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Lifting the lid on Greentown – Why we should be concerned about the influence criminal networks have on children's offending behaviour in Ireland

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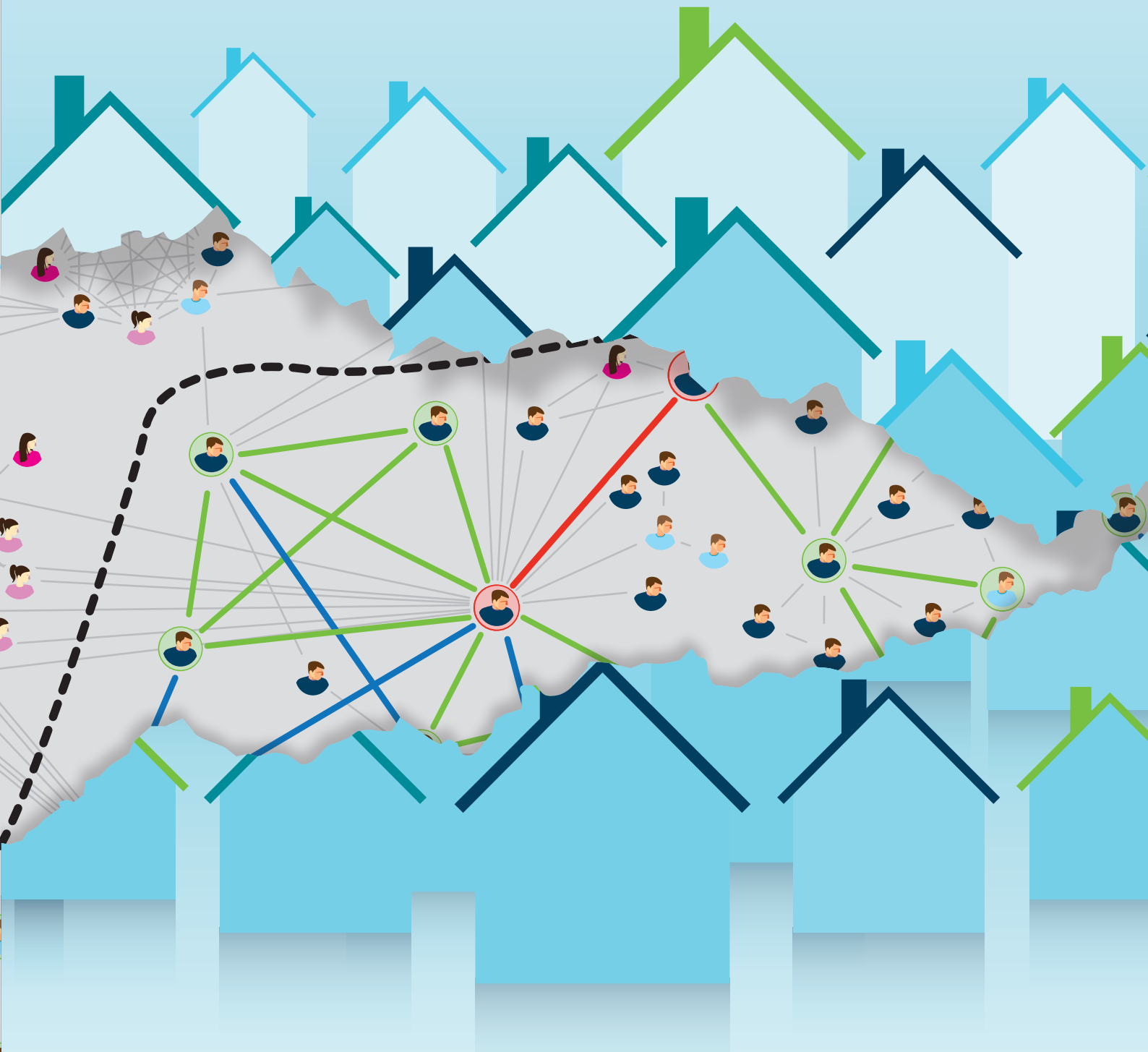
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Lifting the Lid on Greentown



Why we should be concerned about the influence criminal networks have on children's offending behaviour in Ireland

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Department of Children and Youth Affairs

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Department of Justice and Equality

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Executive summary

A large body of research exists in relation to youth crime. However, comparatively little is known in relation to the contexts of children who engage in serious offending behaviour and participate in criminal networks. Using a case study design, this study first *identified* and then *examined* the behaviour of a criminal network operating in a Garda Sub-District in Ireland in 2010–2011.

For the purposes of the study, the Garda Sub-District, which is located outside of Dublin, has been given the pseudonym Greentown.

In order to facilitate this examination, Garda analysts constructed a network map for the study using incident data to position 31 individuals aged 11–36 years who had been involved in either burglary or drugs for sale and supply in Greentown in 2010–2011. Importantly, the map indicated relationships where two or more individuals were involved in the same offence. The map was used as the key reference tool to interview Greentown Gardaí about the activities and contexts of the individuals identified.

The *Twinsight* method

A method called *Twinsight* was designed to facilitate access to actual case-related data. This involved the use of two near-identical versions of the network map during the interviews with Gardaí. In the researcher's version, the name of each individual was replaced with a unique identifying code, e.g. A1, B2, and D1. In the version used by Garda interviewees, the names of the individuals appeared alongside their identifying code. This permitted the researcher and the Garda respondents to talk about the same individuals, with their identities known only to the Garda. *Twinsight* enabled the production of an authentic narrative around key events, while protecting the identities of the individuals at all times.

Key findings

It was found that the criminal network which existed in Greentown in 2010–2011 was hierarchical in nature and was governed by a family and kinship-based 'core'. The hierarchical structure was supported by a deeply embedded sympathetic culture in the area, as well as powerful ongoing processes – in particular, patronage-based relationships which shared the rewards of crime among associates, but also generated onerous debt obligations.

It was also found that the power and influence of the network is most influenced by the intensity of the relationships between individual members of the network and the network patrons, but geographical proximity between them also plays a role.

The overall key finding of the study was that criminal networks play a significant role in encouraging and compelling children to engage in criminal behaviour.

The study identified potential applications for the methods used in the project to progress further research on serious youth crime, and outlined some implications for youth crime-related policy.

Chapter 1 presents a review of the existing literature, outlining the strengths and limitations of existing mainstream scientific knowledge on youth crime, followed by a more specific review of the literature relating to networks and crime. Chapter 2 outlines the overall methodological strategy and describes how a *case study* method was operationalised. Chapter 3 presents the research findings. Chapter 4 assesses the study's contribution to the existing body of knowledge, and considers the study's implications for wider policy and practical application.

Introduction

Greentown is a fictitious name for an actual Garda Sub-District[1] in Ireland. The focus of this study is on a persistent offender population in Greentown in the period 2010–2011.

The study found compelling evidence to substantiate the existence of a criminal network involving adults and children in Greentown, and identified the role of this network in sustaining high levels of serious criminal activity.

Having established the existence of a criminal network, the study attempted to answer three further questions:

1. How and why did children initially engage with the Greentown network, and what factors influenced and sustained their engagement?
2. How was offending behaviour specifically supported by the network?
3. How easy or difficult was it for a child involved in a network to determine and act upon their own choices (i.e. exercise free will), including the option of leaving the network?

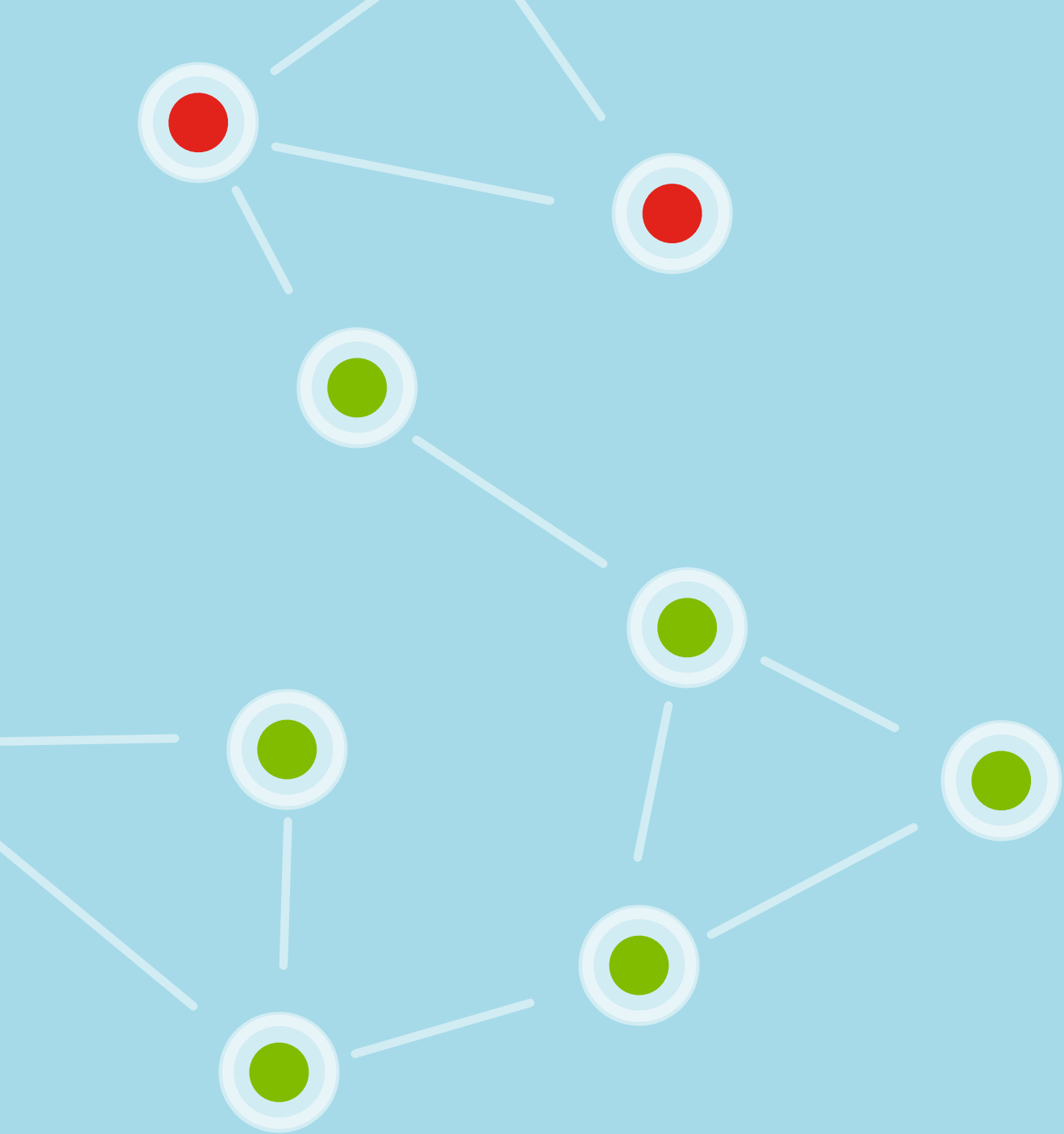
Using a case study design, the study utilised data from three sources:

- Official statistical crime records (PULSE)
- A statistically constructed criminal network map indicating offending relationships between individual actors (2010–2011) in Greentown
- Testimony from individual frontline members of An Garda Síochána based in Greentown

These data were processed and analysed using a transparent stepwise method informed by grounded theory, and emergent themes are presented as findings. The final section considers the policy implications of the findings.

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[1] 'For policing purposes the country is divided into six regions. These are divided into Divisions, Districts and, finally, Sub-Districts. Each Sub-District is normally the responsibility of a Sergeant and usually has only one station, the strength of which may vary from 3 to 100 Gardaí...' (An Garda Síochána website, accessed 13 September 2016, http://www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=21&Lang=1)





Chapter 1

Literature review

Scientific evidence relating to youth crime, largely derived from longitudinal and other outcome studies, increasingly 'encourages a more optimistic view about the prediction, explanation and prevention of offending' (Farrington and Welsh, 2008, p. 18), identifying early on which children are *more likely* to turn delinquent and identifying what can be done to best reduce these odds (Farrington and Welsh, 2008, pp. 158–161).

The theoretical framework developed on foot of this scientific endeavour has been referred to (perhaps pointedly) as the risk and protection factor *paradigm* (O'Mahony, 2009; Case, 2007). For ease, this body of evidence is referred to as 'risk science' in this study. At its simplest level, risk science is concerned with identifying delinquency probabilities or risks related to children (Hawkins *et al*, 2008, p. 20) and offsetting these risks with evidence-based programmes designed to prevent and intervene (Greenwood, 2008, p. 188).

Analogies with public health are often associated with risk science (Dahlberg, 1998). For example, in the same way that body weight, alcohol and tobacco intake and exercise have associations with heart disease, stroke and cancer – impulsiveness, ineffective parenting and school dropout have been shown to have associations with the onset of youth crime (Hawkins *et al*, 2008).

Risk science has asserted a 'hierarchy of evidence', with scientific knowledge derived from randomised control trials (RCTs) occupying pole position. Increasingly, international expert communities (Goldson and Muncie, 2006, p. 98) broker this knowledge, meaning that not only is plain-speak advice now available about which programmes work and which do not, but 'finding them has never been easier' (Wiederstein, 2013, p. 13).

At its simplest level, risk science is concerned with identifying delinquency probabilities or risks related to children (Hawkins *et al*, 2008, p. 20) and offsetting these risks with evidence-based programmes designed to prevent and intervene (Greenwood, 2008, p. 188).

Off-the-peg programmes offer policy-friendly 'bright-line' benchmarks (Noonan *et al*, 2009, p. 13) by which to gauge the performance of any particular programme intervention. Programmes focusing on the *early years*, the High/Scope Perry Preschool Programme (Nores *et al*, 2005), for example, have demonstrated how improving the cognitive functioning, social and problem-solving skills for young children builds resilience and positively affects trajectories far down the line, yielding reduced incidence of adult criminality in particular.

The performance of such programmes is, it is argued, policy-transferable and can be used to underpin the investment of government funds in prevention and treatment choices in multiple jurisdictions (Farrington and Welsh, 2008, pp. 159–161). The attraction of such a framework to policy-makers is understandable. Straightforward logic about how *risks* can be counterbalanced by *protections* informs a dominant

youth-crime discourse which argues that youth offending can be reduced by effective and early intervention.

Significant evidence also indicates that, in any event, the majority of children grow out of crime by the time they reach their late teens or early twenties (Loeber and Farrington, 2012, pp. 5–6). Increasing confidence about what has been called the age/crime *curve* (offending onset, peak and natural 'drop-off') (Loeber and Farrington, 2012, pp. 5–6), combined with an evidenced-based 'bang-for-buck' approach to social investments, has led to increased optimism about *designing out* youth crime. In addition, such *prevention* discourse, with its reassuring and familiar public health approach and its positive, benefit-related language, avoids more negative 'dark rhetoric about crime' (Sparrow, 2008, pp. 38–39).

Explanations or explorations of serious and persistent criminal behaviour by children have received far less scholarly attention, certainly in Ireland. Mostly, Irish research relating to youth crime has gravitated more towards commentary on how children fare in the youth justice system; for example, examinations of children's rights (Kilkelly, 2008), system responses and young peoples' experiences of the system (O'Donnell and O'Sullivan, 2003; Seymour and Butler, 2008), relationships with An Garda Síochána (Feeney, 2009), and critiques of the risk science approach adopted by youth justice systems (O'Mahony, 2009).

Nevertheless, key insights into youth criminal behaviour have been generated, particularly in a small number of ethnographic studies in Limerick and Dublin. Hourigan (2011) shines a light on children being *subject to* and *participants in* tyrannical regimes operating in 'closed' estates in Limerick, directed and sustained by criminal gangs. Ilan's account of 'The Crew' and 'The Team' in north inner-city Dublin points to the hostility of community towards overt youthful crime (The Crew), while, at the same time, harbouring curious ambiguity towards the more serious crime committed by the older offenders. This group (The Team) 'form part of the street's dominant kin culture, have close relatives in leadership positions and are viewed as integral to the community' (Ilan, 2011, p. 1143).

Risk science: limitations

Despite the apparent surfeit of evidence, there is significant criticism of risk science dominance. Criticism focuses on its *universality* and predictive claims (O'Mahony, 2009, pp. 106–107) highlighting the importance of place and context; meaning that evidence is always 'provisional and conditional' (Pawson, 2002, p. 214).

In this vein, Goldson and Hughes (2010, pp. 217–218) argue that generalist scientific claims are incapable of negotiating uneven youth crime landscapes within jurisdictions, while Pawson and Tilley assert, at a further micro level, that even 'individual estates can have their own criminal careers' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 97). If local idiosyncrasy counts as much in terms of influence as macro factors established by the scientific evidence to increase (or decrease) 'risk', this means that interventions have contingent or potential as opposed to assured efficacy (Pawson, 2006, p. 178).

Further criticism of risk science relates to its inability to account for the smaller numbers of children who persist in their offending behaviour. Less is known about these children, unlike the large majority of children who appear to desist from offending over time. Indeed, it is argued that such populations of offenders may share more similarities with each other than they do with a general, lower-risk youth population (Brame *et al*, 2010, p. 345). Closer to home, juvenile *repeat* or *persistent* offenders in Ireland appear to be involved disproportionately in certain types of *acquisitive* crime (e.g. burglary and robbery) as opposed to more hedonistic crime (e.g. public order, criminal damage) found in the general youth-offending population (Redmond, 2011).

Indeed, it is argued that such populations of offenders may share more similarities with each other than they do with a general, lower-risk youth population.

It is therefore legitimate to consider whether mainstream risk science is sufficiently nuanced to offer compelling insights in the area of more persistent youth crime.

'Network' as a useful conceptual tool for understanding complexity

It has been argued that generic definitions of *network* are elusive (Nassimbeni, 1998, p. 538) and their configurations and effects are tempered significantly by context (Pilbeam *et al*, 2012, p. 359). However, some understanding of the utility of network as a conceptual reference point is critical to making sense of the contribution of the Greentown study to what is known about youth offending. This requires some discussion regarding how network analysis can complement or, perhaps, trump other means of analysis and how, in particular, it can assist in understanding the types of criminal behaviour under review in this study.

