.g. companionship, security as motivation for ownership: 'Pioneers living in deprived communities where there is a prevalence of status dogs and sense of insecurity will still have basic sustenance needs to fulfil and these may be met by dog ownership.'
- Supports the finding that the youths recognise the fact that other youths are not 'good' owners, but neglectful and out of control. And that those involved in the research disassociated themselves from this stereotype of youth dog owner: 'No way! - dogs like that should be put down man, I got a dog but would never lose control of her - that boy just soft!' and disassociated themselves from the stereotypical image of status dog owners presented in the media. However each one said they knew others who used their dogs to either 'look hard' or 'act hard'.
- Supports that females motivated by cuteness: 'The young female who aspired to own a 'cute' dog'.
- Supports finding that ownership is motivated primarily by companionship, socialising and protection - identified as 'the need for security and sustenance needs and esteem issues'.

The Role of Dogs

- Supports the fact that young people feel victimised/negatively portrayed by their community. 'Settlers who are not dog owners : people who see dog ownership as undermining security for them, their family and the community they live in. This group tends to view the dog owners unfavourably.' & 'Prospectors who are not dog owners: people who think dog ownership within the community undermines their own wider status. This group tends to view dog ownership unfavourably even when they live in close proximity to status dogs'.
- Supported the distinction between having a dog for status and actually using it in an offence (seldom happens): 'They believed that young men mostly use status dogs to look tough rather than engaging in criminal activity'.
- Supports the finding that protection is re-active rather than proactive - empowers young people: 'Young men feel not only safer walking with their dog but feel more secure and empowered by its presence.'



1. Problematic Forms of Behaviour among Dog Owners

Breeding

- Supports the finding that young people are involved in accidental breeding and were unprepared for this: 'Several participants had bred their dogs and others had been closely involved in the breeding of dogs by close family or friends. Often breeding would be accidental and with the owner not having any formal training or even basic information about the welfare of the mother or puppies'.

Training

- Supports the prevailing use of punitive measures to train dogs and lack of training skills: 'Given that we also found an almost universal belief that to train a dog using play and reward for good behaviour would result in failure, any behaviour change strategy may need to focus on individuals gaining control through treating their dog better.' Furthermore, 'The prevailing view was that control and obedience would be achieved through administering punishment for bad behaviour.'
- Supported that there is a lack of formal training - mostly through peers and often not very good advice: 'Finally, we also identified that that the information most owners have about how to train or care for their dogs is word of mouth and often provided or influenced by role models who are at best misinformed, and at worst malign. Given the two previous key findings, this is a significant opportunity to design interventions that work better for dog owners to meet their underlying values'.
- Supported the finding that the youths predominantly trained their dogs themselves and felt they had good control over them: 'They all said that they had trained their dogs themselves: "I understand what they were saying, and that, but we shouldn't all be labelled as bad. I trained my dog and she obeys my every word no matter where we are or what we are doing"'
- Supported the finds that young people believed their training methods were appropriate - problem with definition, rather than desire to be cruel: 'The line between what constitutes mistreatment and abuse and corrective (and therefore acceptable) punishment is somewhat blurred. But there was universal acceptance of punishment to control and train dogs across values modes groups'.

The Link to Criminality

- Supports link to ad-hoc and accidental dog fight rather than organised due to variety of reasons - lack of control or understanding and cultural norm: 'No-one we spoke to admitted to having been present at a formal dog fight. But there were anecdotes about formal fights taking place in the area or nearby. Accidental or informal fights were mentioned as occurring. The reasons for this ranged from behavioural issues - simply an owner being unable to control a dog, to rather more ritualised behaviour.'
- Support finding that there are some young people who engage in purposeful criminal behaviour with dogs, however, this is not the majority: 'there is a relatively small but destructive group of young status dog owners who use their dogs as weapons to assist in criminal activities and to fight other dogs in formal and informal settings. They provide the stereotype of the urban status dog owner. It is likely that these owners will have trained their dogs to be aggressive by using unlawful training techniques.'

2. Responding to Status Dogs

Education

- Supported the reluctance of young people to engage with training: 'This reluctance is compounded by a belief that any advice or training would not be appropriate for them as it would be "too regimented".'

