

**“Clark Kent Drives My Bus” - A study of safety and risk in public  
spaces through the narratives of young people**

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## **Abstract**

This research explores the complexities of young peoples' personal understanding and experiences of violence and safety in public spaces. The research itself is constructed through establishing the interrelationships between the theories, practices and policies of safety and young people. Working through these links has facilitated an original framework for understanding by accessing data using young people's own experiences and views. There is a significant body of published research exploring young people as offenders but a real absence, especially in the UK literature, of young people as potential victims of violent crime. In particular children's own conceptualisations of risk, safety and victimisation are little understood. This research explores young people's thoughts on exactly this. The empirical research draws upon qualitative data derived from semi-structured interviews with 21 young people aged from 10 to 18 years old taken from a socio-economically mixed area of London. The findings show that irrespective of age, the young people have constructed a very real understanding of safety and risk. Children, even at a young age have developed a myriad of personal safety strategies that involve awareness of teenagers, locations and individuals who they perceive as guardians. However, these strategies emerge without meaningful reference to police or government policy and are largely embedded in a world far away from those in reach of official community safety agents. This research suggests that there needs to be a move away from portraying young people as 'folk devils' who sit at the heart of many 'moral panics' towards involving them as significant actors and

contributors to social policy making by giving them a voice on the political stage.

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## **DECLARATION**

I can confirm that, except where indicated through the proper use of citations and references, this is my own original work. Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other research award.

Signed:

Robin Bhairam

Date:

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Over eight years ago, I lost my wife Tracy. She had been a keen supporter of this working class 'South London' detective who wanted to make a significant improvement on the five O Levels had attained at school.

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*In 1211, Frederick II, Emperor of Germany, in an attempt to discover the natural "language of God," raised dozens of children in silence.*

*God's preferred language never emerged; the children never spoke any language and all ultimately died in childhood*

(Van Cleve, 1972, p. 8) *cited in (Perry, 2002)*

So let the children speak.

## **Introduction**

New Labour's 1998 youth justice reform was the start of a proposed tough approach for dealing with young offenders. Built upon the aptly named policy '*No More Excuses – A New Approach to Tackling Youth Crime in England and Wales*' (Home Office, 1997) Jack Straw, the then Home Secretary's rhetorical proclamation made the mandate of this policy very clear:

*"Today's young offenders can too easily become tomorrow's hardened criminals. As a society we do ourselves no favours by failing to break the link between juvenile crime and disorder and the serial burglar of the future. For too long we have assumed that young offenders will grow out of their offending if left to themselves. The research evidence shows this does not happen. An excuse culture has developed within the youth justice system. It excuses itself for its inefficiency, and too often excuses the young offenders before it, implying that they cannot help their behaviour because of their social circumstances. Rarely are they confronted with their behaviour and helped to take more personal responsibility for their actions. The system allows them to go on wrecking their own lives as well as disrupting their families and communities".*

(Jack Straw Home Office, 1997)

With this statement the government are clearly setting out their stall, with young people constructed as future criminals, rather than valued members of society worthy of protection. There then followed a period of what appeared to be an intensified attack on young people and their culture through the discourse of the mass media (Brown, 1998; Estrada, 2001; Jewkes, 2004; Bhairam, 2006; Newburn, 2007, pp. 84-110; Muncie, 2009, pp. 1 - 42). This

attack consistently suggested that young people had become out of control. The catalyst for this attack perhaps can be explained by the data. The British Crime Survey showed a continued reduction in overall crime since the late 1990's, but a noticeable spike in violent youth crime appeared in the mid 2000's (Stanko, 2010), together with evidence that the fear and perception of crime steadily going up (Home Office, 2000, pp. i-vii; 2003, pp. 1-7; Office for National Statistics, 2009; Home Office, 2011a). There has been a substantial body of criminological research into the interpretation and understanding of crime related statistics. This research should act as a stark reminder to researchers of just how cautious we should be when attempting to attribute meaning to crime data (Durkheim, 1984; Emsley, 1996; Loveday, 1996; Maguire, 1997; Downes & Rock, 1998; Muncie, McLaughlin, & Langan, 1999; Reiner, 2000; Newburn, 2007). But by the very fact that there seems to be a dichotomy between the actual crime figures and the perception of crime i.e. how safe people feel, lends itself for wider exploration. This thesis therefore seeks to explore one aspect of this conundrum, how safe young people feel set against the backcloth of the hard hitting policies such as *The Crime and Disorder Act 1998*, '*The Every Child Matters*' agenda and the apparent reduction in crime against young people.

### *Research Aims and Research Questions*

In 2000 an eight year old 'cared for' girl from the Ivory Coast called Victoria Climbié was tortured and murder by her guardians. The subsequent 'Victoria Climbié inquiry' in 2003 (Laming, 2003) generated a stream of activity into the protection of young people which included the green paper *Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury, 2003b). This, together with the sudden spike in

serious youth violence resulted in New Labour adopting a more holistic approach to the protection of young people, clearly mandating that all young people should be afforded the same level of protection and support. It is worthy to note that whilst the significant increase in youth homicides and youth violence that was evident during the periods 2007 to 2009, are today beginning to show signs of easing (Stanko, 2010), political tactics and strategy are still very much focused towards the reduction and detection of violent crime (Metropolitan Police Service, 2009c; Home Office, 2011b). However, what this means in real terms for young people is still unclear and therefore warrants a critical contextualised understanding of how safe young people feel and what safety means to them. This is the fundamental aim of this research and will be explored through the focus of the following research questions:

- How do young people construct their experience of feeling safe?
- How safe do young people feel?
- How effective do young people feel that policies such as *Every Child Matters* agenda are?
- What strategies do young people adopt to make themselves feel safe?
- How effective do young people feel the government and police are at protecting them?
- What recommendations can be made for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers?