It is argued here that *network* possesses many inherent properties that are crucial to understanding context and phenomena involving social groups interacting (for whatever reason) towards common outcomes. This discussion of *network* is restricted to three *functional qualities*, as follows:

- The first perceives the network as a 'computational entity' (Hodgson, 2006, p. 16); a tool permitting *holistic analysis* of a phenomenon and context in its natural size and state (Sparrow, 2008, pp. 85–86).
- The second considers network as an efficient and *rational response to managing uncertainty* in terms of environments and behaviour; maximising enterprise while harnessing the efforts of interdependent actors towards a particular goal, by 'the formation of co-operative stable links' (Nassimbeni, 1998, p. 542).
- The third relates to the *institutional effects of network*. This perspective is important in understanding what drives and influences individuals and clustered groups towards particular behaviours and directions (including youth offending), and how networks are nourished and sustained over time.

Network: as a holistic tool for analysis

One of the key challenges facing policy-makers is simply determining the *natural size and state* of a particular problem. Adjusting the policy focus too tightly can result in a blinkered, narrow perspective, basing assumptions on too limited a frame of analysis. However, if the policy focus is too large, it can become blurred, profiles can be flattened and generally lacking in the necessary nuance to observe a problem's key individual features, which is crucial if such analysis is to have any *operational* benefit for policy. Here, network analysis offers a means for *taking in the whole* while also examining the activities of individual actors within a particular context.

A practical example of network analysis utility is Johnson's examination of the cholera outbreak in the 'Golden Mile' in London in the 1850s (Johnson, 2008). Johnson describes how Whitehead and Snow's mapping of contaminated water pumps across the Golden Mile neighbourhood demonstrated clear associations between certain connected pumps and locations of cholera infection, contradicting the received medical consensus that a *miasma* or 'cloud' of infection was causing and sustaining the cholera outbreak. The results of their study ensured, ultimately, that remedial efforts shifted from the relentless (and pointless) cleaning of soiled bed linen in individual households (ordered by medical professionals to reduce the effects of the supposed infectious cloud) to a focus on the more effective fixing of contaminated water pumps in order to ensure better water quality. While this public health example is purely illustrative, it demonstrates the practical utility of *network* analysis in terms of disclosing hidden relationships that may otherwise go unnoticed and which may counter general intuition.

The ability to observe multiple individuals and transactions collectively as one phenomenon to make sense of the whole, and to simultaneously zoom in to observe the activities of individual units and smaller clusters, has been critical in meeting the demands of this study.

Network: as a rational response to managing uncertainty

At its simplest level, the network can be seen as an entirely rational response to managing the effects of external and internal uncertainty. 'Since complex relationships inevitably mean unfinished and incomplete contracts, shared value systems reduce coordination costs by specifying tacit rules of behaviour that are widely shared…' (Pilbeam *et al*, 2012, p. 370). Networks offer groups of independent but, crucially, interdependent individuals willing to transcend immediate self-interest, the opportunity to pursue a greater good (which may of course also be analogous to each individual's own interest).

The ability to observe multiple individuals and transactions collectively as one phenomenon to make sense of the whole, and to simultaneously zoom in to observe the activities of individual units and smaller clusters, has been critical in meeting the demands of this study.

Institutional effects of network and enhancement effect on youth offending

It is the capacity of networks *to encourage and direct behaviour* that is of particular interest to this study. If, generically, networks encourage 'shared patterns of thought' (Hodgson, 2006, p. 7) in participants, evidence of the *existence* of network opens a logical line of enquiry relating to establishing whether there is any corresponding evidence of *institutional effect on behaviour*. In the case of this study, if there is evidence of an institutional effect by a criminal network on children who are involved, it questions to what degree a child can exercise the *free* choice – an important normative assumption in criminal justice systems – to not engage or to withdraw (Densley, 2012, p. 316).

With specific reference to children (or youth), a limited body of literature identifies particular properties associated with criminal networks. One such conception is *criminal network as local enterprise*, a corporate body offering local youth employment, sense of meaning, identity and self-worth; 'garnering respect' among other attractions (O'Brien *et al*, 2013, p. 422). As Pitts (2008, p. 70) observes, networks have functional requirements:

> ...the drugs business is a business, requiring a relatively elaborate division of labour within a large workforce, which must maintain and protect the supply chain: market, package and distribute the product, protect the key players, silence would-be whistle-blowers, collect debts and ensure contract compliance.

The *enterprise* conception of criminal network infers, certainly for children considering a career in this 'business', that engagement, participation and succession are essentially rational acts based on clear and understandable motivations (McGloin and Nguyen, 2011, p. 19); among them much desired kudos, 'inclusion, success and protection otherwise denied to them' (Pitts, 2008, p. 84).



It is the capacity of networks *to encourage and direct behaviour* that is of particular interest to this study.

However, networks may have further profound and institutional effects in configuring the default settings for what an individual child believes are permissible (and possible) behaviours, attitudes and aspirations. Where family and kinship networks become central hubs of networks, such properties have been shown to be even more confining, infused as they are by links characterised by mutual trust and obligation (Fader, 2016). In her study based in Limerick, Hourigan observes that many extended families 'may be deeply enmeshed in feuds and drug-related activity' (Hourigan, 2011, p. 144), suggesting a *fuzzying* effect at neighbourhood level to what, at face value, may seem clear oil-and-water separation of heroes and villains. Immersion in this type of network, combined with seclusion from external influence, is considered significant in predicting ongoing retention, given that pro-social 'bridges' may have already been burned (Densley, 2012, p. 314). For the State, such influences may also present 'conscious opposition' (Sparrow, 2008, pp. 199–214) to intervention.

It is reasonable to assert that this aggregation of adversities may coalesce to become effectively the child's day-to-day 'cognitive map' (Kaplan, 1984, p. 30), significantly bounded by a redundant network of friends and associates, copper-fastened by a climate of 'pervasive fear' (von Lampe, 2011, p. 153) and, in some cases, bewildered by an ambiguous (albeit reluctant) affiliation (Pitts, 2008, p. 64) between neighbourhood and criminal network.

Relationships and ties within a criminal network can be so fundamental that only *escape* from the respective neighbourhood and the complete severance of ties may be potent enough to offset the network's influence or avoid exit-related wrath (Pyrooz and Decker, 2011, p. 419). This process of exiting has been referred to as 'knifing off', and while this describes *physical* separation, it has also referred to necessary *cognitive* 'knifing off' (i.e. transformed values, attitudes and beliefs) if any change is to be sustained (Maruna and Roy, 2007, p. 118). Both of these acts of separation can be difficult, as relinquishing links will often mean relinquishing long-held relationships (Pyrooz and Decker, 2011, p. 423).

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Intervening to reduce network effect

The literature in this area has usefully highlighted that criminal networks have *needs* (to sustain and to succeed) and corresponding vulnerabilities (or 'situational contingencies') (von Lampe, 2011, p. 157), which can be targeted using reverse engineering tactics, to suppress criminal activity. Referring to the infamous French Connection heroin-smuggling ring in the 1970s, Sparrow outlines how the law enforcement analyst working on the case determined that the entire operation relied heavily on a small set of specialists – called *courier-recruiters* – operating in French airports, and that by frustrating the activities of this one specific role, the whole network could be incapacitated (Sparrow, 2008, pp. 27–28).

Network vulnerabilities can also relate to less obvious, deeper-set *cognitive* factors. The Boston 'Operation Ceasefire' strategy focused on a key presumption made by members of criminal gangs, *that they would not be apprehended*. Braga and Weisburd report how 'Operation Ceasefire' sought to undermine this sense of complacency by relevant authorities *pulling every lever* to suppress certain gang behaviours and communicating this intent directly to gang members, 'making explicit cause-and-effect connections between the behaviour of the target population and the behaviour of the authorities' (Braga and Weisburd, 2012, p. 328).

Summary

Risk science has delivered significant benefits in terms of our understanding of youth crime. However, its greatest contribution is in describing or explaining features of general populations, or analysis of larger offending subpopulations. The literature relating to the smaller groups of children involved in disproportionate amounts of offending behaviour and abnormal offending trajectories is less extensive, less certain and less universally applicable.

In a general sense, *network analysis* is a potentially useful tool for understanding the complexity of such phenomena, which may involve multiple actors aligned, for whatever reason, in some overall endeavour, and be governed by powerful group-specific institutional influences on attitudes and behaviour.

A small but growing international literature relating to criminal networks identifies particular properties which have a bearing on crime and children's involvement in crime. The 'network as enterprise' discourse identifies key status or *pull* dynamics for children and young people becoming involved in criminal networks. Other evidence also identifies darker *push* dynamics, driven by the influence of criminal actors. These influences can discourage pro-social behaviour, block network exit routes, bound rational choice and, by helping to negatively reframe local cultural attitudes to criminal behaviour, muddle a child's reasoning in making 'right and wrong' judgements.

These influences can discourage pro-social behaviour, block network exit routes, bound rational choice and, by helping to negatively reframe local cultural attitudes to criminal behaviour, muddle a child's reasoning in making 'right and wrong' judgements.

The motivations for children joining criminal networks, the factors that promote children's retention in networks (or desistance from network activity), and the role that community and neighbourhood factors play in deepening or prolonging juvenile criminal careers have not attracted widespread attention in Ireland. This study aimed to contribute further to this area of knowledge development.



Chapter 2

Methodology

This chapter initially summarises the overall methodological approach. It outlines the process of selection for the location of the case study, specifies the data sources used, and describes the methods of data collection, coding and analysis.

Overview

The methodology is based on five key elements which are broadly sequential:

- An analysis of national PULSE data was undertaken to identify **burglary and drugs for sale and supply** offences committed by children under the age of 18 years.[2] These data were then ranked by the Garda Sub-District on the basis of frequency of occurrence during 2010–2011 (Table 2.1).
- Greentown was selected as the most suitable area for the case study, based on its position in the ranking exercise (see Table 2.1), geographical location and other key practical considerations.
- A network map was constructed by An Garda Síochána Analysis Service. The map was based on data which specifically related to Greentown, indicating links between co-offenders which, according to PULSE, were suspected of involvement in burglary and/or drugs for sale and supply offences during 2010–2011.
- The network map was examined in detail on site in Greentown (using the *Twinsight*[3] method designed specifically for this study), by local Gardaí who had personal knowledge of the individuals identified.
- A process of coding, analysis and abstraction of verbatim transcripts disclosed patterns and themes to assist in the understanding of the network's operation.

The study received ethical clearance by Queen's University Belfast on 9 May 2013.[4]

1: Ranking of Garda Sub-Districts based on burglary and drugs for sale and supply offences committed by children

Burglary and drugs for sale and supply as potential predictors of network activity?

Burglary is associated with repeat offending in Ireland.[5] As Figure 2.1 indicates, offences such as Theft from Vehicle, Unlawful Taking (Vehicle) and Burglary are more likely to be linked to prolific offenders than offences such as Assault Minor, Trespass, and Drunkenness.

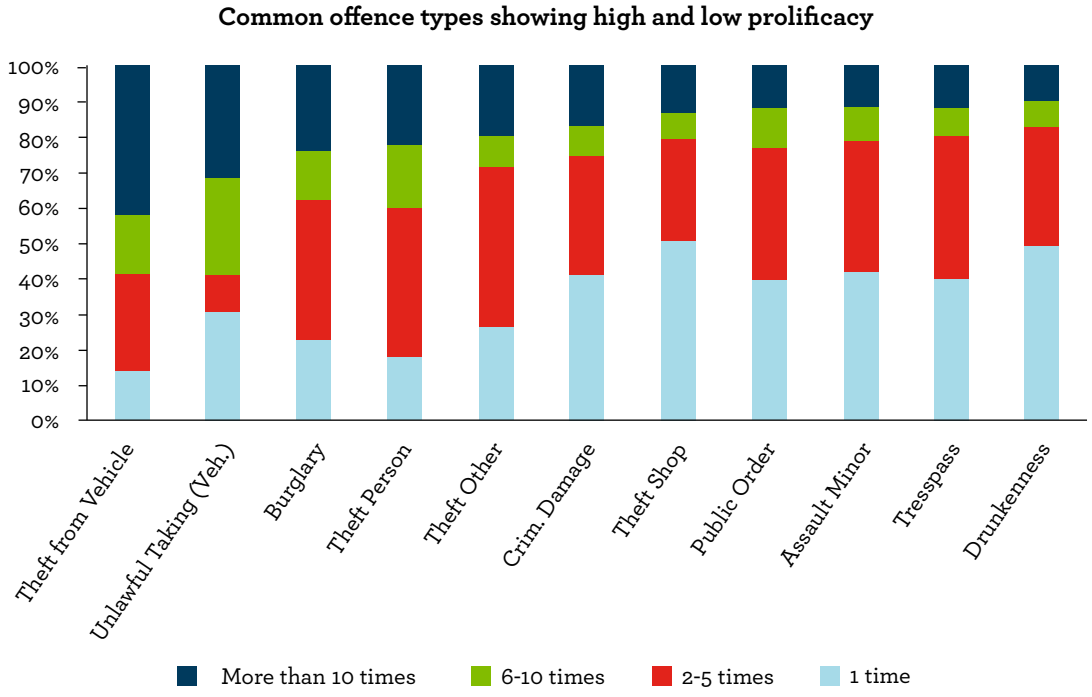
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2 The rationale for choosing these offences as added criteria is explained in Step 2 of the case study selection process.

3 *Twinsight* is a data collection method designed by the researcher specifically for this study to meet anonymity concerns while, at the same time, attempting to personalise comments made by interview respondents about individuals in the Greentown network.

4 To obtain a copy of the full Ethics Statement, contact the report author and researcher, Sean Redmond.

5 See table of offence categories and recidivism rates in the Irish Prison Service Recidivism Study (Irish Prison Service 2013, p. 13, Table 4.4) identifying burglary as the offence category with the highest recidivism rate at 79.5%, and exceeding the second highest category (damage to property and to the environment) by 7.5%.



Source: An Garda Síochána Analysis Service 2015

Figure 2.1: Common non-traffic offences by offender type with higher levels of prolific offender (navy sections) to the left

Burglary was targeted for this study in particular because if a *child* is involved in burglary, there are offence-related functional supports which they may need to resource from relationships with others, and it was hypothesised that these were predictive of network association. Presumed requirements include: transport to get to and from burglary sites (particularly in non-urban areas); assistance in the transit of stolen goods; assistance in the sale and disposal of stolen goods, to transform stolen goods into cash (Ilan, 2013, p. 8); coaching and mentoring (McGloin and Nguyen, 2011, p. 6); and intelligence, for example, to identify which goods are of value and where they can be sourced – so-called 'social facilitators' for crime (von Lampe, 2011, p. 150).

It was considered less likely that such functional supports would be required at the same level for offences such as Theft from Vehicle and Unlawful Taking (Vehicle).

Similar to burglary offences, logic determines that a child involved in *drugs for sale and supply* offending simply cannot act alone. This logic is supported by the existing literature, including studies of whole drugs *enterprises* from production to sales, identifying complex logistics chains with varying roles, responsibilities, competencies, assets, and vulnerabilities (Malm and Bichler, 2011), notwithstanding the fact that at local community level activity is more likely to focus on the retail end of the chain.

Burglary and drugs for sale and supply offences were thus considered appropriate selection-refining criteria, given their plausible association with serious and persistent offending and more likely to be predictive of collaborative or network activity.

A ratings table was constructed identifying localities (Garda Sub-Districts) where children were detected for burglary or drugs for sale and supply offences (2009–2011). Table 2.1 provides a ranking of Garda Sub-Districts (using fictitious names),[6] showing the top 20 of 326 Sub-Districts. The ranking is based on the frequency of detections for minors involved in drugs for sale and supply, burglary, and robbery offences,[7] specifying both *offences* and individual *offenders*.

Table 2.1: Ranking of all Garda Sub-Districts (2010–2011) based on frequency of detections for drugs for sale and supply, burglary, and robbery offences by minors

		Offences 2010 and 2011 offender aged 17 or less				Number of unique offenders 2010 and 2011			
Rank	Location	01 Drugs for sale or supply	02 Burglaries	03 Robberies	Total	01 Drugs for sale or supply	02 Burglaries	03 Robberies	Total
1	Bluetown	28	4	2	34	20	4	2	26
2	Redtown	23	61	27	111	15	33	21	69
3	Yellowtown	21	12	13	46	15	7	4	26
4	Orangetown	18	10	13	41	14	1	8	23
5	Whitetown	17	7	16	40	5	2	13	20
6	Blacktown	16	23	13	52	12	8	5	25
7	Greytown	13	23	11	47	11	12	4	27
8	Browntown	12	5	5	22	9	3	3	15
9	Purpletown	12	3	31	46	6	1	19	26
10	Pinktown	11	15	15	41	6	6	3	15
11	Greentown	10	17	23	50	8	13	11	32
12	Area 12	9	31	23	63	9	19	14	42
13	Area 13	9	6	4	19	2	4	4	10
14	Area 14	6	40	41	87	6	13	21	40
15	Area 15	6	5	2	13	6	5	2	13
16	Area 16	5	13	7	25	5	7	7	19
17	Area 17	5	3	13	21	5	1	7	13
18	Area 18	5	8	4	17	5	4	3	12
19	Area 19	5	2	1	8	5	1	1	7
20	Area 20	5	12	0	17	4	9	0	13

Source: Central Statistics Office 2013

6 The confidential version of this list, identifying actual Sub-District locations, is retained by An Garda Síochána Analysis Service.

7 The original intention had been to include robbery offences as a selection criterion. On reflection, however, it was excluded from the network analysis, as the researcher judged robbery events as less likely to be reliant on support from adults. It is retained in this table for illustrative purposes only.

Greentown (highlighted in navy strip in Table 2.1) is ranked eleventh for drugs for sale and supply; sixth for burglary; fourth for robberies; and fifth for total drugs for sale and supply, burglary and robbery *offences* committed by minors. Greentown is ranked fourth of 326 for the total number of *offenders*.

> Burglary and drugs for sale and supply offences were thus considered appropriate selection-refining criteria, given their plausible association with serious and persistent offending and more likely to be predictive of collaborative or network activity.