- Supported the need for FREE dog training classes, but delivery/deliverer was important: 'police should train 'scouts'/community leaders in how to train young people to control their dogs and teach dog welfare programmes. These could take place in open spaces or community centres close to home. Again - it was felt that people would not attend if costs were involved.' In turn 'the Police were not considered to be an acceptable training provider'.
- Support the need for engaging key dog owners (gatekeepers) in the community to communicate with youths: 'Engaging existing dog owners within communities to become formal and informal trainers and reference points for the appropriate training for status dogs. This should be proactive explicitly designed to support dog owners achieve their personal goals whilst communicating important messaging about dog ownership. Empowering trainers and those who they train to gain an enhanced status position within their local community through reward and community recognition. This could include messaging in community media and events including those specifically directed at young people'. 'Working with appropriate agencies we would develop a community-focused localised 'Effective Street Dog Training' programme targeted at status dog owners. This training would not only educate, but would support the behaviour change necessary to move people to providing higher standards of welfare appropriate to their dog and their circumstances. We believe we have already identified several status dog owners who would make effective participants in a pilot programme.'
- Supports need for early education in schools: 'The design and delivery of a programme in schools using dog owners working with expert agencies.'

Impact of the DDA and Enforcement

- Supports the finding that use of services is limited by fear of seizure, but used RSPCA and other welfare agencies somewhat when needed most: 'However, we believe that there is evidence to suggest that a minority of status dog owners are prepared to engage with formal agencies about the welfare of their and other animals (indeed several mentioned contacting the RSCPA out of concern for the mistreatment of other animals), but a majority were uncomfortable about seeking advice or assistance due to concern about having their dog seized'.

Support finding that focus on breeds, and ad-hoc breeding may result in bigger more dangerous breeds: 'predict a growth in the ownership of bigger and more powerful dogs going forward which will create an even greater climate of fear and risk of instability within communities'.



Appendix B: Findings from the Use and Abuse of Animals Project

Dog Ownership

- Supported the fact that family members played a significant role in allowing or denying access to dogs and looking after them financially.
- Supported the finding that friends can facilitate and promote the ownership of certain breeds of dog.
- Supported the finding that the majority of youths owned bull-breeds.
- Supported the finding that status dog ownership is both gang and non-gang related.
- Supported the finding that youth dog ownership can be transitory, with some dogs 'faith' being unclear.

Motivations for Dog Ownership

- Supports the finding that there are a variety of motivations for dog ownership - including companionship, status, as a weapon, entertainment and financial gain.
- Supports finding that ownership is motivated primarily by companionship and socialising. Youths spend a large portion of their time with their dogs socialising - dogs can be considered an integral part of the group.
- Supports the finding that dogs offer protection and safety to youths.

Problem Behaviours

- Supports the finding that young people are involved in accidental and purposeful breeding.
- Supports the prevailing use of punitive measures to train dogs and lack of training skills and that there is a general lack of formal dog training.
- Supports the link to ad-hoc and accidental dog fight, rather than organised fighting (which a few youths reported) due to variety of reasons - e.g. entertainment.
- Supported the finding that youths reported victimisation at the hands of other dog owners - especially in relation to dog attacks on their dogs.
- Supports finding that some young people engage in purposeful criminal behaviour with dogs, however, this is the minority.
- Supports the finding that peers engage in other cruel behaviours towards dogs.
- Supports the finding that youths recognise that some of their peers are not 'good' owners, but neglectful and out of control.

Responding to Status Dogs

- Supports the finding that reducing ignorance through education and training should be a key response, but that youths are hesitant to engage in 'formal' education and training.
- Supports the finding that youths are aware of organised dog fighting hotspots in their locality, that this is largely an adult pursuit. Also, youths suggest that a stronger agency response is required to reduce this problem.