### *Thesis Structure*

The thesis begins in Chapter One by outlining the pathway of youth protection strategies that led to the *Every Child Matters* policy. It then identifies a number of tensions within the wider ideological discourses between the competing needs of the victim/potential victim and the offender. It will then critically review the effectiveness of the *Every Child Matters* policy. It will conclude with a discussion about predicting victimisation and young people's prevention strategies.

Chapter Two then introduces the methodological underpinning of the thesis and discusses the use of discourse analysis as useful means to understand the data. It goes onto explain the reasoning for using the semi-structured interviewing method and introduces the young people.

The findings of the research are presented in Chapters Three, Four and Five. Chapter Three begins by examining the way the young people deconstruct and construct the concept of safety. It then moves on to explore what they understand as danger through an analysis of their narratives as a means to make sense of the way they construct the world.

Chapter Four explores the young peoples' understanding of preventative policies such as *Every Child Matters* and what it means to them. It then moves on to discuss and explore what strategies the young people use to protect themselves from the dangers they perceive confront them on a daily basis. It then presents their view through their narratives of how effective they see the police and government are in protecting them, before finishing

with an analysis of how disconnected they feel from the policy and decision making processes that affect them.

Chapter Five discusses the findings and what this means for policy makers, practitioners, researchers and the young people themselves. It also discusses the conceptual contributions of the research and future research considerations. It concludes with a reflective passage from the researcher.

## Chapter 1

### Protecting or Controlling? – Negotiating Safety and Responsibility

*“Children should be seen and not heard”*

(Mirk, 1403)

This statement was once extremely well known; it had perhaps become one of the most accepted tenets adopted by generations of adults and in particular parents and those in authority. Nowadays, it is hardly ever used and has perhaps been consigned to the history books. However, whilst the phrase is all but long gone, its relevance in the context of this study and young people’s willingness to contribute to society’s wider issues should not be lost. At first glance it appears to be an almost innocuous, harmless statement. However a more careful reflection upon its substance reveals the potential hidden conflict that lies within. The sense of power that ‘adults’ once had or as this research reveals perhaps still have (Szybillo, Sosanie, & Tenenbein, 1977; Kun, 1995; Valentine, 1996), over young people is so well encapsulated in that one statement, that by reading it, one can almost get the sense of an ‘accepted capitulation’ on the part of the young people.

We shall see throughout this study that the empowerment in the decision and policy-making processes that affect young people is actually inaccessible to the majority of them (Maring, 1998; Maundeni, 2002; Boylan, 2005). This is despite the efforts and recognition of organisations such as the United Nations of Conventions on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) who have made

significant in-roads in promoting the rights of young people, including the following article from the Conventions on the Rights of the Child:

*1. Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*

*2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.*

(Office for United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989)

The new millennium has proven to be somewhat of a milestone in terms of policymaking in the UK for the protection of young people. Starting with the cruel death of Victoria Climbié in 2000 by the hands of those that were meant to protect her. There then began the emergence of what Pitts has called a generation of 'reluctant gangsters' (Pitts, 2008, p. 101), where he argues that groups of young people whose reluctant 'gang' affiliation have been prompted by a concern for their own personal safety. Having identified the risk to themselves they are unable to move away or avoid trouble. They align themselves to groups in their communities whom they've had little or no involvement with historically as a means of protection and social identity (Pitts, 2008; Bhairam, 2009). This has resulted in a proliferation of violent youth gangs and the culture that they ferment (*ibid*). It is important to highlight that this study acknowledges that whilst the events of conventional 'child protection' and gang violence appear to be poles apart; they are perhaps symptoms of the problematic way we construct children and young

people. For example the constructions of young (predominately) men engaged in violence is a world away from the constructions of neglected female children. But as we shall see, there is interconnectivity in terms of the public protection policy making that has brought them together through the perceived plight and vulnerability of all young people. To emphasise the point, 2002 saw the death of Ainlee Walker, aged 2 years (Newham Child Protection Committee, 2002), 2007 saw the death of Baby Peter aged 17 months, (Haringey Council, 2009), and Amy Howson aged 16 months (Butler, 2009), all who died at the hands of their families.

In 2007/2008 London's Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) reported the following statistics in relation to the significant increase of youth violence raised earlier:

<b><u>Crime Type</u></b>	<b><u>Number</u></b>
Gang Related Murder	20
Young Person injured in gun or knife incident	1237
Armed Rapes	12
Gun enabled muggings	88

Table 1: London Youth Crime Data 2007/2008 (Metropolitan Police Service, 2008)

The events listed above resulted in an injection of Government pro-activity that included judicial reviews, policy reviews, practice reforms and changes in a range of public sector policies and practices (Lord Laming, 2009). But within this chaotic melting pot of policy and reform, just how much of the changes were actually influenced by the views of those most affected, the young people, is unclear.

This chapter is structured as follows; the first section begins by exploring in more detail the pathway to the Every Child Matters (ECM) in order to highlight the emerging increase in youth related violence. There then follows a discussion about youth victimisation in terms of the relationship between the victim and policy making. After which we will begin to explore the effectiveness of the ECM policy in relation to the aim of protecting all young people. This in turn is followed by the challenges of predicting violent behaviour and finally there will be a brief discussion about the lack of literature in terms of the prevention strategies young people use to mitigate becoming victims of violent crime.

### **1.1 Protecting Young People from the effects of Youth Offending – The Pathway to Every Child Matters**

Before we can evaluate how well young people feel that the UK government are doing in terms of protecting them from the effects of violent crime, it is necessary to firstly examine the existing landscape of protective policies and strategies. By mapping out the historic pathways to the current policies and strategies, we will be able to illuminate the rationale that underpins how

young people are currently protected against what has now been labelled as 'serious youth violence' (SYV).