2. Greentown as a case study location

In order to make the final choice of locality, a number of additional selection considerations were then applied to the shortlist. These included:

- How 'contained', observable or identifiable the criminal activity identified in the ranking exercise was likely to be in reality.
- Ensuring that the number of young people involved in burglary and drugs for sale and supply offences in the locality was sufficient to make the study viable.
- The willingness of local Garda management and Garda members to participate and meaningfully engage in the study.[8]
- Facilities in the locality which would be conducive to undertaking the fieldwork.[9]

Greentown was selected using the process outlined above, which was designed to limit opportunity for researcher bias. The researcher's only input related to an assessment of which localities shortlisted by the quantitative exercises would yield the richest data and best facilitate data collection.

Greentown is a busy Garda Sub-District located outside of Dublin. In terms of national comparisons, as identified in Table 2.1, Greentown featured significantly regarding the numbers of children involved in burglary, drugs for sale and supply (and robbery). Unlike a large urban location, such as Dublin, which would increase the likelihood of offending across Sub-Districts, it was believed that a regional location would increase the probability of offending occurring within the home Sub-District. It was presumed that this is in turn would mean that Garda respondents should have better knowledge of both the individuals involved in offending and the actual offending events.

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8 Advice was taken on this from senior Garda management.

9 Ideal specifications for this facility were: a room free from distraction with close proximity to the home Garda Station, reasonable soundproofing and, ideally, laid out reasonably informally; availability of light refreshments (e.g. tea and coffee).

The study provides only general descriptors for Greentown, observing assurances to An Garda Síochána regarding anonymity at individual *and* locality level. As with all confidential and sensitive data relating to the study, such material was passed on to the Analysis Service of An Garda Síochána. Access to any of these data for future study will require prior authorisation by An Garda Síochána.

3. The Greentown network map

The focal point of the study is the Greentown criminal network. The network is illustrated by an evidence-based graphic produced specifically for this study (to the researcher's specifications) by An Garda Síochána Analysis Service using PULSE data. Figure 2.2 illustrates the approach to constructing the Greentown network, which is based on offending relationships involving co-offenders detected for burglary and/or drugs for sale and supply offences in Greentown during 2010–2011.

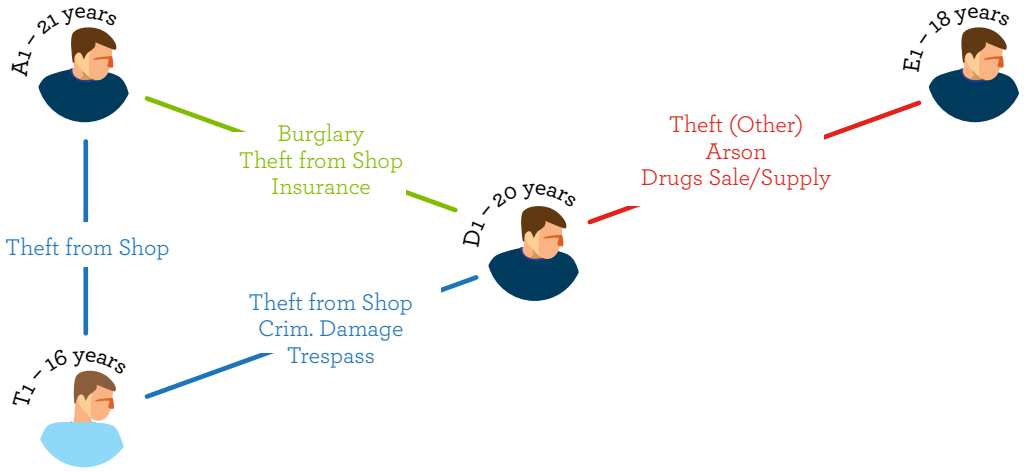


Figure 2.2: Constructing the Greentown network

The network was constructed by linking individuals through common incidents (involving both minors and adults). ***All individuals had an address in the Greentown Sub-District*** during 2010–2011 and ***all offences occurred within the Greentown Sub-District***. A **green link** indicates that one or more burglary offences link the respective individuals. A **red link** indicates that one or more drugs for sale/supply offences link the respective individuals. A **blue link** indicates other relevant crime types which link individuals.[10]

[10] Garda analysts used their discretion with blue links where they believed that an offending link other than burglary or drugs for sale and supply would add to the understanding of the illustration. Thicker lines linking respective individuals indicated a greater number of detections connecting them.

The Greentown network was constructed at Garda Headquarters in Dublin without input by the researcher or Gardaí from Greentown. The exclusion of the researcher from this process was intended as an important element in meeting assurances regarding the protection of confidentiality and anonymity and limiting researcher bias.

The network map for the semi-structured interviews was provided in PDF format, with agreed read-only usage of the data, thereby precluding researcher manipulation of the data. Two versions of the Greentown network were constructed, one a 'zoom-in' version, the other a 'zoom-out' or 'birds-eye' version. Figure 2.3 shows the 'zoom-in' version. This version was used as the key reference for examination of the network in semi-structured interviews.

Prior to the site-based interviews, the utility of the network map was tested by a national workshop involving Juvenile Liaison Officers selected from localities across Ireland which had the highest rates of burglary and drugs for sale and supply involving children. Adaptations to the network map and to the approach to interviews were made based on feedback from this event.

The network map formed the basis of examination in individual interviews with 16 members of An Garda Síochána based locally in Greentown. Respondents were selected by local Garda management based on their personal knowledge of individuals identified in (the confidential version of) the Greentown network. The data collection strategy for semi-structured interviews is illustrated in Appendix 1.

Greentown Sub-District linked suspect offenders 2010–2011:

- Only offenders with one or more Burglary or Sale of Drugs offences included.
- A link between two people signifies they were involved in an offence together.
- Networks are based on groups of offenders with common links.

common Burglary offence — common Drugs Sale offence — link based on any other offence type

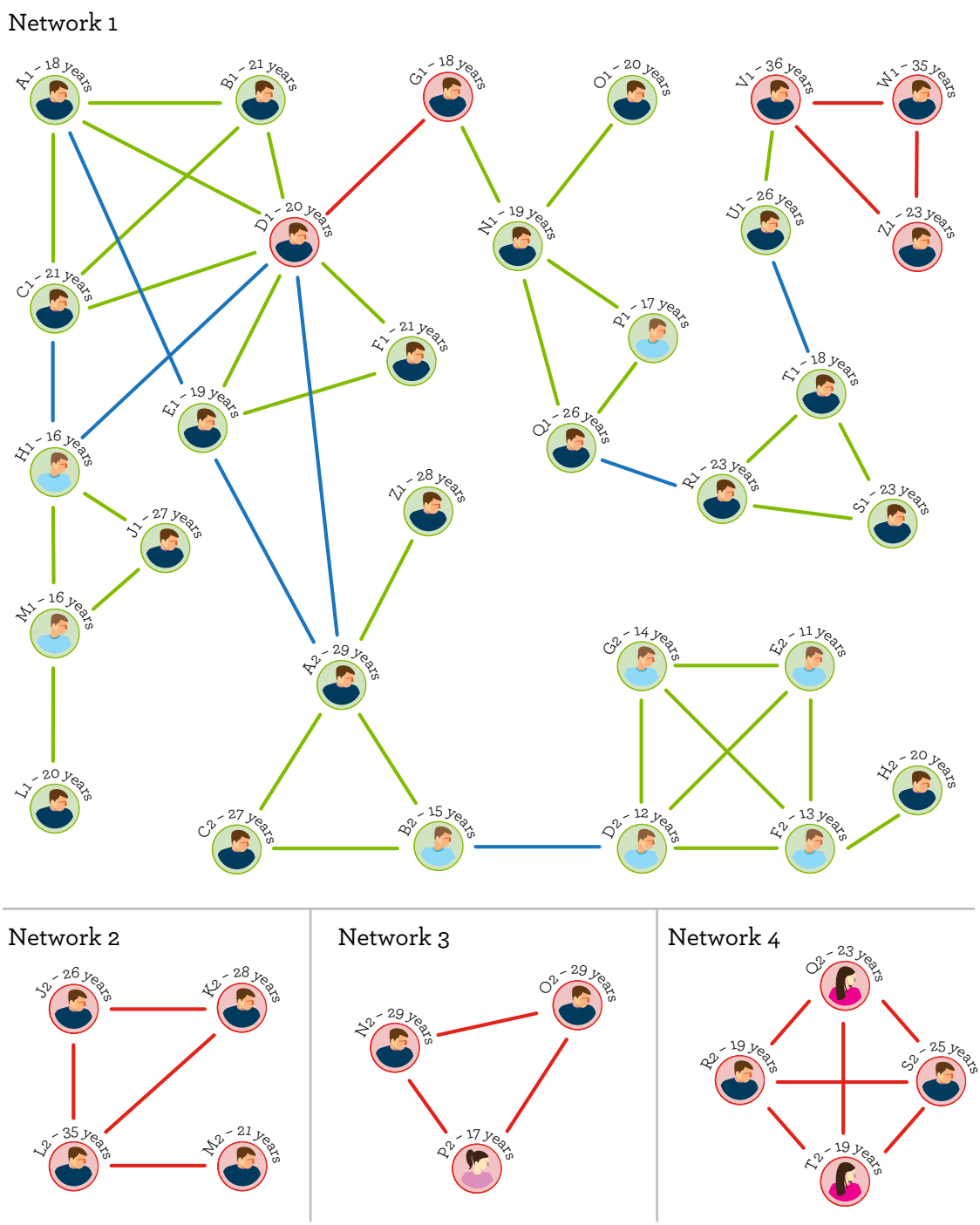


Figure 2.3: Greentown network 'zoom-in' magnification with identifier codes for use in semi-structured interviews

While the illustration actually encompasses four networks, Network 1 is the most significant in terms of number, involving 31 individuals (all male) with age ranges from 11 to 36 years. The individuals in Network 1 were linked through 48 separate incidents: nine burglaries, two aggravated burglaries, five theft/other, five trespass, four arsons, four handling stolen property, three assaults causing harm, two drugs for sale/supply, and 14 other offences.

Due to time and resource considerations, and the fact that only one child appears outside of Network 1, this network became the main frame of analysis (see Appendix 2) and, from this point on, is referred to simply as the Greentown network.

The individuals in Network 1 were linked through 48 separate incidents: nine burglaries, two aggravated burglaries, five theft/other, five trespass, four arsons, four handling stolen property, three assaults causing harm, two drugs for sale/supply, and 14 other offences.

Figure 2.4 shows the second version of the network. This is a *bird's-eye view*, which provides a more panoramic view of offending relationships in Greentown and includes *all* offences with linked suspects committed in Greentown 2010–2011, as opposed to only burglary or drugs for sale and supply. Two reference points are provided (zoom-in and bird's-eye versions) because, as Campana has pointed out more recently (2016, p. 5), the issue of drawing a categorical offence-related boundary around the Greentown network could be problematic. The zoom-out facility permitted interview respondents to *check their bearings* with a wider reference outside of the more detailed coded network during interview.

An individual's gender is identified by a colour code: blue for male and pink for female. Adults (over 18 years) are represented by the nodes that are dark pink and dark blue and children (under-18s) by those that are light pink and light blue. This is necessary in the *bird's-eye view* version because there is no supporting information relating to age and there is no unique identifier for each individual.

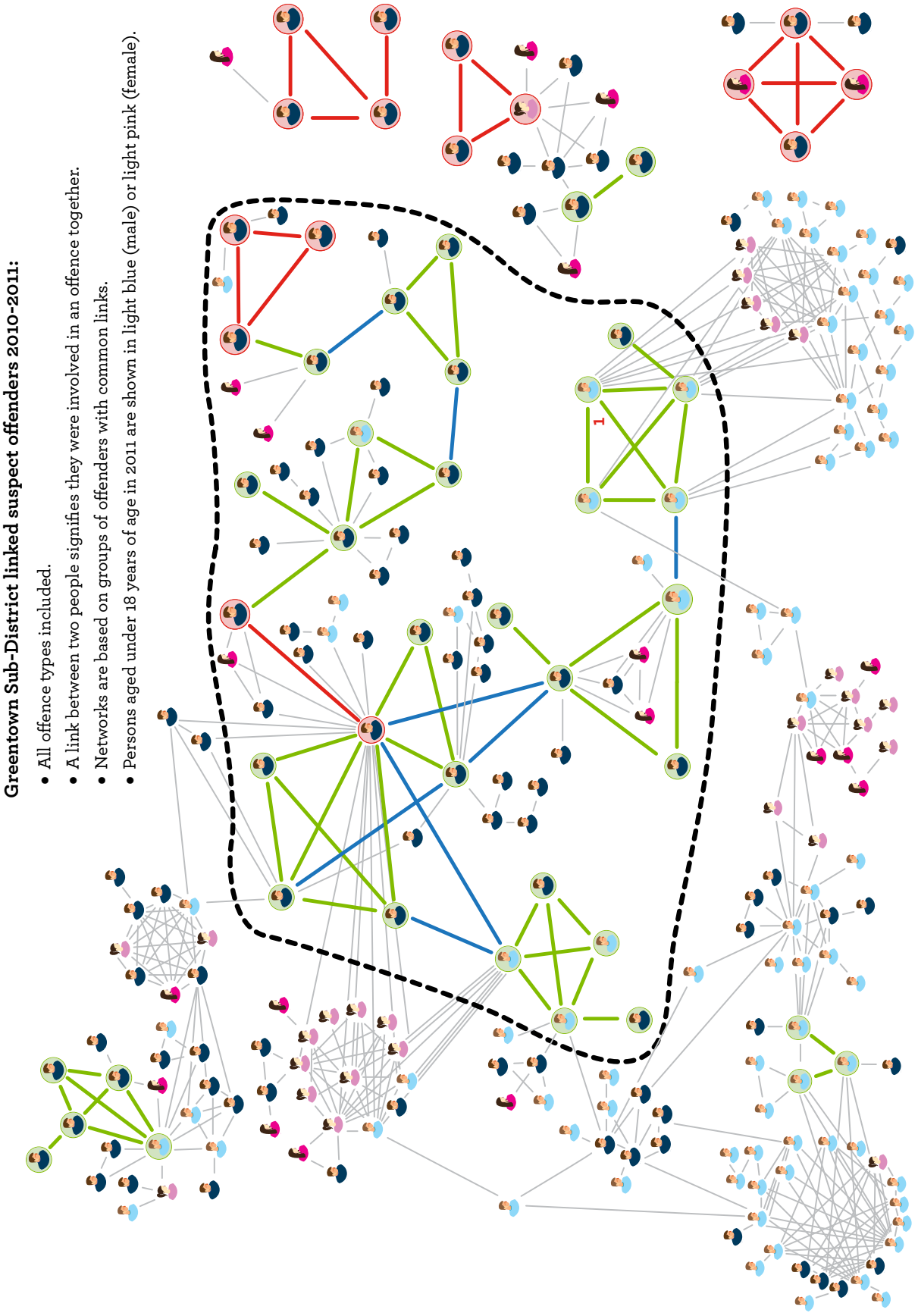


Figure 2.4: Greentown network 'zoom-out' magnification also known as 'bird's-eye view'

4. Examining the Greentown network map

This section outlines in detail the design, approach and methods for data collection. It introduces *Twinsight*, a method designed by the researcher for navigating the network and for pinpointing incidents without disclosing confidential case-related information.[11]

Appendix 3 illustrates the method used by the researcher and the respondents to navigate the network.

'*Twinsight*'

A key feature of the design of the semi-structured interviews undertaken with locally based members of An Garda Síochána was the development of an innovative technique called *Twinsight*. *Twinsight* separated the researcher from personal and confidential data, permitting access to concealed data using the 'zoom-in' network referring only to reference points as opposed to individual identities.

One version of the Greentown network map was 'live', i.e. it contained personal details of the individuals involved, accompanied by a unique identifier (reference code) for each individual. *This version was only ever seen by Garda members or analysts*. It was concealed securely and was used by Garda respondents in the semi-structured interviews to link unique code identifiers with real cases.

The second version was a near exact match with the first version, with one key exception. Any personal information that could identify the individual in the network was removed. During the interviews, the researcher used only this second, anonymised version. Both versions shared the same identifier codes, permitting both researcher and respondent to focus on the same individual or the same link. The use of anonymous but unique identifier codes permitted precise and simultaneous identification of individuals (*Twinsight*) for discussion, while observing ethical requirements to use only anonymised data. The questions listed below illustrate how the researcher used this technique in practice:

- 'Let's discuss some of the obvious key players and links; can you identify two or three that you believe you know best, and/or believe to be most important?'
- (Focusing on two or three individuals *chosen by the interviewee*) 'If we take these individuals one by one, from your own knowledge, how do you think they ended up in the situation we're looking at? Try and go back to the first time you encountered them and describe the path from that point until this network was created.'
- (With reference to X individual) 'Who would you say had the biggest influence on their becoming part of the network and engaging in the network's activities? Can you tell me a little bit about what this relationship looks like and how it may have come about?'

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[11] In the original study, this method was titled *Battleships*. The name *Battleships* was chosen because the use of anonymous but case-sensitive codes permitted, as in the game *Battleships*, precise pinpointing of individual targets from a remote location.

Respondents were actively encouraged to 'ground' their opinions by linking observations and experiences of key issues *to individuals* on the network map, using the unique identifier. Linking opinions to events and individuals as opposed to simply documenting opinions *about crime and the causes of crime* was a conscious attempt to improve the basis of the evidence. Furthermore, accounts of 'individuals and events' provided fixed reference points that could be triangulated by analysis of individual Garda perspectives of the same individuals and events. The following observation from an interview respondent is a good illustration of the utility of the method.

> *Garda:* '...so the top family A2 (he might not be on his own like ... but his family) might get drugs, they might dish them out in large quantities to D1, E1 and A1 and then they will in turn break them up into smaller groups and give them to the likes of U1 who needs them. And U1 is paying these guys massive money that he can't really afford to get back and U1 is dishing them out all over the place ... in really small 25 (euro) bags...'

5. Coding and analysis of data

The approach to coding and data analysis was significantly informed by grounded theory literature and, in particular, the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 2009).[12]



Respondents were actively encouraged to 'ground' their opinions by linking observations and experiences of key issues *to individuals* on the network map, using the unique identifier.

Once collected, data were imported into NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Data comprised statistical reports, the network map provided in PDF format by Garda analysts, and (once transcribed) records of semi-structured interviews. Audio files were transcribed verbatim using Dragon voice recognition software.