Appendix C: 'Status Dogs' Interview Schedule

Introduction

Hi, thanks for meeting up with us. Just before we start, I want to give you an idea of what we will be doing for the next hour or two and let you ask any questions you may have. As you know, we wanted to talk with you today for our research on youth ownership of status dogs and behaviours linked to this. I will ask you now for a pseudonym - some pretend name of your choice - that we will use from now on. We use **pseudonyms** to help us ensure the research is confidential, this means your name will not be linked to the recording or documents we write on. I want you to feel comfortable talking about your experiences and attitudes, so I will clarify how we can protect you. As I said, the interview is **confidential**; we will not be sharing your information or responses with anyone outside the research team. We will be asking you about **your involvement in illegal behaviour**, you can tell us in brief about past offences, but there is one important exception to the confidentiality rule - if during the interview you tell us that you intend to harm yourself or another person or commit a future offence, I may be obliged to report this to another agency (e.g. police, youth services) - so please keep this in mind.

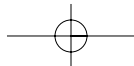
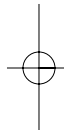
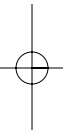
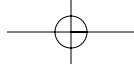
The **interview will start** with a few questions about yourself and your pet ownership and then your opinions on various issues to do with status dogs - does that sound okay? If at any time you **don't want to answer** a question or would like to stop (for drink/cigarette) - just say so - we will work at your pace. The interview will **take an hour** or more - it really is up to you how long you feel like speaking with you, you can stop the interview at any time (or at a later date, you can decide to withdraw consent and ask for your data to be destroyed). As you can see we have brought a **recording device** - this is because it is easier for me to concentrate completely on what you are saying if I don't have to write notes continuously. If you would prefer not to be recorded - that is fine - the interview may be a little slower. If you choose at any point to stop the recording - just press this button, or if you decide after the interview that you would have preferred not to be recorded then we will destroy the recording - all recordings will be destroyed once they are transcribed - again this is to ensure the information cannot be passed on. I want to be sure you are happy to talk openly with us - so please let me know if you would prefer not to be recorded. Are you ready to start?

1. **Personal Details and involvement in education/employment and offending.**
2. **Pet Ownership:**
 - A) Details of all dogs owned (breed, type, description, age).
 - B) Details of dogs you have looked after (but not owned) - who owned them, your role with dog?
 - C) Care of and routine with own dogs - who does what and how did you learn this?
 - D) Reason for owning current dog - motivation for getting a/this dog, what do you get out of owning this dog, how does the dog make you feel - why feel that way, what was the best/worst thing about owning a dog, how do people react to your dog, in one word how would you describe the role/function of your dog?
 - E) Influences on the treatment/ownership of dogs - locality and family, childhood experiences, friends' dog ownership?



- 3. Opinions on Key Issues (Dangerous dogs/status dogs/ weapon dogs/ irresponsible owners):**
- A) Familiarity with these terms and awareness of banned breeds (and identifying these breeds).
 - B) Why do you/peers focus on certain breeds?
 - C) Perceptions of problematic dog behaviour, managing negative attitudes towards your dog.
- 4. Specific Behaviours - I would like to know more about your (and your friends) involvement in and MOTIVATION for:**
- A) Owning a banned/status breed,
 - B) Breeding and Selling dogs/banned breeds,
 - C) Training dogs,
 - D) Fighting/rolling/trunking,
 - E) Using your dog as a weapon or for protection,
 - F) Cruelty towards dogs.
- 6. Experiences of external responses to dog ownership:**
- A) Contact with agencies regarding dog ownership
 - B) Consequences of contact with these agencies
 - C) Awareness of legislation and of agencies who promote/oversee animal welfare.
 - D) Desistence
- 6. Anything else we need to know, have not touched upon that you think is important about dog ownership/status dogs/dog fighting?**

We would like to thank you for taking the time out to have a chat with us - it has been really helpful and I appreciate your honesty and willingness to talk about these issues. Your data is held in the strictest confidentiality - your name will never appear on the documentation/recording. If you have any questions, you have our number, please send a text or call and we will ring you back. Do you have any other questions now about the interview or the research? Would you like some contact numbers to agencies who you may be able to discuss the impact these issues have had on you? If we needed to get back in touch with you - in case we forgot to ask you something - would you be willing for us to call you again? Finally, as part of the research we hope to making a recording for an information video - would you be interested in taking part?





ISBN: 978-1-904815-92-1



9 781904 815921 >

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD

 Cardiff Centre for Crime
Law & Justice