SYV is defined as:

“... Murder, attempted murder, grievous bodily harm and weapon-enabled violent crime committed by and against young people under 20 years of age”.  
(Stanko, 2010)

Within academic and political discourses, the issues of youth violence and victimisation are inextricably linked to notions of 'appropriate' childhood and to those of 'responsible' youth (Kohler, 1982; Hamilton, 1990; Gaskell, 2005; Holt, 2008). The association of the term 'feral' with young people can be found in sociological research from the early twentieth century (Davis, 1940; Dennis, 1941) together with similar constructions in the tabloid newspapers over the past 15 years. However more recently, the term can be found in academic literature linked to the perception of youth violence and children in need of control (Chambers, 2002; Gaskell, 2005, p. 53; Squires, 2011; Yates & Shukla, 2011; Hedge & MacKenzie, 2012; Monaghan & O'Flynn, 2012; Morrow, 2012). We shall see that a sense of urgency has emerged, as young people's behaviours and attitudes are perceived to be contributing to what Cohen describes as a 'moral panic' created by 'folk devils', in this case young people, towards the wider community (Cohen, 1972, 2002). It is now perceived that young people's levels of violence towards one another have escalated from the 'fisticuff' brawling of the 60's to a more dangerous involvement in murder or 'life changing'<sup>1</sup> assaults. Cohen's terms 'moral panic' and 'folk devils' have been extensively quoted in sociological studies

<sup>1</sup> This category is now well established within UK policing discourse when assessing levels of injury

and have now found a permanent place within the discourse of sociology (Marsh & Melville, 2011, p. 2). Mirroring earlier studies (Cricher, 2003; Jewkes, 2004; Newburn, 2007; Marsh & Melville, 2011), we will now briefly turn to Cohen's definition of moral panic to try and place the term within the context of this particular study.

*'Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerge as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; and socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions.'*  
(Cohen, 1972; 2002, p. 1)

However a word of caution must be attached to Cohen's use of this concept. A search of the literature fails to reveal any substantial evidence to critique it and even Cohen himself is unable to illuminate any real critical analysis of his work (Personal correspondence from Professor Stanley Cohen 13<sup>th</sup> September 2011 - (Cohen, 13th September 2011)). Yet despite his perspective, some residual evidence can be found. Jewkes for example, points out that Cohen's use of the term 'morality' is accepted unproblematically when discussing 'moral panics' (Jewkes, 2004), whilst Garland points out that moral panics and folk devils have an interactive relationship, one of deviance amplification brought about by media attention and increased social control (Garland, 2001, p. 53). He goes on to say that what Cohen has failed to emphasise was that specific groups of 'folk devils' are often singled out as deviants because they possess characteristics that make them a suitable screen upon which society can project sentiments of guilt or anger upon, such as AIDS victims (Watney, 1997), Gypsies (Turner,

2002) or Immigrants (Capdevila & Callaghan, 2008). At a presentation given by Paul Rock to mark Cohen's retirement, Rock argued:

*"That the corresponding weakness in moral panic analysis is the actual failure to provide evidence that the background anxieties truly exist and they, rather than the deviant phenomenon being reacted to, actually contribute to the moral panic in question."*

(Rock, 2007)

Young also provides an insightful perspective on the subject. Examining the arrest, incarceration and release of Mick Jagger in 1967 for drug offences, Young suggests that sometimes it can be beneficial to engineer moral panics, that many deviant acts are attractive and there is certainly a blurring of the lines between 'Folk Devil' and 'Folk Hero' making the a moral panic a thing of energy and emotion rather than a simple mistake in rationality and information (J. Young, 2011, pp. 245-258). So whilst it is accepted that moral panics can be conceptually problematic, Goode and Ben-Yehuda reinforce just how important the term has become by citing Garland (2008, p. 1):

*"... the term moral panic has such a ring, resonance and relevance, that if Cohen hadn't come up with it in 1972, it would have been necessary for someone else to invent it."*

(Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009, p. 23)

Media discourse has significantly contributed to the shaping and construction of the term 'youth', and in particular how society sees and attempts to understand them in a wider social and crime context (Ditton & Duffy, 1983; Schlesinger, Tumber, & Murdock, 1991; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1993b, 1993a; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994; Greer, 2003; Jewkes, 2004; Bhairam, 2009). There is now a perceived crisis where it is viewed that young people are 'out of control' and 'need to be reined in' (Jeffs & Smith, 1995). Even down to the association of the 'hoodie', an innocuous item of clothing; a

simple sweatshirt with a hood, that is now inextricably linked, as we shall see, through the discourse of youths and adults alike to 'extremely violent, out of control' teenagers (Moberg, 2005; Saunders, 2005; Parent Line Plus, 2007; Millie, 2010; Marsh & Melville, 2011). However Young provides a word of caution, reminding us that these 'moral disturbances' are not the fiction of the press or without substance, they are indeed 'moral happenings' that are indeed widespread and current (Young, 2009, p. 13).

Through the drive of New Labour, all of these components became linked to a potential break down in social order brought about by disengaged young people (Jefferies & Smith, 1995). This was underpinned by the urgent necessity for Government to impose control and protective strategies to stem the tide of 'violence' that appeared in the mid 2000's, which in turn created a dichotomy for policymakers. On the one hand there was the perceived 'feral' youth that needed controlling and bringing back into line (Goldson, 2001). Whilst on the other, there was the obvious vulnerability within particular groups of young people that were being consistently portrayed by powerful media images as 'victims of violent crime' (Reiner, 1997; Newburn, 2007; Bhairam, 2009) and whose wellbeing needed to be safeguarded in order to demonstrate the government's commitment to making the UK a safer place to grow up in (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008a)<sup>2</sup>. On the surface it appeared that all policymakers needed to do was design a strategic and tactical framework that reflected the need to both protect and control young people. However, the ideological complexities when designing policies around young people and crime need careful consideration. Seeking