Demonstrating a clear audit trail, where each stage of the process can be available for scrutiny, is a necessity in undertaking good-quality research (Yin, 2008; Gibbert *et al*, 2008, p. 1468). All data in NVivo were clearly filed, and trains of thought could be mapped given that these theory-building journeys are logged by the software, transaction by transaction. Appendix 6 outlines in detail the analytical strategy from open coding to the development of themes and propositions.

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[12] Grounded theory, deriving from the seminal work of Bernard Glaser and Anselm Strauss, provides 'a systematic method of analysing and collecting data to develop middle-range theories' (Charmaz, 2012, p.1) and is particularly apposite for exploration of phenomenon and contexts which present with low paradigm (Thomas *et al*, 2011, p. 1075) levels of pre-existing knowledge.

Summary

Previous research in the area of youth crime has looked at individual offenders or groups of offenders (including a smaller number of studies on networks). This study adopted an innovative approach by focusing on the individual as the basic unit of enquiry within the context of a criminal network.

The value of applying a network frame to analysis has been demonstrated by examples as varied as locating patterns of contagion identified in water pipes by the public health pioneers in cholera-infected 19th-century London; understanding organisational behaviours; or examining the influences that cultivate, facilitate and sustain criminal activity, in particular, in local neighbourhoods.

In this study, the use of Garda data to provide the evidence base that a network *existed* (by showing the relationships between individuals based on detected offences) is, in itself, new. Secondly, the use of the network map for closer examination with local Gardaí enabled the researcher to ground the evidence of respondents in the context of individuals and real events, rather than opinion.

Finally, the *Twinsight* technique designed by the researcher facilitated examination of the Greentown network and its individual members, while simultaneously satisfying prior assurances and requirements in relation to anonymity and confidentiality. These related to non-disclosure of Greentown's location, protection of the identities of individuals discussed in the study, and of Garda respondents who contributed to the study.

Limitations

Notwithstanding the strengths of the methodological approach and controls on researcher bias, there are a number of points that must be acknowledged.

First, the network map was prepared by Garda analysts based on PULSE data. However, these data were statistically manipulated to meet prescribed parameters (burglary and drugs for sale and supply offences) which contrived to *cluster* the individuals together on the map. Therefore, the network map itself is an artificial construct, although based on concrete evidence. Garda members were then asked, based on their experience, what they could deduce from the network map. In effect, the study findings are therefore the researcher's interpretation of Garda respondents' interpretation of a construct based on PULSE data.

Second, prescriptions of 'time' (2010–2011) and 'offence type' (burglary and drugs for sale and supply) determined who, from the total population in Greentown, did and did not appear in the network map. These criteria yielded 31 individuals in the case of the largest network, Network 1, which became the focus of the study. Clear weaknesses were evident in terms of the degree to which some individuals were represented. One particular individual was over-represented because he was involved with one anomalous burglary episode during the period, although otherwise peripheral to any network-related activity. At the other extreme, one individual, 'the little fella', was not included in the network map at all, due to the fact that during 2010–2011 he had not been associated with a burglary or drugs for sale and supply offence. However, he was forced into the scope of examination in spite of the criteria, by repeated and 'concerned' references from Garda respondents.[13]

Third, the key data source that the network is built upon, PULSE, has its own limitations and weaknesses. The PULSE data used to build the network relied on events (and detections), and are obviously susceptible to the normal vulnerabilities associated with data inputted by human actors.

During interviews with Garda respondents it became clear that although the PULSE-generated network map provided a reasonable portrayal of offending relationships, it did not provide the detail and nuance required for a more complete account of links between individuals. Relying on the detection data alone actually had the potential to mislead if not treated cautiously, highlighting the importance of local intelligence.

Fourth, and perhaps most significantly, while three data sources were utilised for the study – PULSE data, the network map, and individual semi-structured interviews – it could be argued that they are, in fact, just three different *iterations* sourced from the same data pool, at best offering only 'internal' triangulation.

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[13] It is important to note the potential effects of the basic inclusion criteria (i.e. offence type and period in which committed) in setting the frame for analysis.



Chapter 3

Research findings

This chapter identifies four key findings:

1. The Greentown network existed and was hierarchical in nature.
2. The hierarchical structure in Greentown was supported by powerful processes and a sympathetic embedded culture.
3. Network power and influence is mediated by geography and by the degree of obligation and intensity of individual *associate/client* relationships with network patrons.
4. Network influences act to encourage and compel certain young children into abnormal patterns of criminal behaviour.

Throughout this chapter, an important distinction is made between *family members* (individuals who have a blood relationship) and associates (individuals who are linked to each other in a variety of other ways). The significance of this particular distinction, as identified in other studies (e.g. Fader, 2016), becomes apparent as the findings are discussed.

Finding 1: The Greentown network existed and was hierarchical in nature

Evidence to support the existence of the network was compelling. Prior to any significant employment of the *Twinsight* examination, the clear feedback from Garda interviewees was that the network map (constructed off-site by Garda analysts and based only on PULSE data) was largely accurate. The following exchange is representative:

Researcher, referring to the network map:	'If I was to give you a score of 0 to 10 and said to you "look, 0 means no sense" and 10 means "this is a really accurate picture of what was going on in 2010–2011", what score would you give it?'
Garda:	'I'd give it about 7 … definitely … anyway.'
Researcher:	'…that's great. So 7 is a really high score, so why would you give it a 7?'
Garda:	'…because I see here, you know, the green lines signify the burglary offences, those that you have linked with the green lines are very accurate for those that would have been committing those crimes. And those that you have in the drugs section is all very accurate. They're all involved in those crimes…'

In terms of exploring the existence of 'hierarchy', the first stage in this process was to identify any disproportionately important, influential, and significant network actors. Analysis of 'first sweep' and 'frequency of mention' were key elements in this process.

When respondents were *first* asked to identify the individuals in the network they wanted to talk about (from the confined list of 31 in the network), each individual identified was coded as *first sweep*, as this was the respondent's first cut at the network and would determine which individuals would feature *initially* in the discussion. The inherent assumption and logic here was that the group of individuals who were selected in the 'first sweep' would be those who figured more significantly in the minds of respondents. It should be noted that respondents were given no direction or guidance in the selection of individuals to discuss. Figure 3.1 shows the frequencies of mentions of network members for *first sweep of cases*.

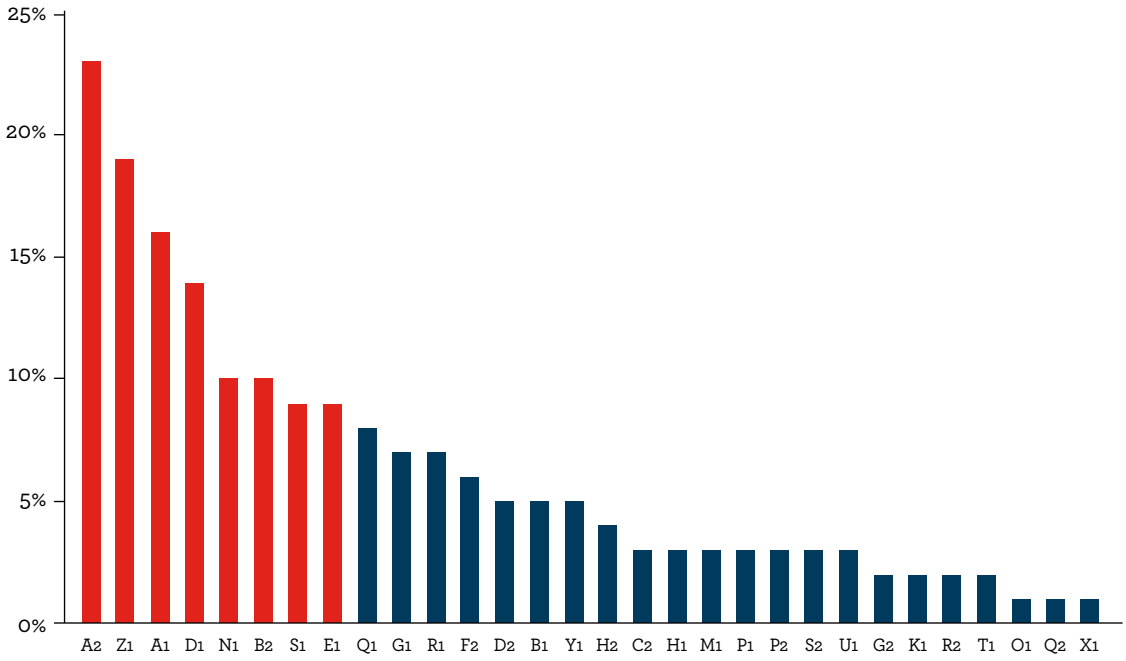


Figure 3.1: First sweep of cases

Of interest here is that the top four positions (and a significant volume of *first sweep* discussion), involve a small number of individuals – A2, Z1, A1, and D1.

Figure 3.2 represents the relative *presence* of individual actors in semi-structured interviews based on *how many times each actor was mentioned across* ***all*** *16 interviews*. Similar to first sweep, it is presumed that those individuals who are repeatedly referred to by the majority of respondents are likely to be perceived as more prominent. The total number of mentions is multiplied by the number of individual interviews where each actor was mentioned. **Therefore, the highest 'total frequency of mention' scores were achieved by individuals who were mentioned on multiple occasions but also in multiple interviews.**[14]

[14] The researcher assessed knowledge of the network by Garda respondents as follows: one respondent knew all the network participants, eight knew most, and seven knew some. None were gauged to have known few or none.

The red columns identify eight individuals – A2, B2, D2, Z1, D1, E1, A1, and F2. Of note, three of these – A2, B2, and D2 – belong to the same family and kinship group in Greentown.

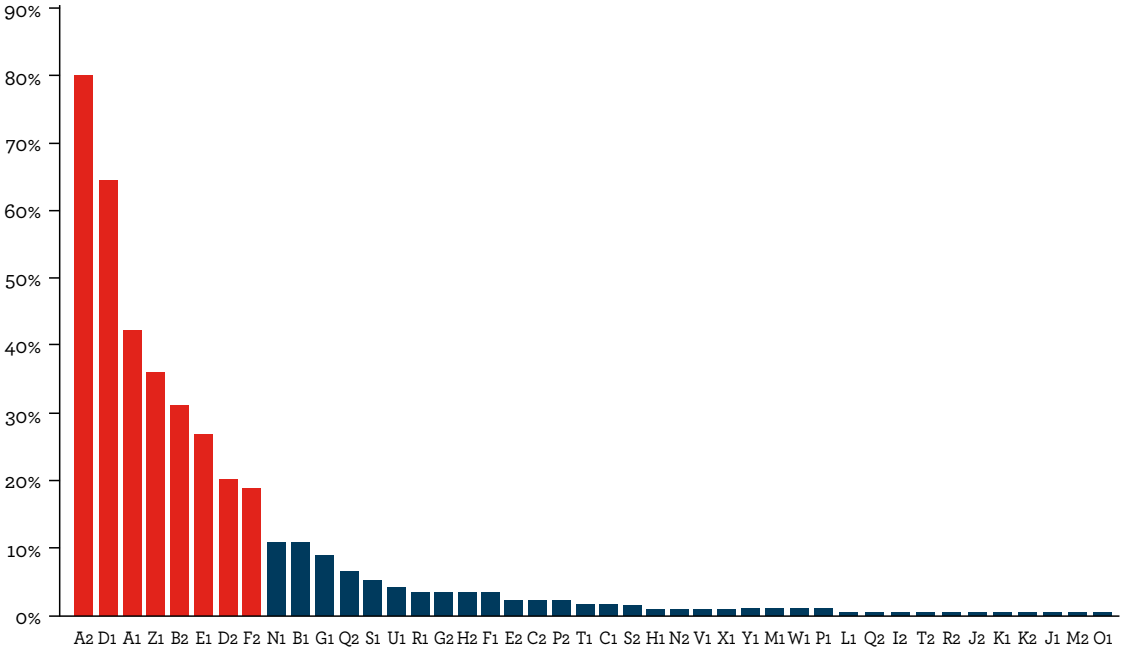


Figure 3.2: Total 'frequencies of mention' of individual network participants by breadth of interviews

When the 'total frequencies of mention' were compared with 'first sweep frequencies of mention' (from a potential 31 individuals), the top eight places are, with the exception of two individuals D2 (frequency of mentions exercise) and S1 (*first sweep* mentions exercise), sourced from the top 11 places for both exercises, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Top positions of 'total frequencies of mention' compared with 'first sweep frequencies of mention'

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
Frequency of mentions exercise	A2	D1	A1	Z1	B2	E1	D2	F2	N1	B1	G1
First sweep exercise	A2	Z1	A1	D1	N1	B2	S1	G1	E1	Q1	F2

This dual frequency of a relatively small number of individuals being at the forefront in respondents' minds and repeatedly referred to over the duration of most interviews suggests that this relatively small group is more important than the majority of other network participants.

The results of an exercise linking individual network participants with any interview references to *power* are shown in Figure 3.3. The same individuals occupy the top four positions. (Note: NVivo search tools permitted the identification of these correlations given that Garda members interviewed were encouraged as far as possible to tie opinions to individual network members.)

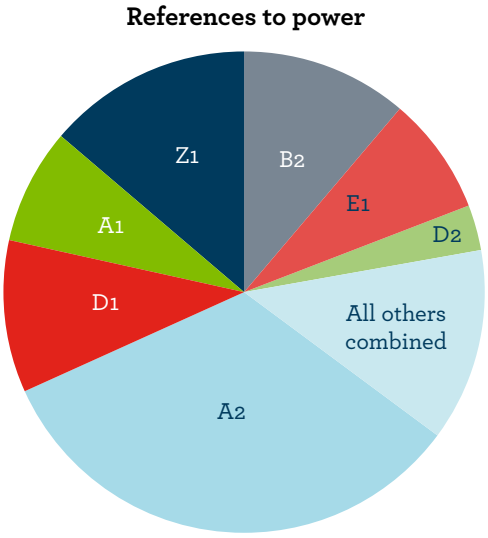


Figure 3.3: Referencing 'power' to network participants

Similar exercises in relation to *leadership* and *influence* revealed similar patterns and clusters as those conducted for *first sweep, total frequency of mention*, and *power*. Of significance is the fact that A2's presence consistently dominates along with, to a lesser extent, D1, Z1 and A1. These data appear to indicate repeat patterns associated with a small cohort of key leading players in the network, supporting the plausibility of a hierarchical structure within the network.

> ...a relatively small number of individuals being at the forefront in respondents' minds and repeatedly referred to over the duration of most interviews suggests that this relatively small group is more important than the majority of other network participants.

However, this structure appears to be informal, with fluid dynamic properties. Respondents indicated that since the period of study (2010–2011) the network has experienced changes of roles and seniorities,[15] individuals' stocks have risen and fallen, and new alliances have emerged within it. However, it is also clear that the personal and social capital of certain individuals have remained relatively stable.

15 Interview 015/064: For example, A2's cousin emerging as a new leader.

Family members (blood relations)

Each of the key individuals in the network is now briefly profiled in a pen-picture based on representative interview data.



A2 (male aged 29 years) is considered by *all respondents* as the clear leader of the network, the *head man* and next in line to take over a multigenerational, family-based criminal organisation. **A2** has, over a significant period of time, presided over a regime that governs the majority of network actors both in terms of their outward compliance and own self-governance. He presents as a remote, elusive but controlling individual. Appendix 4 contains an illustration of how he is perceived by Gardaí.

A2 presents as polite and non-confrontational in his dealings with An Garda Síochána. This *creative* compliance with state actors is a behavioural norm expected by **A2** of those most closely linked with him, including his family and kinship network and a small number of *trusted associates*, as a means to avoid undue and excessive Garda attention. His influence has served to shape young people's behaviour. Even relatively senior network actors can be sanctioned for breach of this norm.[16]

> **A2** (male aged 29 years) is considered by all *respondents* as the clear leader of the network.

In the past, **A2** has been involved in burglary and is suspected of involvement in drugs for sale and supply, although he is far more likely, in recent years, to organise and supervise or *contract* this work to others. More recently, **A2** has overseen a moneylending enterprise, which is used by certain vulnerable residents in Greentown, drug users and *associate* members of his own network. Importantly, these financial and criminal activity-related transactions impose obligations on debt-ridden *clients* to a small number of network *patrons*. **A2** uses middle-ranking members of the network such as A1, D1 and E1 to enforce debt repayment. To some children who live on the same estate, **A2** represents a clear example that crime pays.



B2 (male aged 15 years) is an immediate family member of A2 who lives close by in the same estate. **B2** uses his family name to confirm his significant social capital and he is both revered and feared by young people in his immediate neighbourhood. In his early adolescence **B2** was considered impetuous and impulsive by A2. However, he has now emerged as a player, mixing more with family members than the *associates* he used to mix with. **B2** is now more trusted by A2 in terms of management of the family brand and is seen as a future heir to control the network.

> **B2** uses his family name to confirm his significant social capital and he is both revered and feared by young people in his immediate neighbourhood.

[16] For example, E1 was disciplined by A2 for being rude to a Garda (Interview 012/019).



D2 (male aged 12 years) is also an immediate family member of A2. **D2** appears to be encouraged in criminality by A2, but equally sheltered by him, partly because his younger age may make him more prone to disclosing something about A2 that he should not.

D2 carries authority significantly disproportionate to his age. He appears to be able to gauge the potency of evidence against him on matters that he is suspected of and, on the advice of his parents, knows when to accept a caution. **D2** offers street advice and counsel to other children on offence-related matters and uses strategies similar to those of adult members of his family for encounters with An Garda Síochána.

Like B2, **D2** derives capital from the family brand and many of the local children are afraid of him. The 'birds-eye' version of the network indicates relationships between **D2** and younger children at the periphery of the network and, like A2, he is considered to be becoming adept at distancing himself from offending incidents through the use of others.

> **D2** carries authority significantly disproportionate to his age.

Associates (i.e. not part of A2's family and kinship group)



Z1 (male aged 28 years) is an intriguing character, originating from outside Greentown. **Z1** is not a family member of A2's, but they have had a long and close association, and he is considered a lieutenant of A2 and his second-in-command, by most but not all respondents. **Z1** is considered to be A2's confidant, always in his company, and joint architect with A2 of serious offending events. Like A2, **Z1** selects his closest *associates* very carefully. **Z1** appears to be a network entrepreneur; he has links to individuals outside Greentown in terms of 'fencing' stolen goods and, together with S2 (which is not disclosed by the network map), provides a network crossing point for burglary and drugs for sale and supply.