<sup>2</sup> Nearly all 43 UK Police Forces have the words 'safer' or 'protection' as key objectives in their strap lines

out 'what works' may be seductive, but as Muncie points out 'what works' in some contexts (spatial and temporal) may not work in others (Muncie, 2001). For example the 'tough on crime' policies imported from the US disregarded the research evidence on the success of diversionary minimalist response from the 80's (Burnett & Appleton, 2004, p. 35) in an attempt to win the popular vote (Pitts, 2000) and as Gaskell points out:

*"Violence and victimisation may be a 'target' for policies of control and of the promotion of 'appropriate citizenship' in young people, but these policies, in reality reflect an attempt to control all children and young people as a fixed and 'morally flawed' subsection of society".*  
(Gaskell, 2005, pp. 55-56)

These policies in reality reflected a more aggressive punitive framework and under New Labour, a whole new discourse of youth and young people was beginning to emerge. There followed a Government white paper which took an 'innovative' and 'pro-active' approach to tackle youth offending and alongside this was born a 'hybridity' of discourses (Muncie, 2006) that would soon become synonymous with the control of young people in the UK. It included terms such 'ASBO', 'Child Curfew', 'detention and training order', 'child safety order', and Final Warning Schemes', clearly spelling out a 'will no longer tolerate' attack on the youth crime problem and powerfully reinforcing that control is emphasised over protection. The white paper was aptly named '*No more Excuses*' (Home Office, 1997).

The framework brought to life a more managerialism business model, which had derived from the entrepreneurial methods grounded in the 'New Public Management' thinking of the 80's (Hood, 1991, p. 5; Osborne & Gaebler, 1993; Lane, 2000; McLaughlin, Osborne, & Ferlie, 2002; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011) than had been previously practiced recognising that no single agency

could shoulder the whole task. Whilst partnership working was already evident, these incidents perhaps heralded the real dawn of the complex world of 'multi-agency partnerships' in the UK (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001; Atkinson, et al., 2002; Lewis, et al., 2003; Sloper, 2004; White & Featherstone, 2005).

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Home Office, 1998) placed a legal obligation on many of the public sectors agencies to work together in the form of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and it is interesting to note that sections 8 to 16, 37 to 52 and 65 to 79 were solely concerned with the management and control of young people in the community. In a final show of strength within this legislation, New Labour also declared that not only were they prepared to tackle youth offenders with the might of all their key public sector assets, a process Holt describes as the 'criminalisation of social policy' (Personal communication Dr Amanda Holt - July 2011). They were also prepared to openly 'declare war' on the parents of these young offenders through the armoury of legislative tools such as parenting orders (Holt, 2009).

However as we shall see, this strategy, like so many government strategies before, would impact upon the already marginalised groups within society, namely women, lone parents, young men, minority ethnic young people and young people living in low-income areas (Williams, 2000; Crewe, Young, & Institute, 2002; Gaskell, 2005, p. 56; Holt, 2009, p. 23). For example curfews have been criticised on a number of levels. Walsh (2002) and Jeffs and Smith (1995) both provide a detailed account of these critiques. They cite age discrimination, the criminalisation of previously non-criminal behaviour,

oppressive state control, increased moral panic about the behaviour of young people and creating hostile relations between young people and the police as the most fundamental concerns (Smithson & Flint, 2006, p. 24). Just how real the youth crime issue was at the time these policies were created is still a matter of academic debate. But what is clear, was that through these policies there was to be a significant increase in the monitoring and regulating of young people and their families through the criminal justice system (Wyness, 2000; Grier & Thomas, 2003; Cleland & Tisdall, 2005; Holt, 2009).

A careful examination of both the Crime and Disorder Act and the white paper reveal a glaring lack of strategic vision in terms of protecting young victims of violent crime. Whilst the ironically named 'No More Excuses' white paper openly acknowledged that young people are at greater risk of becoming victims of crime (Home Office, 1997), little more is said about any strategic protection planning for them. In fact it actually suggests putting the onus back on the young people themselves:

*"Young people themselves have an interest in tackling offending both by their peers and older people".*

(Home Office, 1997)

In summary New Labour sought to tackle the issue of youth crime and victimisation through a pro-active punitive strategy with actually little or no real strategy embedded for young victims of crime. As will be discussed later it took the death of an 8-year-old girl from the Ivory Coast, to cause the Government to re-examine their duty of care to young people. But before dealing with that, the following section will examine the issue of young victims of crime.

## **1.2 Youth Victimization**

The complexities of analysing, understanding and responding to youth victimisation have been well documented in the academic literature (Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Hill & Jones, 1997; Jenkins & Bell, 1997; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Finkelhor & Hashima, 2001; Brown & Bzostek, 2003; Finkelhor, et al., 2005, p. 5). It is important to highlight that much of the research is from the United States and therefore caution is required in terms of differing policy and practice contexts. However Finkelhor's research (Finkelhor, et al., 2005) does provide a useful insight for UK policymakers and a link for this study, given the lack of similar UK based research and the relevance of subject matter.

In it, they suggest the risk for policy makers that is often overlooked, is that certain types of child victimisation is routinely neglected from research or analysis and therefore actually underestimates the burden of victimisation young people experience (Finkelhor, et al., 2005, pp. 4-5). For example studies of community violence often exclude the various forms of child abuse suffered at the hands of their caretaker (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; Osofsky, et al., 1993; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). By neglecting to establish the interrelationships between the different experiences a young person may have had, it may not be possible to fully understand and begin to resolve the problem of victimisation and vulnerability.

Finkelhor states:

*“At a public policy level, the fragmentation of victim type inhibits the development of a fully comprehensive approach to juvenile victimization. In the absence of a comprehensive development epidemiology, certain forms of victimization may get over emphasised, while other more pervasive problems are ignored”.*

(Finkelhor, et al., 2005, p. 6)

The relevance of this statement to this research is highlighted by their study of Children and Youth Victimization, where they examined a number of separate categories of experiential victimisation which included assault, maltreatment, sexual assault, property crime and witness intimidation. They established that from a sample of 2,032 young people aged between 2 and 17, 71% reported at least one case of victimisation and the average number of separate, different categories of victimisation incidents were three over a 12 month period (Finkelhor, et al., 2005, p. 14). They further identified more micro interrelationships between crime types, such as those subjected to property crime (i.e. robbery or theft) that were also strongly associated with violent victimisation (Finkelhor, et al., 2005, pp. 17-18). Their findings concluded that studies focusing on a single form of victimisation are at risk of missing a much bigger picture (Finkelhor, et al., 2005, p. 18). The lack of sufficient youth victimisation studies in the UK may be a stark indication that policy makers charged with protecting young people may not be doing so with all the relevant facts and therefore may leave policies and strategies found wanting.

The vast majority of existing research focuses more on the violent youth offender rather than the young victims of such offences. Farrington theorises that youth violence is situational and intrinsically linked to development theories. Long-term influences such as family, biological, peer, school,

community and environmental all play a part in shaping the individual (Farrington & Loeber, 2000, p. 744), However as we have already established, the volume of research into identifying protective factors against youth violence is extremely limited and more needs to be done (Farrington & Loeber, 2000, p. 742).

Interestingly Farrington seeks to explain the increase of youth violence as an epidemiological phenomenon (Farrington & Loeber, 2000, p. 734), the analysis of incidence and spread of disease within populations, with the aim of establishing causality (Scott & Marshall, 2005, p. 193), As Bowling puts it:

*In epidemiological terms, once a degree of 'infection' is reached, an epidemic occurs.*  
(Bowling, 1999, p. 539)

But again much of the existing literature is offender centred where little reference to the victim's experience is made.

### *Victims*

Compared to the United States, British sociological research into young people as victims of violence, in particular the discourse of young victims of violence and their experiences seem to have been noticeably overlooked. The necessity to provide young people with a voice seems to be based upon the assumption that children and young people have gone unheard within policy and academic forums (Kun, 1995; Barron, 2000; Valentine, 2000; Boylan, 2005). This is not strictly the case and whilst it is acknowledged that there are some pockets of research relating to young people's experiences of violence (Shepherd, et al., 1989; Shepherd, Robinson, & Levers, 1990; Wyn & White, 1997; Batchelor, Burman, & Brown, 2001; Bailey & Whittle, 2004; Finney & Britain, 2004) most of the literature in existence on being a

victim of crime has revealed that the concept of being at risk is a complex one to analyse (Chadee, Austen, & Ditton, 2007). This complexity is compounded when trying to establish the actual relationship between the likelihood of becoming a victim and the fear or perception of criminal victimisation (*ibid*); this concept will be discussed in more detail later.

### *Young Peoples Voices*

Despite the current state of affairs, Tisdall et al reminds us that the collective participation of children and young people in decision making is not a new phenomenon (Tisdall & Davis, 2004, p. 343), though the formalisation of such participation, of influencing change and the public recognition of such participation have differed over time. Taking the views of young people about matters that affect them is an important feature in the debate and one that has been recognised within the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) articles. Young people do want to have a say and get involved in political issues and policy making, (Nwokolo, et al., 2002; Curtis, et al., 2004; Tisdall & Davis, 2004; Gaskell, 2005; Lewis & Porter, 2007, p. 224; Worrall Davies & Marino Francis, 2008) but as a study of young Londoners revealed, 66% felt they had no way of influencing local decisions and 73% felt they had no way of influencing pan London decision making (Greater London Authority, 2009)<sup>3</sup>.

In 2004/2005 the British Crime Survey found that 22 percent of sixteen to twenty-four years old respondents we were “very worried” about physical violence (Allen, et al., 2006; Cockburn, 2008, p. 76), this is also reflected in

<sup>3</sup> ICM Research interviewed for the GLA, a quota sample of 1025 Londoners aged 11-16 using an in home face to face questionnaire

more recent studies. In 2009 the GLA young Londoners survey of eleven to sixteen year-olds revealed a slightly higher figure of 29% (Greater London Authority, 2009). However, due to the fact that young people are more likely to become victims of violent crime (Simmons, et al., 2003; Cockburn, 2008, p. 76), their voices still seem to be missing in the actual shaping of protective policy making.

*Equal or Individual Rights – A dichotomy between ‘Victim’ and ‘Offender’ strategies*

As we shall see, paradoxically a number of the ‘preventative’ policies such as the Crime and Disorder Act, or Every Child Matters do not necessarily achieve what they set out to do and quite often they once again end up targeting or isolating the specific groups of young people they were intended to protect, such as young men from ethnic minority communities (Williams, 2000; Cockburn, 2008, p. 77) and in doing so, a spiral of discontent is set into motion (Scarman, 1981; Smith & Gray, 1983; Bowling, 1999, p. 548; 2001; McGhee, 2005).

In 2001 a series of violent disturbances in the former northern mill towns of Bradford, Oldham, Leeds and Stoke on Trent proved to be the catalyst for a radical shift in government thinking in terms of the relationships between young people, particularly those from different racial groups, and policy. The subsequent review of social policy and a large number of government reports revealed strong evidence of young people being marginalised from mainstream society (Cantle, 2001). This in turn seemed to initiate a subtle move away from the political ethos that ‘everyone is equal’, which had been so central to policy making since the 1970’s, towards a more liberal

'individualist equality' way of thinking, i.e. treating people according to their individual needs (HM Government, 2010). The UK Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights also underpins this concept.