D1 (male aged 20 years) is considered part of Greentown network's middle management under the influence of A2, and regards A2 as a figure to aspire to. **D1's** family background was considered chaotic and he is seen as having been involved in criminal behaviour from an early age, particularly car crime, prior to his full engagement with the network.

> **Z1** is considered to be A2's confidant, always in his company.

D1 has shown dissent to A2, which was punished, indicating that even relatively senior members of the network are subject to summary justice by A2.

D1 developed a reputation for not caring about adverse consequences of his behaviour and for being willing to do anything for money,[17] including enforcing discipline on behalf of A2. His older brothers were all involved with A2 and have spent significant periods of time in prison. This familial involvement, combined with physical or geographical proximity, is associated with **D1's** closer connection to A2. **D1** has a reputation for driving proficiency but is not considered to have the right temperament or intelligence to become leader of the network. **D1** is part of a smaller friendship group with E1 and A1 capable of operating alone, although lacking the sophistication of crimes organised by A2 and more likely to be detected. **D1** is seen as controller and recruiter of new participants (e.g. F2 and other children). **D1** has shown dissent to A2, which was punished, indicating that even relatively senior members of the network are subject to summary justice by A2.



E1 (male aged 19 years) is a close, long-time associate of D1 and neighbour to D1, A2, D2, and B2. **E1** and D1 are often mentioned in the same breath by respondents when discussing their activities and their relationship to A2's family. **E1** does not appear to have experienced the same sibling pressure as D1, in terms of older brothers who had been routinely involved in crime and with A2 in particular. While **E1** has, in collaboration with D1, been very closely connected to A2's operations, more recently he has also developed links with other key players outside Greentown.



A1 (male aged 18 years) is often seen in the company of D1 and E1, although he does not live in the same part of Greentown. **A1** was known to Gardaí as a child and is remembered for his hostility to authority, an attitude that appears not to have been tempered as he has grown older. **A1's** family background was considered chaotic; his father had chronic alcohol problems and the family had an openly confrontational relationship with An Garda Síochána. **A1** has been involved in multiple offending episodes with D1, in particular burglary, as well as activity on behalf of A2, including debt collection. The offending relationship with D1 continued beyond the time span of the Greentown network map and he is one of a small number of

While **E1** has, in collaboration with D1, been very closely connected to A2's operations, more recently he has also developed links with other key players outside Greentown.

[17] Interview 011/010 gives the example of D1 and E1 being involved in an attack on a nightclub. Interview 013/022 identifies D1 and E1's involvement in criminal damage and arson on behalf of A2.

associates who has 'enjoyed' a longer-term relationship with A2. **A1** was involved in the recruitment and mentoring of F2 (see below), a child, whom he lives close to. It is believed that **A1** and D1 have benefited from the proceeds of burglaries committed by F2 and a younger cohort of children. **A1's** role in recruitment and mentoring included developing a *paternalistic* relationship with the mother of another individual known as 'the little fella' (see below) while 'the little fella' was spending time outside Greentown in State residential care.

> **A1** has been involved in multiple offending episodes with D1, in particular burglary, as well as activity on behalf of A2, including debt collection.



F2 (male aged 13 years) is considered by many to be the child member of the network who had become most involved in serious offending over the study period. **F2's** family background was chaotic. His father is considered to have been absent in **F2's** upbringing, living elsewhere in Greentown. An uncle of **F2's** involved him very early on in offending behaviour, including aggravated burglary. In addition to being considered a prolific offender in his own right, **F2** has himself been instrumental in recruiting members of his own network, including 'the little fella'.

F2 and his young offending group were responsible for a spate of burglary and robbery offences, and appear to represent a chaotic fringe to the network. **F2** and his group engaged in excessive alcohol and drugs consumption in the company of D1 and A1 (who were some seven years older than him), and **F2** is considered to be significantly under A1 and D1's influence more generally. **F2** is seen as an individual with a strong character who will become one of the more significant adult members ensuring, it is argued, the network's progression to the next generation of *associates*. Despite **F2's** lower status, his primary relationship being with A1 and D1, he is not beyond the coercive reach of A2.

'The little fella'[18] (male aged 12 years) does not appear on the network map. However, he is included in the narrative account here because of repeated references to him by respondents. **'The little fella'** was considered to be an individual of significant concern in 2014, when the study was undertaken, not just for

> **F2** is seen as an individual with a strong character who will become one of the more significant adult members ensuring, it is argued, the network's progression to the next generation of *associates*.

[18] The term 'the little fella' is used because this and 'the young fella' is how he was described by respondents. The term seems to convey (if nothing else) the respondents' perception of him relative to the physical size of other network actors.

crime, but also for welfare reasons. His mother appears to have had a significant drug problem. Welfare concerns precipitated his removal into residential care where his conduct and behaviour was considered very poor and disruptive. When he returned to Greentown, F2 engaged him with D1 and A1, for whom he became involved in carrying out burglary offences. '**The little fella's**' specific asset, notably his small size and slight build, is a valuable attribute, allowing him to crawl into small spaces or through windows of houses to open up premises for adults committing burglary. He is supplied drugs by D1 and is highly influenced by both D1 and A1. In one incident, **'the little fella'** was discovered by Gardaí in D1's house, in a state of severe intoxication with other boys of a similar (young) age. Many respondents shared particular concerns about this young person in terms of predicting his likely deteriorating trajectory.

'The little fella' was considered to be an individual of significant concern in 2014, when the study was undertaken, not just for crime, but also for welfare reasons.

Summary

Finding 1 provides evidence supporting the existence of a network in Greentown and suggests that the Greentown network was hierarchical in nature. Specifically, it posits that hierarchical traits for Greentown can be detected in the data, and that the division between family and non-family is a key consideration in determining authority and status.

Of the eight principal actors in the Greentown network (A2, B2, D2, Z1, D1, E1, A1, and F2), A2 presents as being a central and key influence. Z1's position as A2's second-in-command and confidant appears to have been sustained over time. D1, A1 and E1 present as both a quasi-autonomous close friendship group and as followers and middle management – committing offences, implementing punishment orders and undertaking debt collection – deriving much of their power and social capital directly from A2.

In one incident, **'the little fella'** was discovered by Gardaí in D1's house, in a state of severe intoxication with other boys of a similar (young) age. Many respondents shared particular concerns about this young person in terms of predicting his likely deteriorating trajectory.

During the period in question, D1 (aged 20) was cultivating a relationship with F2 (aged 13), who was considered to be a prolific offender in his own right and had progressed under D1's mentorship. 'The little fella' (aged 12) was significantly influenced by these actors and by A1, committing burglaries for D1 in return for drugs and the prestige of more senior association.

It is clear that there is a superior and a subordinate class in the Greentown network, which tends to be divided (although not exclusively) between those who are part of A2's family and kinship group and those who are not.[19] The prestige of A2's family is also evident in observations regarding D2 who, at the time, was 12 years of age. D2 was seen to carry authority with adults, which is significantly disproportionate to his age; he commands fear and respect from other young people in the neighbourhood and was already distancing himself from the front line of criminal behaviour, preferring instead to stand back at a safe distance while others engage.

Finding 2: The hierarchical structure in Greentown is supported by powerful processes and a sympathetic embedded culture

This section examines the issue of how contrived *processes* and *culture* support the loose hierarchical *structure* discussed in the previous section. It also considers how *power* is exercised in the Greentown network and how this, in turn, influences the behaviour of network (and other) participants.

Process

A2's 'contractual relationships' developed from direct involvement in serious crime to delegation of work to multiple network actors. This involves instrumental exchanges of cash from the proceeds of theft,[20] rewards for acts of intimidation and enforcement on his behalf, and more sophisticated multi-actor operations.

It is clear that there is a superior and a subordinate class in the Greentown network, which tends to be divided (although not exclusively) between those who are part of A2's family and kinship group and those who are not.

Some of A2's criminal activity relationships are direct, such as Z1, D1, A1 and E1; others are perhaps more indirect and distant, such as F2 and 'the little fella'. As Appendix 5 illustrates, while actors such as A1 and D1 enter into a succession of agreements with A2, these are not walk-away propositions. It is generally believed that, despite their relative seniority, they cannot turn down a request from A2 and are required to share proceeds from their own criminal activity with him.

Network *associates* can also become *clients* when they fall into debt, resulting in obligations. This provides an additional governance mechanism for A2. Routinely, this can mean payback of exorbitant loan fees; however, there were examples of *client-debtors* being coerced into crime, including individuals committing serious crime under the supervision of lieutenants or middle management.[21]

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19 Z1 appears to be a singular exclusion to this rule.

20 Interview 007/007 provides an example of commissioning D1 to undertake a large-scale theft and to convey the stolen item to another source in return for a share of the proceeds. A2 is illustrated here as architect of the offence, providing intelligence and 'a fence' to dispose of the goods. This was offered as an example of A2 creating clear water between himself and the crime. Further details of the event cannot be disclosed, in order to ensure anonymity.

21 Interview 013/020: A brother of N2 was forced to commit robberies due to a drug-related debt.

> …while actors such as A1 and D1 enter into a succession of agreements with A2, these are not walk-away propositions.

The debt driver is formalised and *normalised* with the extension of A2's activities into moneylending, which has been seen overall as a conscious choice by A2 and his family to become involved in such less risky 'grey' enterprises. A2's involvement in this activity has had spillover effects, causing an escalation in criminal activity by newly engaged actors who have fallen into debt with A2 (often women) and have become involved in theft and shoplifting activities to service the debt. The following exchange between a Garda respondent and a shoplifter illustrates this point:

> *Garda:* '…I said "why are you shoplifting, you are never … I've never even heard of you before a year ago, like…?" (They are travelling, getting buses around all over the country stealing every day) … And she said: "*Well I have no other option. I have to have the money every week for them … Or else like*."'

> Routinely, this can mean payback of exorbitant loan fees; however, there were examples of *client-debtors* being coerced into crime, including individuals committing serious crime under the supervision of lieutenants or middle management.

Moneylending activity also expands the territory of A2's contract influence, involving (relatively) non-associated drug users and a wider cohort of individuals and families characterised by vulnerability, where debts can be generated simply by engaging in a loan arrangement. The following quote conveys the context and consequence of the transaction well, identifying (a) the means of surety and (b) how the risks relating to repayment are mitigated by fear, geographic isolation and a low likelihood of detection.

> *Garda:* 'He preys on the vulnerable, so … A lady would come looking for €300 for Christmas … He would give them the €300. They would pay off the €300 and he would tell them he wants €450 or €500 … He would take their dole cards or their social welfare cards on them … This is what he used to do, take the dole and the social welfare cards and give them to them on the day they were going to collect their dole … He would drive them there and when they came out they'd have to hand back the money … He would just keep extending the loan … In fairness to these people, they couldn't come and report it to the Guards because … they would be afraid of repercussions … living in the estate on your own out there …

> And that's the way he ran about his business … He is technically … There's nobody going to give evidence against him that he'd be caught … It's a safer way of him doing his business than actually committing burglaries or road traffic or where the Guards can actually catch him … But unless we get a complaint from … a member of … that he's lending money to … There's nothing really the Guards can do about it, you know … And it's very hard. I wouldn't blame anyone … You probably know yourself living in the circumstances out there … For a young woman on her own with probably one or two kids, no husband … In a lot of cases the threat of something happening to them overrides actually going to the Guards, you know, and she'll just pay off the loan and suddenly he will say … you don't have to pay me anymore … maybe if you borrowed a loan for 300 he would get an extra thousand.' (Interview 016, p. 18)

Debt and fear are powerful push factors, particularly in the context of an insular, redundant and 'intensely parochial' network (McGloin and Piquero, 2010; Pitts, 2008). Corresponding and powerful pull factors are also clearly evident for children in particular. Money is seen as a key instrumental reason for engaging in a contract with A2 (or any other network patron) along with drugs (and combinations of money and drugs). According to respondents, certain children present as drawn towards key players seeking patronage, excitement and the acquisition of social capital by association. There is also evidence to suggest that A2's approach to 'contract' has had a trickle-down effect, with acolytes such as D1 entering into similar transactional relationships with adults and children.

Culture

A2's family brand, linked to the use of violence in past feud-related conflicts, is used widely in regulating *associate* behaviour[22] and in enforcing compliance more generally across the network. However, ongoing risk management is more efficiently sustained by perceptions, stories, myths and perceived panoptical surveillance by A2 and his family which, in turn, secure self-regulation by *associates, clients* and non-aligned residents in the estate where A2 lives. The following interview extract illustrates this point:

> *Garda:* '…she can't say anything because … I know she told me that she has told the detectives, but she says she is walking down the street now and she's so paranoid because she thinks that they're after finding out she is after saying something … Because they told her that she'd be buried with a straw in her mouth … Like if she told anyone or didn't pay the money, like…'

[22] An example is the disciplining of G1 and D1 with reference to their behaviour.

Individuals who have *client* relationships with A2 are also well aware of the family's capability of carrying through on debt-related threats and can be prompted into action by no more than a phone call.

B2 and D2 derive direct social capital from the family brand and they walk the estate with an air of ownership. A2 can be equally assured that young people, and even relatively senior young *adults* like D1 and E1, would never give evidence against him if they were caught executing a criminal action for him.

Network *associates* are often carefully selected for their personal vulnerability (e.g. C1),[23] family history of criminal association through elder siblings (e.g. D1, A1), poor supervision (e.g. F2), parenting capacity compromised by alcohol and drugs misuse and absent or ineffective father figure (e.g. A1, B1, E1 and 'the little fella') or, more likely, combinations of these factors. Individuals who have *client* relationships with A2 are also well aware of the family's capability of carrying through on debt-related threats and can be prompted into action by no more than a phone call.

Presumptions made by the criminal justice system regarding rational action demand attention here. Securing a conviction against A2 requires a complaint and an individual willing to follow the process through to court. The data suggest that this presumption falters at all levels. To begin with, A2 appears always to be very distant from the commission of a criminal act and there is a paucity of individuals willing to make complaints or offer witness evidence against him (or other network protagonists), whether they are simply residents in A2's estate or have a more intense *client* relationship with him. Garda respondents complained of delay once an offence gets to court and a tendency to mitigate the seriousness of criminal behaviour by *rolling offences together* over long periods of time.

Securing a conviction against A2 requires a complaint and an individual willing to follow the process through to court.

Summary

The study finds that A2 and his family have a powerful influence over associates, clients *and non-aligned residents*' behaviour. Additionally, it appears that the criminal justice system is built on presumptions that are at odds with the lived reality of individuals who have any form of contact with A2 and the network. Taken together these influences support a culture of compliance and sustenance of network power and impact.

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[23] Interview 001/011: C1 is referred to as a vulnerable, harmless and soft loner who is taken advantage of by more manipulative members.

Finding 3: Network power and influence is mediated by geography and by the degree of obligation and intensity of individual *associate/client* relationships with network patrons

This section examines how power and influence are *distributed* across the network in particular and across Greentown more generally. It is argued that these forces are not spread evenly across Greentown and that the dominant subordinate relationship often trumps physical or geographical proximity alone.

A2 and his family are generally well known across Greentown, even to those who have no connection with him or his family (non-aligned residents). One respondent observed that, even at a distance, residents in Greentown are unlikely to make complaints. A2's family are described as 'probably the most feared family in Greentown'. For example, even when compelling corroborating evidence was secured by An Garda Síochána in relation to a serious violent offence committed by A2 in a public area, no witnesses were willing to come forward.

> ...it appears that the criminal justice system is built on presumptions that are at odds with the lived reality of individuals who have any form of contact with A2 and the network.

In essence, Greentown comprises two effectively mutually exclusive spaces. The first is 'official' Greentown where residents go about their normal lives and do not feel the Greentown network's influence. The second, characterised by links to A2, is a close network of associates bound together by choice and/or misfortune.

Responses suggest that this 'parallel' Greentown is a small, claustrophobic space, where everyone knows each other. While, generally, it could be reasonably expected that A2's influence wanes with distance from his home estate, it can be experienced with its essential intensity by *associates* and *clients* irrespective of physical distance.

Perhaps the highest and most sustained concentration of influence is experienced by ***associates*** and ***clients*** living in A2's estate. It is believed that here those individuals who by choice and/or circumstance have become *associates* or *clients* of A2's also forfeit basic freedoms and privacy.

Responses clearly suggest that clients fear physical punishment by A2, or more likely A1, D1 and E1, in terms of debt retrieval. Fear of the consequences of their refusal to engage in crime is seen as a key driver of *child associates*' behaviour. This sense of stifling proximity has been identified in other commentary (Pitts, 2008, p. 34) and is exemplified by D1's reported experience of 'feeling the pressure', living as he does (along with E1) in A2's immediate vicinity.

> Responses suggest that this 'parallel' Greentown is a small, claustrophobic space, where everyone knows each other.

> Perhaps the highest and most sustained concentration of influence is experienced by *associates* and *clients* living in A2's estate. It is believed that here those individuals who by choice and/or circumstance have become *associates* or *clients* of A2's also forfeit basic freedoms and privacy.

Referring to the housing estate A2 lives in as 'up there' (described by one Garda respondent during interview) has a particular significance, characterising its physical distance from Greentown's commercial and civic centre and conjuring up an inner world beyond the reach of the authorities, where the State's official sovereignty is effectively contested by A2.

A2's family and kinship group have a large presence on the estate, operating, it is believed, as overt and widespread surveillance, fitting with Hourigan's similar observations relating to criminal gangs in Limerick (2011, p. 95). Here, it is believed, A2 has cultivated a climate of fear, with B2 and D2 carrying authority and *intimidation rights* well beyond their actual age and maturity. It is thought that D2's outwardly convivial interactions with members of An Garda Síochána may also have the more profound effect of convincing residents that the family has a *special relationship* with the Gardaí, serving to undermine their confidence in the authorities to alter the status quo. Living close to A2 leaves one exposed, remote and vulnerable, and this applies equally to 'non-aligned' residents. In the words of one Garda respondent, 'we're not there 24/7 to protect them if something does happen'.

The combination of remoteness and insular pressure means that residents in the estate have to choose which side they are on. However, between the black and white of 'A2 or not A2' is a grey ambiguity with myriad shades.

Despite the adversity, the majority of individuals, families and children do not become involved. (However unlikely, this includes a brother of one of the key *associate* family groupings.)[24] The default coping mechanism is *stoicism*; residents tend to keep their heads down or simply stay out of A2 and the network's line of sight on the reasonable assumption that they will be left alone if they leave him alone. However, 'coping' with the regime also has consequences. Victims of crime or antisocial behaviour on the estate are unlikely to speak out or lodge a complaint, certainly against A2, and cooperative witnesses are hard to find. The inability of the authorities to provide the high level of protection required suggests that stoicism is a rational response in terms of everyday living.

> It is thought that D2's outwardly convivial interactions with members of An Garda Síochána may also have the more profound effect of convincing residents that the family has a special relationship with the Gardaí...

[24] Interview 015/036: The specific context here is concealed to ensure anonymity. However, given the degree of adversity, there are potentially significant insights to be gained from further examination of this case in terms of how he managed to repel what must have been inordinate pressure over a long period of time.

Figure 3.4, which is based on the interview data, illustrates how A2's influence is profiled, and suggests that physical proximity and the intensity of relationships help to determine the degree of influence.

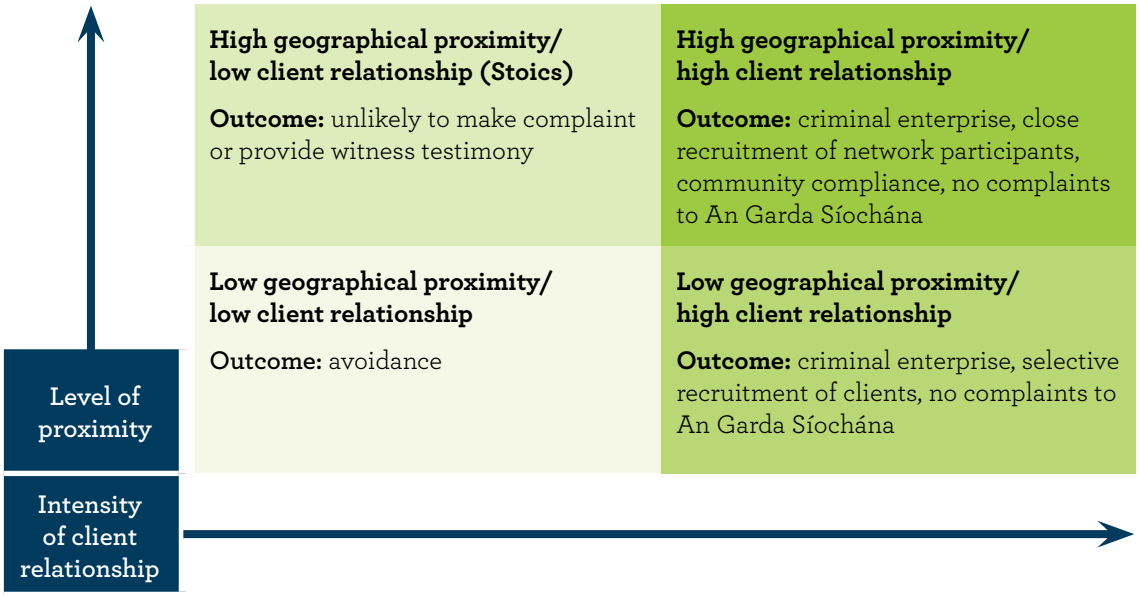


Figure 3.4: A2's influence in Greentown

Summary

The evidence presented suggests that the network's influence is strongest in (the network leader) A2's estate involving *clients* and *associates* of the network and (perhaps obviously) is weaker with increased geographical distance and non-aligned individuals. It also highlights, however (at mid-levels of influence), the effects of *client/associate* relationships and proximity, respectively, *suggesting that the relationship trumps physical or geographical proximity.*

> Victims of crime or antisocial behaviour on the estate are unlikely to speak out or lodge a complaint, certainly against A2, and cooperative witnesses are hard to find.

Finding 4: Network influences act to encourage and compel certain young children into abnormal patterns of criminal behaviour

In this section, levels of child offending in Greentown are compared with national norms. The section then presents evidence to plausibly associate the Greentown network in (a) attracting network membership, (b) retaining network members and (c) reducing the possibilities for individuals exiting the network.

Comparing national youth crime trends with trends in Greentown

In examining the proposition that network influences act to encourage and compel certain young children into *abnormal* patterns of criminal behaviour, it is necessary first to establish whether there is *any* difference between the patterns of criminal behaviour for individuals (children and adults) in the Greentown network compared with national norms. Statistical data collected with reference to 'all non-traffic offences' are used here initially to establish a national baseline for *frequency of offending,* with a further focus on national 'burglary' statistics, given that elevated offending rates for burglary have already been established in Greentown. Table 3.2 presents data relating to the number of offences committed on average for (a) national non-traffic-related offending, (b) national burglary-related offending and (c) Greentown network-related offending in 2010–2011, the period of the Greentown case study.

Table 3.2: Comparisons of frequencies of PULSE incidents (2010–2011)

Offences	Non-traffic national (Over 12 years)	Non-traffic national (12–17 years)	Non-traffic national (12–19 years)	Non-traffic national (12–24 years)
1	70%	71%	67%	67%
2	13%	13%	14%	14%
3	6%	5%	6%	6%
4	3%	3%	3%	4%
5+	**9%**	**8%**	**10%**	**10%**

Offences	Burglary national (Over 12 years)	Burglary national (12–17 years)	Burglary national (12–19 years)	Burglary national (12–24 years)
1	47%	58%	53%	48%
2	14%	16%	16%	15%
3	8%	6%	7%	8%
4	6%	5%	6%	6%
5+	**25%**	**15%**	**19%**	**23%**

Offences	Greentown network (All)	Greentown network (12–17 years)	Greentown network (12–19 years)	Greentown network (12–24 years)
1	0%	0%	0%	0%
2	3%	0%	0%	0%
3	6%	0%	0%	4%
4	13%	13%	8%	13%
5+	**77%**	**75%**	**69%**	**74%**

Source: An Garda Síochána Analysis Service

The table splits age ranges 12–17 years (children), 12–19 years (19 years = approximate peak age of offending for all non-traffic offences) and 12–24 years (where the highest volume of offending occurs and rates begin to taper off). Taking the 'All' non-traffic (national) category, the table indicates that, on average, 9% of individuals have been detected for committing five or more offences. The rate is almost three times higher for national burglary figures (25%). However, in the Greentown network, 77% of individuals have been detected for committing five or more offences. This is three times the rate for national burglary figures and over eight times the rate for all non-traffic offences nationally.

For children (i.e. column relating to 12–17 years) the comparisons are more stark; nationally, 8% of non-traffic offenders were detected for five offences or more, 15% of burglary offenders were detected for five or more offences, but in Greentown 75% of 12–17 year-olds were detected for five or more offences. This indicates a rate of burglary at five times the national average. *None* of the children in the Greentown network had been detected for fewer than two offences over the period 2010–2011.

Accepting all the caveats that apply when relying on official crime data (and the small numbers of children identified in this study), the contrasts between 'individuals in the Greentown network' and national averages are significant. While there are insufficient data to indicate *prolonged* offending behaviour beyond the normal age/crime curve, the data indicate a significantly more serious pattern of offending in terms of *frequency*.

> …in Greentown 75% of 12–17 year-olds were detected for five or more offences. This indicates a rate of burglary at five times the national average.

The Greentown network: entry to, and emergence in, the network

Risk factors for *associates* entering the network include poor affinity and performance at school; family involvement in crime, drugs and alcohol misuse; antisocial peer groups and ineffective parenting/guardianship, all of which leave children vulnerable, and perhaps present as no surprise. However, given that the evidence so far suggests that the majority of children and families choose not to associate with A2 and the network, the challenge is to discriminate which factors are linked with children engaging with, or being selected and recruited for, the network.

In attempting to describe the context for 'vulnerability', the research focuses here on clusters of risks associated with family and parenting which, according to interview respondents, appear to mark out the cohort of children and young people more likely to engage.

A1 and **B1's** family background was considered to be chaotic, unstructured and, in common with other active network members, troubled and dysfunctional. Their father had severe alcohol problems and the family as a whole had an extremely confrontational relationship with An Garda Síochána.

F2 was involved in criminal behaviour at an early age, accompanying his uncle on burglaries, and with whom he consumed excessive alcohol. He is described as having a chaotic home life, no interest in school, poor parental controls permitting him to stay out unsupervised all night, and has been the subject of care proceedings. Less is known about **'the little fella'**, however; the available data suggest that he experiences the same generally chaotic environment, lacks the guidance of a 'father figure', and is a drug user. This composite picture of a chaotic, hedonistic and boundary-less ecosystem of childhood experiences is, on the face of it, in significant contrast with Z1, A2, B2 and D2 (the latter three of whom are members of the same family).

Z1 is included in this group because (from the little we know of him) he presents with more similarities to A2's family than the previous profile of *associates*. Z1 is from outside Greentown, a member of another criminalised family who joined the Greentown network as an adult and therefore, strictly speaking, is not of priority interest. However, the observation that despite background criminality his family is described as reasonably functional (similar to A2 and in contrast with D1 and other *associates*) means that his situation merits mention.

It is argued here that **A2's** family involvement in the network can be described as *dynastical*, given that he is the current leader in a multigenerational criminal family network. **B2**, a close family member, is seen as successor. Consequently, language relating to the network for A2's family speaks more appropriately of 'emergence' as opposed to 'engagement'.

The contrasts between A2's family and the circumstances endured by *associate* families are clear. One respondent observed:

> A2 has a mother and father at home … His brothers are all closely knit family … Now they never did schooling and their learning. They've been taught by mother and father how to rob … okay and how to get away with it and you know … But of all the families, they are probably the most functional of the whole lot of them … the same with Z1, his family in the … Well, he's from out of town … are a total intact family, mother or father, brothers, sisters or whatever.

Consequently, language relating to the network for A2's family speaks more appropriately of 'emergence' as opposed to 'engagement'.

B2 and **D2** are coached by parents and kinship elders. This cultivation, nurturing and shaping analogy is in marked contrast to *associate* membership of the network, where neglect and vulnerability help to discriminate who engages and who does not engage. Appendix 7 illustrates (based on interviewees' testimonials) the limited exposure of A2's family to a range of antisocial influences, compared with the significant exposure of *associates* to these influences.

Given that the vast majority of children and families do not engage, it appears that some form of prior vulnerability filters those more likely to do so, and there is evidence that such vulnerability is actively targeted.

The evidence suggests that vulnerability is a key context for *associate* engagement in the network.

The evidence suggests that vulnerability is a key context for *associate* engagement in the network. This contrasts with a succession, coaching and grooming narrative which is attached to B2 and D2's *emergence*, where continuity is provided by A2, his family and most trusted *associates*.

The Greentown network – retention

Using the data collected and the available literature, this section attempts to offer some explanations for why individuals, once engaged, tend to stay engaged and, during the period of engagement, commit offences in multiples of the national norm.

There are clear, powerful relational influences which act in combination and are sustained over time. Some of these influences relate to what have been regarded in the literature as pull factors. Grounded in the Greentown experience, these manifest as reverence towards A2 and his family by certain young people, acquisition of social capital by being associated with A2 or other powerful network members, and coveting A2's trappings and lifestyle.

The evidence also reveals significant push factors that compel individuals in the network into repeat action. These push factors can be overt, but they tend to be more subliminal. (It is thought that D1 may be beaten up if he does not submit to A2's directions.) Much of the fear relating to A2, his family and the potential wrath of the network against individuals relates to perceptions, stories and myths (accepting that there is truth in the rumours). This *hidden hand* drives network actors to seek protection in the network, and regulates compliance in terms of debt payment and silence.

A key pattern emerged involving complex couplings of normally mutually repelling qualities, for example; friendship and fear, intimacy and disposability, and protection and exposure. This ambiguity is captured in the following comment from a respondent:

Much of the fear relating to A2, his family and the potential wrath of the network against individuals relates to perceptions, stories and myths. This *hidden hand* drives network actors to seek protection in the network, and regulates compliance in terms of debt payment and silence.

> They're looking up to them and to be honest a lot of kids would be afraid of D2; there are even some lads you'd think are his friends and you'd know even by talking to them that they're afraid of him. Well, maybe not afraid of him … they're afraid of the background, so they get involved I suppose stupidly and they make friends, and then he comes knocking at the door saying "come on, we're going somewhere" and then they go … because the consequences of not going could be worse.

While fear compels certain children into action, there is some suggestion that they are also attracted by the fear *that they generate* to subordinate others in Greentown, as a consequence of the social capital gained from alignment with key network players. However, involvement entangles individuals who engage, making extrication very difficult, especially if there is no protective influence in the child's home to draw them back.

The Greentown network – getting out

Although it appears from PULSE data that there is an eventual decline of criminal activity in the Greentown network in line with national norms, data are limited in relation to gauging desistance from criminal activity. However, supplementary PULSE data[25] made available for the study indicate that 17 of the 31 individuals in the Greentown network had been detected for an offence in 2013 and a further 10 were detected in 2012, indicating that whatever personal relationships individuals still had with the network, there had been continuing offence-related activity.

> While fear compels certain children into action, there is some suggestion that they are also attracted by the fear that they generate to subordinate others…

The concept of *knifing off* is useful here. It describes the process whereby an individual may leave the network. 'Knifing off' can be both physical (i.e. moving location) and cognitive (reconciling the discrepancy between the old and the new self) and both severances may be necessary to start a new redemptive narrative (Maruna, 2011).

However, while the former can be initiated by a third party, the latter can only be achieved by the individual himself or herself. A good example of this is the case of 'the little fella', who was removed physically from Greentown for a period but who, within days of his return, was reunited with F2, A1 and D1. The clearest example in terms of 'knifing off' is the case of **H1**.[26] However, the key features of H1's case, identified by the respondent, are worth reflecting on.

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[25] It is not possible to reproduce this chart for reasons related to protecting anonymity. The chart is held securely by the Analysis Service of An Garda Síochána.

[26] Other cases were highlighted, but H1 was the only case where there was no dispute about whether he had turned his life around. Other examples had either conflicting accounts or were described in imprecise terms: for example, 'slowed down', 'not in as much trouble'.

> H1 never really got involved with any of the major players in Greentown, and he was kind of doing his own thing … And I'd say that's how he found it easy to get out of it, he's totally no longer in our system … H1 never actually got into the middle of it … He never got into the middle structure of … this whole system in … He actually never got smack bang into the middle of it, he was only on the periphery … And then he decided to step back and A2 and his likes never really had that much trust or whatever in H1 … So they weren't asking him to do anything … So he just stepped back from it all … and he was just lucky.

The respondent observes that H1 is an 'exception', contrasting his anomalous *fortune* with more routine circumstances of clients and *associates*, driven to deeper and deeper obligations with key network members.

B1 is thought to have distanced himself more from the network, although there was divergence among respondents in terms of 'degree'. Consistent with some commentary on gang exit strategies, his separation by external factors – a new family prompting a new realisation – permitted him to propose legitimate excuses (Pyrooz and Decker, 2011, p. 422), making him less likely to attract any retribution.

The respondent observes that H1 is an 'exception', contrasting his anomalous fortune with more routine circumstances of clients and associates, driven to deeper and deeper obligations with key network members.

More generally, due to the small size of Greentown, it is difficult to avoid contact with network members and to get out of their line of sight once engaged or obligated. Geographical and/or cognitive 'knifing off' is difficult to achieve, certainly for core members of the network, as long as A2 retains his position. D1, for example, was physically punished for not keeping up with A2's demands. It is generally suggested that D1 had sufficient capacity to exercise agency but that he had chosen to participate in the network; he made his own decisions and 'he didn't want to walk away'.

Difficult as it may be, it was suggested that if an individual was able to withstand multiple enticements and/or requirements by A2 and/or other key network actors, 'knifing off' is possible *if the will is there*. However, it is considered that any 'knifing off' intent while 'in situ' is poorly supported by the State, with very few options and very little assistance to act or plan to act pro-socially. It is believed that both D1's and 'the little fella's' identification and protective welfare intervention came far too late to make any impact, and that for D1, in particular, the provision of a substitute *responsible* family at a young age would have offered the best chance of change.

> ...due to the small size of Greentown, it is difficult to avoid contact with network members and to get out of their line of sight once engaged or obligated.

There were suspicions that core network members (adults and children) deliberately manipulated the justice system. This included managing detections, and 'ratcheting' strategies in the juvenile diversion process, suggesting that on occasion some children would admit to offences they have not committed in order to avoid another child with more cautions from elevating their seriousness and bringing the system closer to a decision to prosecute.[27] Other evidence suggesting that key network members contrived to delay legal proceedings, combined with what are perceived to be light sentences, incommensurate with the crime(s) committed are seen to contribute to a sense for those Greentown network *associates* or *clients* that little will change in terms of the natural order.

> However, it is considered that any 'knifing off' intent while 'in situ' is poorly supported by the State, with very few options and very little assistance to act or plan to act pro-socially.

The perceived scale of challenges for *associates* in terms of 'knifing off', similar to treatments of engagement and retention, presents as qualitatively different for A2 and family members. Some testimony suggested that neither B2 nor D2 would be interested in any other life, and that the gains accrued from being a member of A2's family presented a self-interested rational reason for continuance. However, this sense of conscious choice is countered by the institutional reality of 'a life mapped out' for B2 and D2, restricting options and setting the parameters for behaviour, requiring them not just to run but also to hide if (however unlikely) they choose to leave or desist from criminal behaviour.

Summary

This final section has attempted to apply what has emerged from the examination of the first three findings to assessing whether, on balance, there is evidence of a *network effect* in encouraging and compelling children into abnormal offending patterns.