A shift from tougher custodial sentences towards a more rehabilitative 'sentencing in the community' model was becoming apparent in New Labour's strategy (McLaughlin, Muncie, & Hughes, 2001; Muncie, 2001; Gelsthorpe & Morris, 2002; Smith, 2003; Jamieson, 2005). However moving the point of reference from a commitment of equality towards policies that are based upon individual opportunity, where all have an equal chance to succeed (Cockburn, 2008, p. 80), presented an interesting conflict in terms of potential young victims and offenders. Arguably the outcome of any criminal justice intervention should be balanced, based upon a more holistic definition of the word 'individual'. Therefore ensuring that all young people benefit from any policy decisions according to their needs and are provided with an equal chance to benefit be they a rehabilitating offender or a victim/potential victim of violent crime.

But by delivering costly resource intensive activity to offenders, such as social workers involvement, training, supervision, special schooling, counselling or life improvement opportunities to divert an individual from crime, the needs of any potential victim were often overlooked (Victim Support, 2010). As will be revealed, there is little or no provision made for them from either public policy or public funds.

This position highlights that disintegrating young people from mainstream society is not only about demonising them; disintegration marks the failure of

social institutions and communities to deliver basics such as social recognition, access, participation or the sense of belonging (Cockburn, 2008, p. 77; Heitmeyer & Anhut, 2008). By failing to make young people feel safe, provide adequate means of protection or appropriate support when then they do become a victim, whilst apparently providing an abundance of support for the 'wrong doers' can equally marginalise groups of young people, who in the end have to make their own provisions for personal safety (Watt & Stenson, 1998; Bhairam, 2009).

Burr signposts how disintegration theory can be useful for sociological researchers by focusing upon the recognition deficits that an individual may experience in life and how it affects them (Albrecht, 2003, pp. 611-656; Cockburn, 2008, p. 82; Heitmeyer & Anhut, 2008). For example, where a young person who repeatedly reports that they have been attacked on the top deck of a bus by the same group are not taken seriously by the authorities, or supported in anyway, they are more likely to avoid sitting on the top deck of a bus or working with the authorities in the future. This is underlined by Cockburn's assertion that in the majority of youth policies the real problem of effectiveness may not actually sit with young people's behaviour, but are arguably a reflection of how society consistently fails to be respectful and inclusive to all young people (*ibid*).

Ironically, the evidence of disproportional provision between young victims and young offenders can be found within the *Youth Crime Action Plan – Good practice for supporting young victims of crime* (Ministry of Justice, 2009). This is one of the few UK policy documents specifically intended for supporting young victims of crime. The document purports to highlight best

practice and case studies in terms of supporting young victims of violent crime. But a closer examination at the options revealed that the majority of the available facilities mentioned were in fact for young people that:

*'Other organisations find difficult to engage' and 'who have multiple needs such as homelessness, substance abuse or a history of offending'.*

(Ministry of Justice, 2009, p. 59; Fairbridge, 2011)

### *Victims or Predators?*

It's not hard to see why young people seem to be all but removed from any consultation processes involving their own safety. All too often they are seen or portrayed as 'malicious predators' or 'the embodiment of dangerous natural forces, unleashed to social ends' (Cohen, 1972, 2002; Cockburn, 2008, p. 83; Brown, 2010, p. 40). In his seminal work *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Cohen highlights what he describes as 'the plight' of young people, brought about by media interpretation and the force of local and Government policy and strategy (Cohen, 1972, 2002). This continual focus upon recognition deficit can only go to reinforce any socially constructed view of how they are perceived. Young people have no real place or say in the structuring of society, which, in turn helps shape their personal discourses of themselves. The way young people are described, analysed and theorised by academics, local communities and policy makers (Smithson & Flint, 2006; Cockburn, 2008, pp. 83-84) pushes, in many ways, towards the social exclusion of young people. Either ascribed as criminals and 'police property' (Reiner, 2000, p. 93) to be disposed of through the criminal justice process or as victims, where their allegations are 'messy', 'intractable', 'unworthy of attention' or simply the 'complainants own fault' (Smith & Gray, 1983, pp. 64-66; Reiner, 2000, p. 94). All of this negative analysis points to their

'worthlessness' and lack of agency, which in turn shapes how they view how the wider society sees their place in the world.

Cockburn identified that a number of external experiences affected how young people's perception of danger was shaped. A high profile gang shooting for example, restricted one individual from 'straying too far from where he lived' despite Cockburn himself, a middle aged man, feeling very safe in the very same area (Cockburn, 2008, p. 85). He argues that the activity and behaviour of the police or private security services can exacerbate these perceptions of danger (*ibid*) and can often contribute to the fear experienced by young people by isolating them and making them feel unsupported. One such observation concerned security staff at a railway station responding to young men that were 'perceived' to be loitering, but were in fact waiting with a female friend, who herself felt vulnerable. The young men were told to leave as they were deemed 'threatening' to other station users. In stark contrast, the staff then totally ignored the same girl when she asked for help to stop middle-aged men who were hassling young women, including her, and therefore making her feel extremely vulnerable and unsafe (Cockburn, 2008, p. 85). This interaction highlights the negative impact of such encounters. The young men that were 'criminalised' because of their presence at the station and their age profile, almost certainly shaped negative future contact with any 'authoritative guardians'. These same 'authoritative guardians' then dismissed the concerns of the young women who saw themselves as potential victims, leaving them with the notion that the very people who were empowered to protect them actually reinforced their risk. Arguably this leaves them with no option but to develop their own

future strategies for protecting themselves from harm, as their own experience had taught them, as young people, not to expect any form of protective services from the authorities. It is through these types of narratives from young people that we can learn how their worlds are shaped by their experiences, and start to identify and act upon what is important to them.

Up until late 2002, despite a national appetite to create safe environments for young people, there was a noticeable absence of any single policy dedicated to the overall development, well-being and safety of all young people. That however, was about to change in 2003 with the publication of the Green Paper '*Every Child Matters*'.