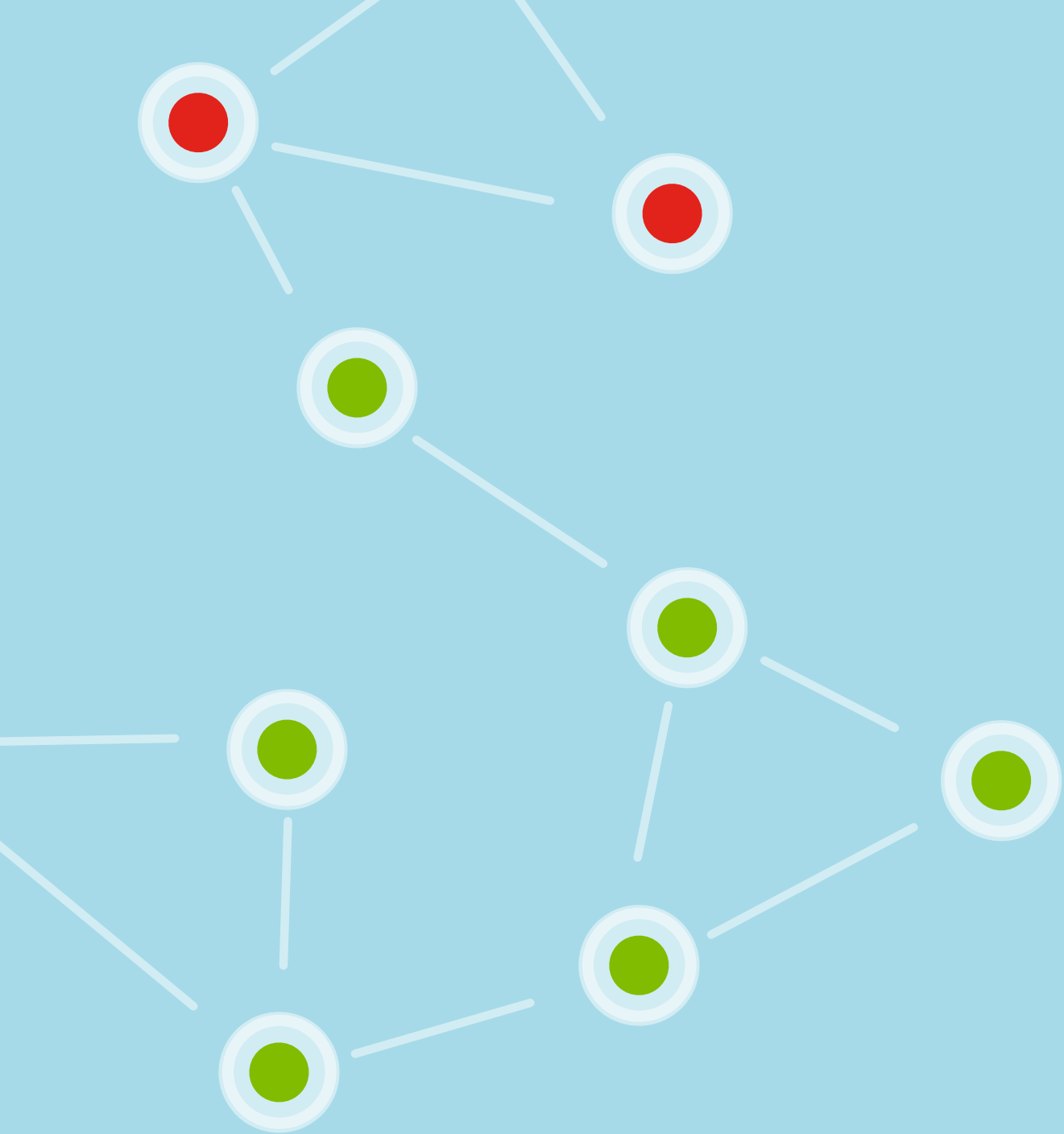
The most potent network factors with regard to *associates* relate to selection and recruitment (engagement); strong *pull* and *push* dynamics; a culture of compliance; the offer of a deal (retention); and restriction of choice and creation of uncertainties

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[27] Interview 005/014, and Interview 006/012: These references relate to suspicions that adults and children manage 'ratcheting' in the juvenile Diversion process, suggesting that on occasion some children will admit to offences they have not committed in order to avoid another child with more cautions from elevating their seriousness and bringing the system closer to a decision to prosecute.

such that individuals contemplating leaving the network would be discouraged (getting out). The network factors with regard to family members relate to history, expectation, family brand, legitimacy to control, emergence, succession; effectively a preordained role.

There is evidence to suggest that these factors are omnipresent in the lives of the children reported by respondents, particularly in A2's locale and where his influence extends beyond the immediate estate into families where there is an established *client* relationship. However, attributing an abnormal crime trajectory to the effect of a *network* is problematic. There are no control groups to gauge whether the same (negative) effect of longer and more serious crime trajectories could be achieved with no network. Nor is there the possibility of a randomly assigned group *within* Greentown to test the potency of the network effect against 'life as normal'. This study seeks instead to propose that there is sufficient evidence to support a plausible argument for a network contributory effect association with abnormal crime trajectories for the children involved.





Chapter 4

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore whether criminal networks played a role in causing children to develop longer and more serious crime trajectories. The focus of the study was the Greentown network.

This chapter considers the relevance of the study to the current body of knowledge. The implications of the study findings for policy in the area of youth crime are also discussed, along with the potential for further practical application.

Study findings and the existing literature

This study responds to the demand in the mainstream risk science literature for more enquiries into the situational context of persistent youth offending (Loeber and Farrington, 2012, p. 101) and a number of its findings resonate with the existing literature.

Finding 1 suggests that the Greentown network was hierarchical in nature, indicating centralised authority, rather than a more even distribution of power and influence. Similar to Fader (2016), the study finds further that, within the network, membership of the network leader A2's family and kinship group appears to confer elevated privilege based on *trust* as opposed to *contract*, *obligation* and *threat*. Pilbeam *et al* (2012, p. 368) have identified the role of *trust* as a distinctive governance mechanism for *core* members at the centre in their more mainstream treatments of networks as institutions. Evidence presented in the study relating to the clamour for status by *associates* supports other studies of criminal networks and their *pull* potential to permit individuals who are engaged to acquire social capital (O'Brien *et al*, 2013, p. 422; Pitts, 2008, p. 84). Concerns about 'associate' opportunism in the Greentown network are mitigated by *push* forces associated with debt or obligation and underpinned by a perception of ubiquitous surveillance by A2.

Finding 2 identifies powerful structures, processes and a compliant culture enveloping network members and serving to sustain the network. This includes evidence of how the expectations of key network actors direct and influence behaviour: for example, norms of behaviour in relation to exchanges with An Garda Síochána. Other studies have identified this ability of networks (more generally) to set expectations (Hodgson, 2006, p. 2) and determine behaviour or delineate opportunities for discretion (Owen-Smith and Powell, 2008, p. 599). Pitts (2008, p. 37) has identified how distinctive beliefs and attitudes are cultivated in gangs and networks. While directed at community, Horney *et al*'s analogy of 'preying' (Loeber and Farrington, 2012, p. 109) and notions of poor guardianship (Braga and Weisburd, 2012, p. 351) are relevant here in terms of family vulnerabilities and inadequate parental protection as experienced by F2 and 'the little fella'.



Finding 1 suggests that the Greentown network was hierarchical in nature, indicating centralised authority, rather than a more even distribution of power and influence.

Finding 3 suggests that the degree of A2's power and influence is determined by factors such as proximity and *client* obligation. The study suggests that the network's influence is strongest in A2's estate involving *clients* and *associates*, where individuals such as D1, E1 and A1 are truly 'embedded' (Pyrooz *et al*, 2013, p. 241) and involved in a tight, 'redundant' (McGloin and Piquero, 2010) collection of antisocial relationships. However, the testimonies of Garda respondents in the Greentown study suggest that, within what should be the highest risk location (close to A2's home), *stoical* families go about their day-to-day business and do not become involved. Conversely, the study indicates strong network influence for certain individuals (adults and children) who live outside A2's estate and who have an obligation-bound client relationship relating, for example, to debts incurred from borrowing money from A2 or co-enterprise in past offending events.

Finding 2 identifies powerful structures, processes and a compliant culture enveloping network members and serving to sustain the network.

Finding 4 suggests that network factors plausibly converge to produce an overall *network effect* for certain children. The study finds that there is insufficient evidence to indicate whether the Greentown network caused *longer* crime trajectories for children. However, the finding that participation in the network is associated with *elevated frequency of serious offending,* as demonstrated in Table 3.2, resonates with findings by scholars operating in this area. Rosenfeld *et al*, for example, point to 'an enhancement effect' associated with gang membership, '... a combination of selection and social facilitation' (qtd in Loeber and Farrington, 2012, p. 124). Importantly, the study helps to highlight one of the key shortcomings in the risk science literature, which is that, in its treatment of youth crime as a logical exercise balancing risk factors with sufficient protection factors, it generally fails to consider that *contexts* are not *passive* and can, in fact, be very potent.

Finding 3 suggests that the degree of A2's power and influence is determined by factors such as proximity and *client* obligation.

Practical applications

The network tool and its associated procedures offer possible wider utility for academic/law enforcement collaboration in the study of criminal networks.

Finding 4 suggests that network factors plausibly converge to produce an overall *network effect* for certain children.

The application of the network tool to the phenomenon of criminal network provides an evidence-based means to examine the anatomy of its nodes and links, and to get a better practical sense of the natural size and state of the problem and the effort required in order to reduce a network's effect. In terms of law enforcement, the approach may highlight opportunities to identify points of vulnerability and employ *saboteur* tactics to reduce a network's influence.

For academics, *Twinsight* offers a robust protocol for engaging authorities to undertake sensitive areas of study. The *Twinsight* technique provides a novel 'non-invasive' means for examining sensitive issues and material in an in-depth but ethically compliant manner to produce authentic, detailed narratives about relationships and transactions between individuals and groups of individuals in networks. This in turn could help with new theory development via empirical study. However, in order to protect its integrity as a potentially powerful data collection method for research into sensitive areas, and collaborations between academics and law enforcement personnel, the clear rules devised for this study, in particular relating to the strict separation of anonymised and live data and the protection of respondents' identities, must be observed in any future usage of *Twinsight*.



The *Twinsight* technique provides a novel 'non-invasive' means for examining sensitive issues and material in an in-depth but ethically compliant manner...

Policy implications

The key outcome of this study has been to highlight an area of risk for children which has, to date, been given relatively little attention, certainly in the Irish literature. The evidence that the Greentown criminal network (2010–2011) functioned as a factor *additional* to the usual inventory of risks associated with youthful offending presents significantly contrary indications when considered against a largely sanguine approach to youth crime.

Even though the children involved in the Greentown network represent a small minority, their activities, from a law enforcement perspective, pose a considerable problem. This small population of children in Greentown was, during 2010–2011, responsible for a significant level of serious crime, five times higher than equivalent national averages for burglary. This suggests that it is legitimate to allocate disproportionate resources in this area. Additionally, given the clear association between burglary and repeat offending more generally, a referral of a child to the Diversion Programme *for burglary*



This small population of children in Greentown was, during 2010–2011, responsible for a significant level of serious crime, five times higher than equivalent national averages for burglary.

or a related offence should, perhaps, *presume* enhanced concern. Nevertheless, this research suggests that burglary predicts possible adult influence and that any such concern should be welfare related and protective as opposed to justice related and punitive.

The Diversion Programme and court systems appear to have been routinely gamed by certain actors in Greentown. A2's organic governance mechanisms in place in the Greentown network are seemingly far more influential than any formal agency or court sanction in directing behaviour and retaining control of associates. The suggestion that adults in the network appear to actively recruit and cultivate certain children towards criminal activity, coupled with the absence of nurturing and protection, challenges authorities to consider whether statutory remedial protections are required in such cases.

The weight of evidence in the study indicates that the criminal justice system, in the context of the Greentown network, is founded on questionable notions of rational and responsible action by both offenders and victims. The study has suggested that institutional assumptions regarding individuals volunteering complaints to An Garda Síochána or providing witness testimony against network actors are greatly misplaced for clients of the Greentown network and those living in close proximity to A2.

The state of *equilibrium* suggested by the study, and sustained by A2's family presence in Greentown, infers that short-term law enforcement (or other) campaigns will do little to disrupt the network's essential *balance*. Shortening the individual careers of youth offenders is of little value if the network acts to generate a constant throughput of young people. Such situations can only be effectively addressed through sustained long-term planning and intervention. A long-term view may also permit reimagining of the relationship between the State and an individual in terms of rewarding *and protecting* those who are cognitively prepared to 'knife off' from their offending past.

The suggestion that adults in the network appear to actively recruit and cultivate certain children towards criminal activity, coupled with the absence of nurturing and protection, challenges authorities to consider whether statutory remedial protections are required in such cases.

These findings will be of value in terms of wider deliberation relating to children involved in criminal networks and/or more general treatments of high-crime neighbourhoods in Ireland. Future research in this area would obviously benefit from multiple viewpoints, including those of children, network participants and, in the experience of Greentown, better insights into the coping strategies of those families identified as *stoics*.

However, the ethical and logistical challenges associated with such engagements should not be underestimated. It is suggested that the study be repeated in further sites, including Dublin, to test the validity of the Greentown findings. In parallel, an action research project may be a useful and prudent means to process the findings of Greentown in the context of designing and trialling new forms of response and intervention.



Shortening the individual careers of youth offenders is of little value if the network acts to generate a constant throughput of young people.



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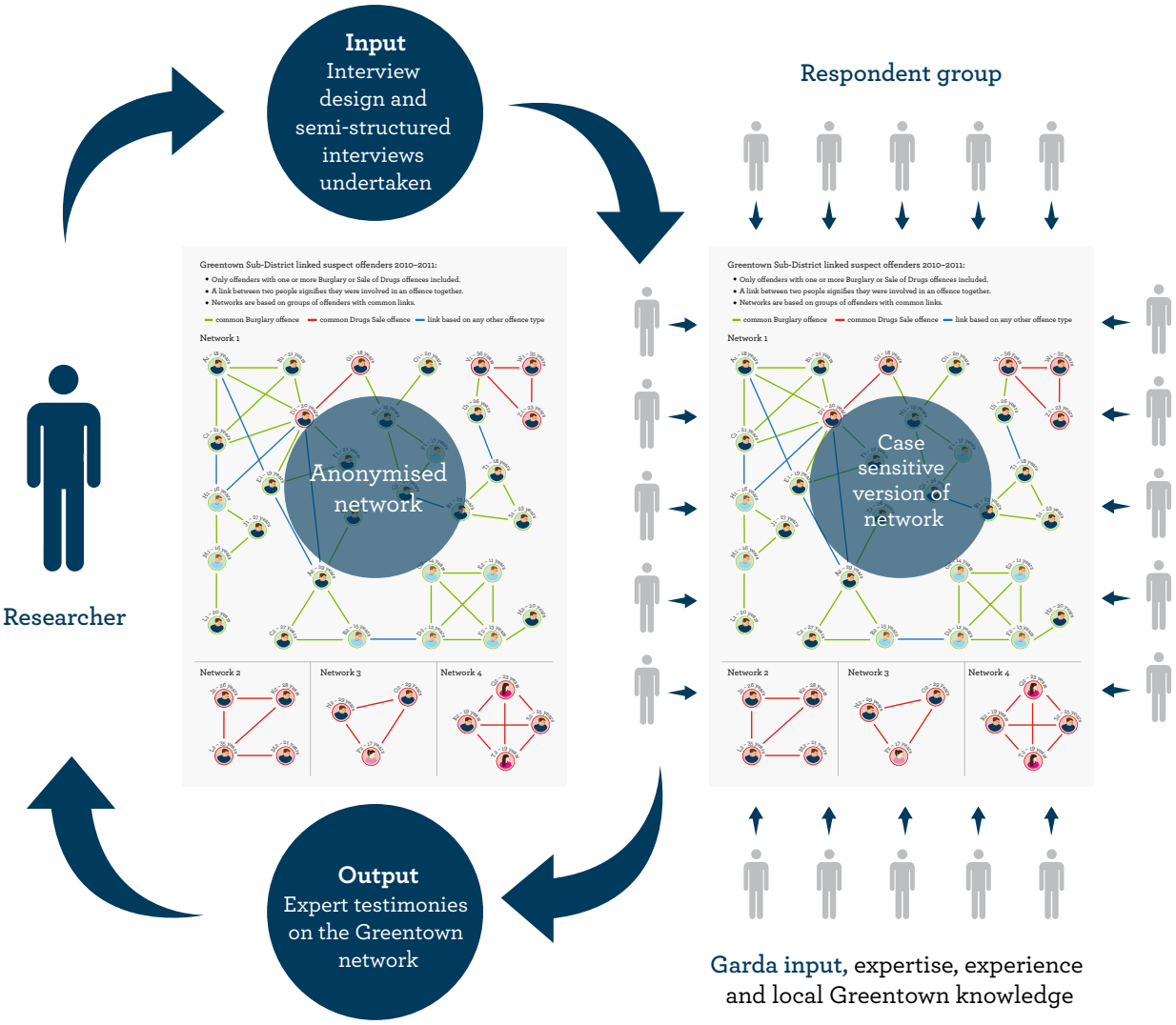
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Data collection strategy for semi-structured interviews