### **1.3. Every Child Matters**

In early 2003 the landmark review by Lord Laming into the death of Victoria Climbié was presented to the government (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009b). Its impact was about to take public sector thinking around the protection of young and vulnerable people to a new level. In September, following Laming's report, New Labour published the Green paper entitled *Every Child Matters*. The emphasis of this strategy was very clear, with an overarching objective for the protection of all young people by using the multi-agency partnership frameworks that were now established<sup>4</sup>. It was to be a wide and innovative approach to the well being of children and young people from birth to 19 with an aim for every (*emphasis added*) child,

<sup>4</sup> Every Child Matters proposed an electronic tracking system for children; 150 children's trusts were to be set up by 2006, amalgamating health, education and social services; a children's director to oversee local services; local safeguarding children boards to replace ACPC and there was to be a children's commissioner for England (Batty, 2005)

whatever their background or circumstance, to have the support they needed to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

(HM Treasury, 2003b)

Its publication together with the passage of the Children Act 2004 marked a significant watershed in the thinking about children's services in England.

On the face of it, it appeared that this would take the protection of young people to a new level, not only in the home environment as traditional child protection strategies had previously dictated, but to the wider community, including public spaces, schools, and public transport through the multi-agency framework.

However with an estimated population within the proposed age range of 12.5million forecast by 2007, (National Youth Agency, 2010) and a looming national debt (HM Treasury, 2003a, 2004), this was an extremely ambitious strategy from the outset.

### *Every Child or the 'Usual Suspects'?*

Every Child Matters appeared to be a far reaching 'off the shelf' protective strategy. The report was 108 pages and covered a broad range of issues

(HM Treasury, 2003b). It aimed to identify and intervene much earlier in the lives of all children in order to prevent a range of problems in later life through a conduit of multi-agencies such as education, health, criminal justice and social services. However as this particular study is centred on how safe young people actually feel, the focus will concentrate on the 'staying safe' element.

At last it appeared that a policy had arrived that was intended to support the needs of all young people in terms of safety and well being. It had a mandate of involving them and acting upon their needs and the needs of their parents through what promised to be a hefty consultation process (*ibid* pp98 – 100). However as Parton points out, the changes were to have a more dramatic side to them, especially in terms of the power dynamics of State v Citizen:

*“It will have the effect of fundamentally reordering the relationship between children, parents, professionals and the state, and have major implications for undermining the civil liberties and human rights of the citizen and increasing the power and responsibilities of professionals in a wide range of social welfare, health and criminal justice agencies in both government and non government sectors”.*  
(Parton, 2006a, p. 977)

This risk of electronic surveillance on already marginalised groups is a point of concern that is raised elsewhere in the academic literature (Dow, 2005; Garrett, 2005; Penna, 2005). Whether this strategy was truly a springboard directed at making all young people feel safe by providing equal access to a whole range of services based on individual needs or not becomes evident very early on in the Green Paper, thus providing credence to Parton's argument.

By page 17 the agenda seemed to have been fixed as to whom the New Labour government actually felt this strategy would mostly benefit and

arguably where 'performance results' could be made evident most quickly, those already on the welfare and criminal justice radar. As can be seen, there were strong claims to show existing policies and measures were making a significant difference such as:

- Record investment in early years education for all children and childcare for children through Sure Start
- Significant real terms rises in Child Benefit and more generous support through new tax credits
- Child Tax credits alone will provide £13 billion of support for families with children
- Introduction of literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools and extra support for schools in deprived areas through Excellence in Cities
- Introduction of Quality Protects and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Children's Fund which supports local projects for 5 to 13 year olds and the Local Network Fund which, invests in local community and voluntary groups working for and with children and young people aged 0-19
- The creation of Connexions to provide advice, guidance and personal development opportunities for young people aged 13-19
- The teenage pregnancy strategy and the wider Sexual Health and HIV Strategy
- The creation of Youth Offending Teams and the Youth Justice Board

- The updated Drugs Strategy published in December 2002, which will provide increased support for young people, especially those that are vulnerable
- An end to bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families with children:
- New homelessness legislation treats 16 and 17 year olds not supported by social services as being vulnerable and in 'priority need' for accommodation

Much of this is extremely commendable. However they go on to concede that there were shortfalls that needed addressing (HM Treasury, 2003b, pp. 15-21). What was interesting is that on the one hand they acknowledged that the existing research does not really provide a detailed picture of causal links (*ibid* p17); yet on the other they proceeded, over the next few pages, to outline what groups they thought were most at risk and in more need of public protection services. By page 21, the scene is set and the reader is presented with a 'targeted services' pyramid, with Specialist Services for children at risk and families with 'complex' problems at the top and Universal Services for 'all' at the bottom (*ibid* p21) however what is glaringly absent from this model was any obvious reference to protecting young people from the effects of violent crime other than in the home environment.

Three significant issues become apparent from this position. Firstly as we witness an emergence of a preventative state that aims to intervene earlier (Parton, 2006b), policies and practices were intrinsically linked to systems of surveillance that help identify emerging risks sooner. However as already identified, this is likely to involve those that are already on the criminal justice

radar, those from marginalised groups such as lone parents, those with previous convictions, and those already of interest to particular spheres within the public sector, such as police, children and adult social services, probation, YOT, health and housing. The expanse of information sharing in relation to individuals would be spread over a wider number of these agencies, justified and legitimised in the name of 'protection' and in order to determine who will get what services. Whilst the vast majority of these marginalised families will not actually be at risk, their information will be recorded and held on a significant number of databases, ensuring that their place on the criminal justice radar is firmly maintained (Parton, 2006b). Secondly, these assumptions are based loosely on what the government think the key issues are, deriving from what appears to be weak empirical evidence these were:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Economic Well-Being

(HM Treasury, 2003b, p. 16)

However despite some powerful rhetoric in relation to consultation provided at the end of the Green Paper (*ibid* pp98-100), no evidence is presented as to what consultation had actually taken place with young people to prepare the Green Paper, or any substantial reason why the focus was to be clearly maintained on already marginalised groups. Thirdly, from a strategic perspective, it is important to note that 2003 saw the start of the significant rise in UK debt levels, increasing from £286bn (2001) to £335.3bn (2003) in September (the month of the publication of ECM), this increase would

steadily continue year on year until a key spike of £883.4bn in 2009/10 (HM Treasury, 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2004, 2010b, 2010a). It was becoming clear, even at an early stage that once the bureaucracy and resourcing issues to manage this ambitious policy had been finalised, there would be little financial capacity left to provide the promised protective services to the majority of young people on a daily basis.