Greentown – semi-structured interviews



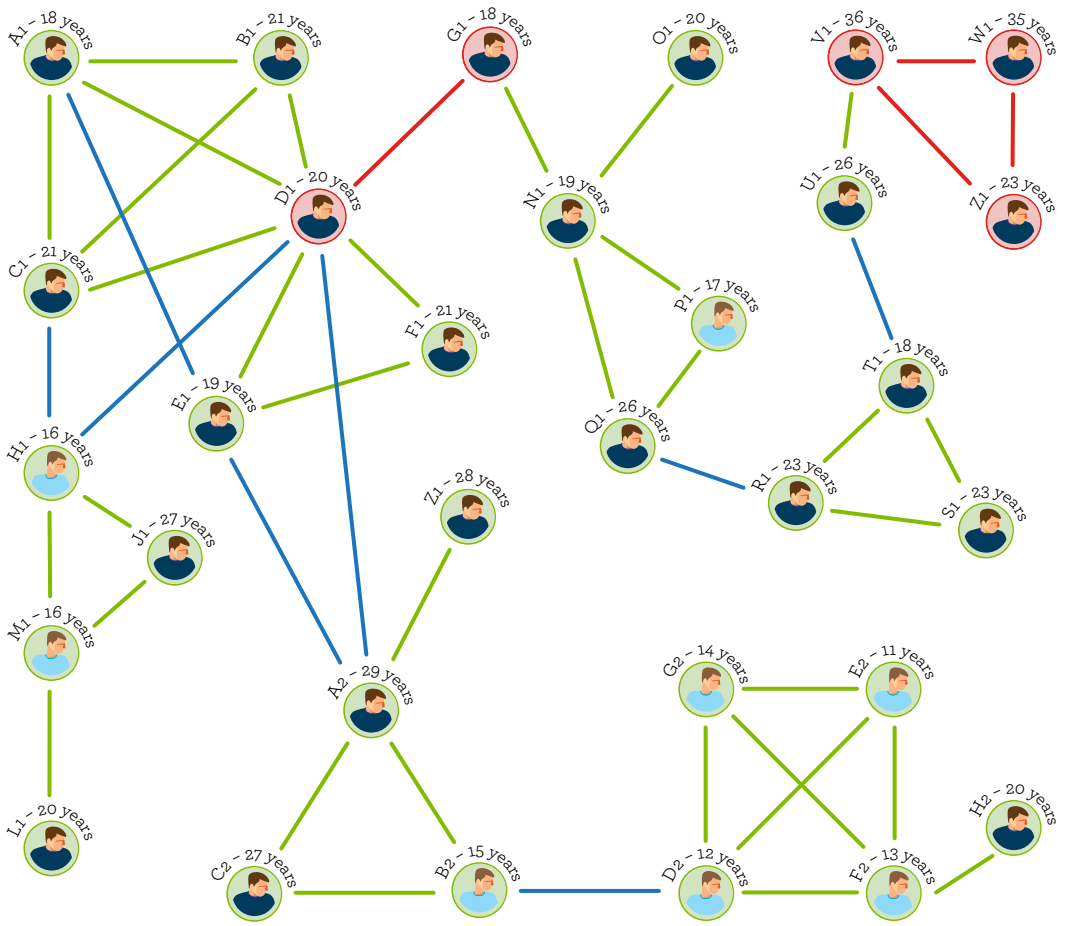
Appendix 2: Network 1 frame of analysis – zoom-in view

Greentown Sub-District linked suspect offenders 2010–2011:

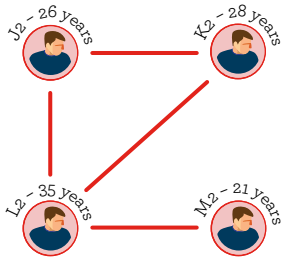
- Only offenders with one or more Burglary or Sale of Drugs offences included.
- A link between two people signifies they were involved in an offence together.
- Networks are based on groups of offenders with common links.

common Burglary offence — common Drugs Sale offence — link based on any other offence type

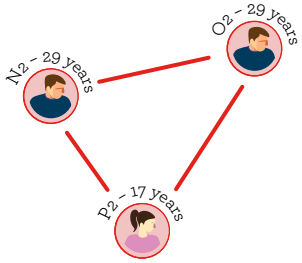
Network 1



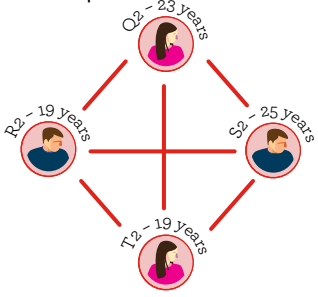
Network 2



Network 3



Network 4



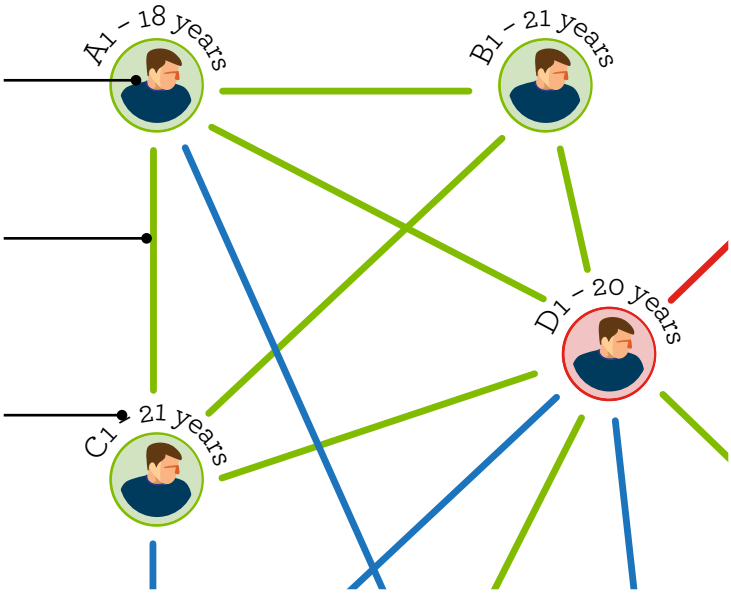
Appendix 3: Navigating the Greentown network

Navigating the Greentown network

Node is an individual member of the Greentown network.

Link represents an offence incident recorded by PULSE.

Unique identifier permits tracking of issues and themes with individuals or groups of individuals.



Appendix 4: Interview extract

Garda: I suppose just because ever since I came down he was the name that was always said to me and one of the first houses that was pointed out to me when I went out in the car. You know, keep an eye on him, intelligence reasons. He was always a prominent figure down in Greentown as long as I've been here and that hasn't changed, you know. You often hear of a fella being prominent and then falling from grace; you know, as in no one's listening to him anymore, but that has never happened with him.

SR: And what's kept it going then, what's sustained it? 'Cos you're right. These networks are sometimes quite fragile. So what's kept that going?

Garda: I suppose people are so afraid of him. He just has that reputation. Maybe in their world … Maybe he hasn't been caught by us doing anything in particular. Well, obviously he has on a few occasions, but like he's probably just intimidating in that he's a strong character, like. No one would mess with him and he gets that message across in different ways. And they know if they mess with him there's going to be some kind of consequence. And he's kept that going. Like, he hasn't let anyone go with things maybe. So that's how he's keeping his name going and keeping those around him in line as such.

(Interview 009, p. 19)

Note: SR denotes the author and researcher.

Appendix 5: Interview extract

Garda: So, he might cut the drugs up into a number of different (just for example, no, cos there's probably more than three) but into three groups – A1, D1 and E1 would get some of those drugs each. Then they would distribute that each themselves to local, really small-time drug dealers, and then those drug dealers would give to the users.

SR: So, that's like the retail end. They're the ones who are doing the selling?

Garda: So like, I'm just saying that's in relation to drugs … but, so the top family A2 (he might not be on his own, like … but his family) might get drugs. They might dish them out in large quantities to D1, E1 and A1 and then they will in turn break them up into smaller groups and give them to the likes of U1 who need them. And U1 is paying these guys massive money that he can't really afford to get back and U1 is dishing them out all over the place … in really small 25 (euro) bags … That's only hypothetical with drugs, but it's the same with organising burglaries and everything. It's the same structure.

SR: And the – so that's the individuals and then the links – how those links are characterised are…

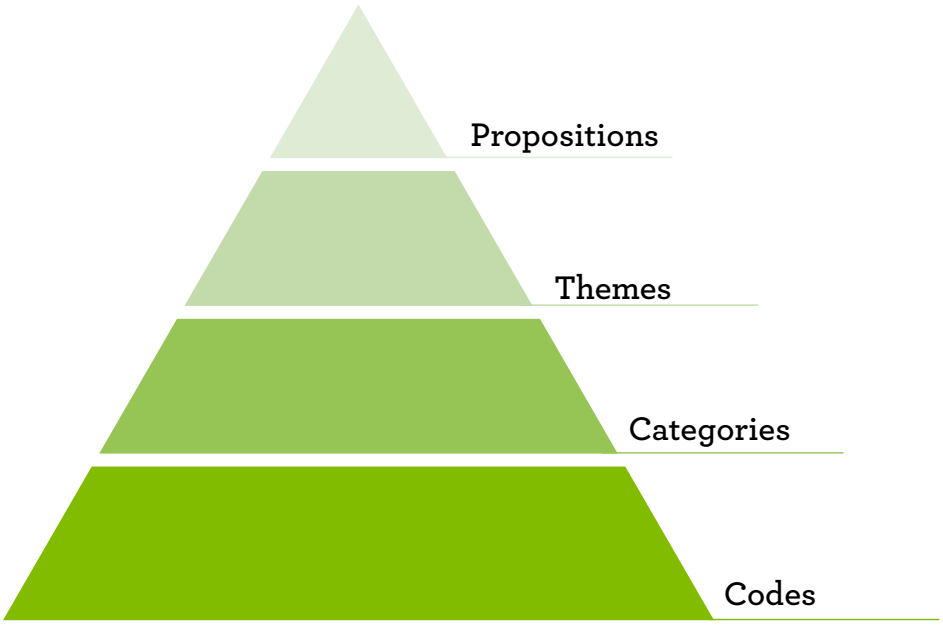
Garda: Yes, it's definitely… there's money involved. They're like … they're linked to it. A2 would be after investing into something and organising something. And then A1, D1 and E1 would also be investing but would still owe A2 … Now it might not be money. It might be something else. He might owe him – well, let's just stick with money say … but then like the relationship then, ok that's all well and good until it goes bad. Now, it hasn't gone bad yet, so then it's a friendship.

(Interview 010, p. 14)

Note: SR denotes the author and researcher.

Appendix 6: Coding and analysis framework

One requisite process for setting up a database to manage unstructured data is to identify and create the unit of analysis and observation, referred to in NVivo as a node (Bazeley and Richards, 2000, pp. 23–24). In this study the unit of analysis was not, as would typically be the case, the interviewee, but the individuals on the network map to whom Gardaí referred during the interviews. A 'case file' was created for each individual in the network, and qualitative data from the interviews were then added to the relevant individual's case file.



Coding framework: the process from open coding to development of themes and propositions

A nine-phase framework, derived from the work of Maykut and Morehouse (1994) on qualitative data analysis, was used for coding and analysis.

Open coding (phase 1) involved line-by-line examination of interview transcripts to break them down into viable and transferable units of meaning which could later assist in the construction of higher-level categorisations and propositions. This exercise yielded a total of more than 300 codes.

Categorisation (phase 2) involved the reorganisation of these codes, referencing the research question as an additional arbiter for inclusion. NVivo allows for the organisation of data into a *tree* structure, which permitted the researcher to observe the development of patterns where clusters of data began to congregate. This process of initial reduction produced 61 categories.

Coding on (phase 3) involved the exploration of relationships and patterns across categories, and further reconfiguration of codes in order to achieve a deeper understanding of embedded meanings.

In-case and cross-case analyses (phases 4 and 5) involved examination of the emergent themes as they related intrinsically to individual cases and compared *across* cases.

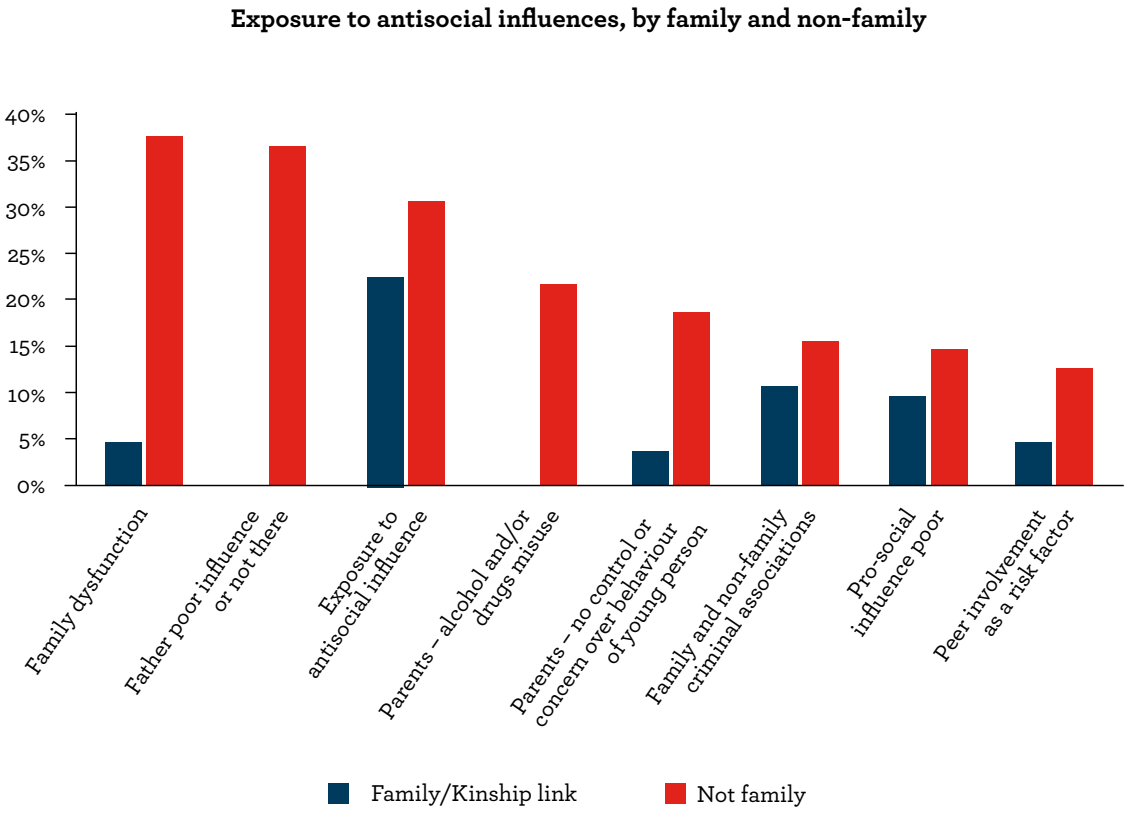
Data reduction (phase 6) involved consolidation of the codes into *themes*, which were further informed by the research literature in the area. This process reduced the overall number of categories and was developed iteratively alongside phases 7 and 8 below.

Writing analytical memos, which involved committing thoughts and ideas to paper, was carried out from the outset of the coding and analysis process. At this point (phase 7), however, it was focused on trying to arrive at propositions and identify patterns directly relevant to the research enquiry. 'Hierarchy', for example, surfaced here as an early, important theme, which was retained in the final analysis.

Validating analytical memos (phase 8) involved testing the developing propositions against the evidence. NVivo's capacity to support analysis here was of particular benefit, seeking evidence deep in the data and scattered across various categories and cases to support, modify or refute developing explanations and propositions.

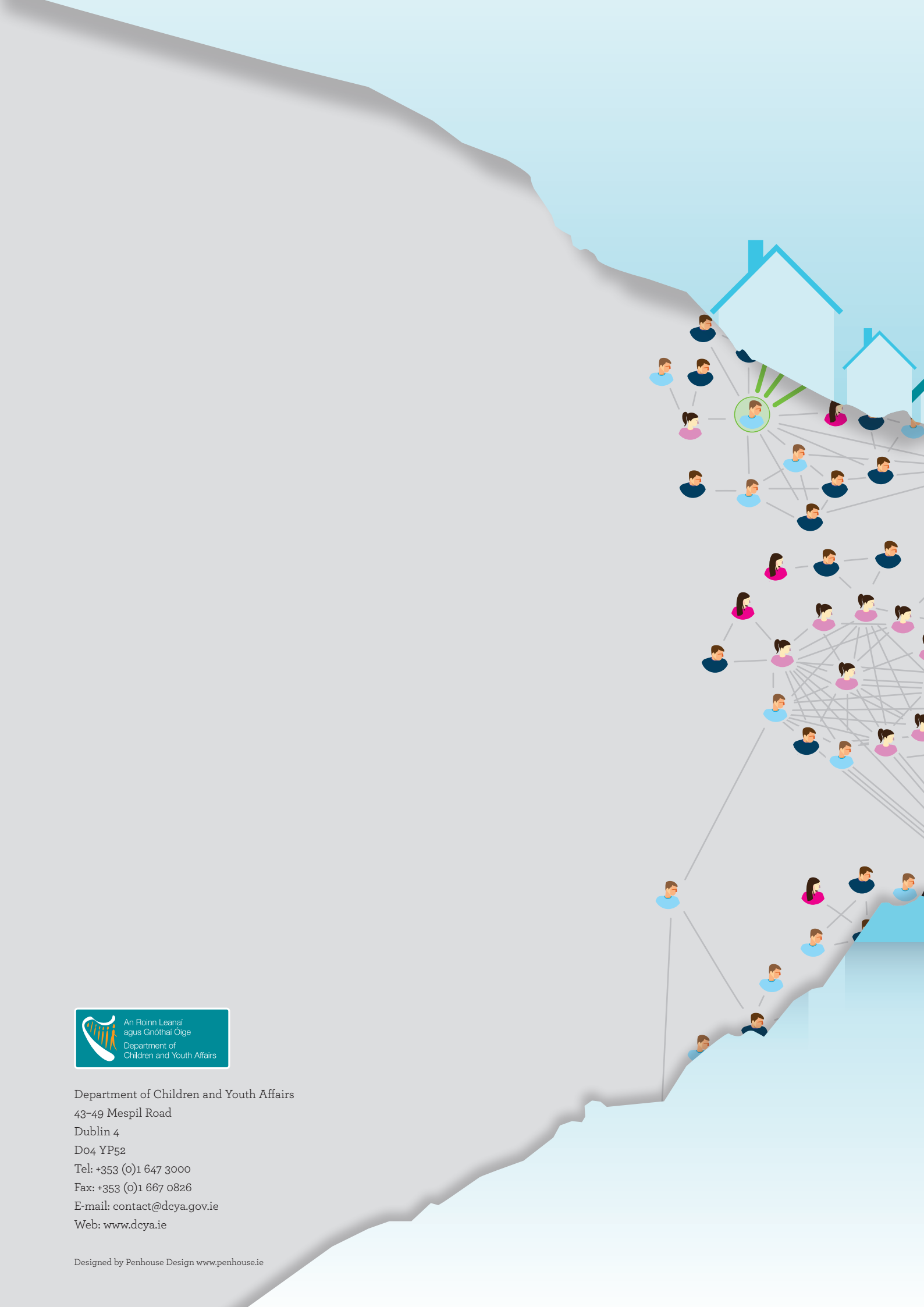
Proposition development (phase 9) yielded three propositions, each of which derived from evidence 'drawn from across the full range of available texts' (Bazeley, 2009, p. 19). A further proposition, *responding directly to the research enquiry*, was then abstracted from the three subordinate propositions: 'Network influences act to encourage and compel certain children in Greentown into abnormal patterns of criminal behaviour.'

Appendix 7: Analysis of 'antisocial influences' on A2 family members compared with *associates*



NOTES





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