*Things can only get better – If you do it yourself*

In 2008 a progress report on the Children's Plan that underpinned the Green Paper was published. But by this time, despite the ambitious safety measures promised by ECM, the changing landscape of children services and a decreasing public purse, things had taken a more dramatic turn that would have serious implications for the safety of young people. The first of these was a growing trend in youth gangs and related violence (Pitts, 2008). Whilst Pitts was writing his book *'Reluctant Gangsters'*, 39 young people had been either shot or stabbed to death on the streets of London (*ibid xv*), and on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2007, another young child, Baby Peter, as Victoria Climbié 7 years before, had succumbed to the injuries inflicted over a period of time by his family.

These events appeared to be in total contrast to the opening statement of the Executive summary of the progress report:

*"Keeping children and young people safe from harm is everyone's responsibility and a top priority for the Government".*  
(Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008b, p. 8)

A review of the document revealed some substantial work and investment being planned for conventional child protection matters such as violence in the home environment, and whilst this was absolutely necessary, there still

appeared to be no clarity in how they now proposed to protect young people or make them feel safe from unpredicted or random attack, as promised in the original Green Paper. The only paragraph in the progress report that is remotely linked to this pledge, relates to the *Staying Safe Action Plan* and states:

*“To enable children and young people to enjoy safe environments, and empower them, and their parents ... to develop a good understanding of risks and how to manage them.”*  
(Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008b, p. 57)

There is no mention of additional tactical resources to improve safety or what measures of support will be provided if young people are harmed, and once again the steer from government appeared to be ‘protect yourself’.

Children and young people have a strong wish to be consulted, particularly on issues directly affecting their daily lives and activities; their education, school and the school environment, recreation, public transport, and health (Stafford, et al., 2003, p. 371). Yet missing from the 230-page policy document was any real evidence of the outcomes of the promised consultation with the young people, about what concerns them, what they want to happen and what will actually happen, despite the original Children’s Action Plan echoing the sentiment of the original ECM Green Paper:

*‘Consulting with children, young people, parents and professionals to ensure that the Government and policies reflect the priorities of the children, young people, families and communities and build on best practice, we will establish an on going dialogue and consultation with children, young people, parents and professionals’*  
(Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007, p. 165)

However despite what was occurring in the wider community and concerns raised by parents and the media (Ditton & Duffy, 1983; Schlesinger, et al., 1991; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994; Bhairam, 2009), the central focus of the

ECM agenda still seemed to be on marginalised groups, those most at risk from conventional child protection issues and those from more vulnerable destabilised backgrounds. The absence of incorporating the emerging youth violence risk was glaring and with the deaths of so many young people in predominantly public spaces, it was almost as if ECM lacked any real appetite for its own philosophy; the genuine protection and safety of ALL young people. In short, 5 years on from when ECM was launched, there appeared to be too much time spent on strategic development rather than immediate delivery.

In 2009 in an attempt to unravel some of this, I conducted a research study into the impact of media reporting of youth violence on families (Bhairam, 2009). This became the foundation of this current study. I found that whilst only a small proportion of respondents, 35%, reported that they or their families had been personally affected by youth crime or violence, about 70% reported that the style of media reporting had made a significant impact upon them and as such 64% stated that they had altered their family lifestyles as a result of the apparent increased youth violence. These changes included stopping their children travelling alone on public transport, stopping them going into the local town centre, stopping them from going to parks and public places, stopping them 'hanging around with groups of friends' (this was in fear that they may be mistaken for a gang) and stopping them carrying valuables such as iPods, mobile phones or cash. Two families were so concerned that they had actually moved home. Some of the sample had advised their children to surrender whatever they had if challenged by a group of youths. Finally of the sample that responded, 78% felt that police

should have increased powers. However several thought that the irresponsible use of stop and search, particularly brought about by poor training or understanding, actually contributed to the issues. Consequently reinforcing the process of social alienation by focusing upon and subsequently isolating young people, this concept is overwhelmingly supported by the existing academic literature (Smith, 1997; Reiner, 2000; Pilkington & McKenzie, 2002). However it would appear that these simple but very real concerns had been glossed over in the body of the ECM policy and subsequent progress reports.

Despite the amount of effort, resourcing and cost to ECM, there is no evidence to show of any attempts to evaluate in any detail how effective it has been either through analysis or through the narratives of young people and their experiences; this is one of the key aims of this research. The heart of this research lies not only with how safe young people feel, but also with their perceptions of the risk and likelihood of becoming such a victim, the next section will explore this aspect.

#### **1.4 Predicting Violent Behaviour**

One of the major challenges policy makers encounter in terms of devising strategies to protect young people, is the actual unpredictability of the act. All too often attacks of violence are sporadic and unexpected and this may well account for the more holistic strategies encountered in policies such as the ECM policy. There have only been a few high-quality longitudinal studies into the predictors of youth violence (Hawkins, et al., 2000). General findings reveal that young people exposed to previous violence themselves either in

the home or elsewhere (Hawkins, et al., 2000, p. 3) are more likely to become perpetrators themselves, therefore creating a cycle of violence. This is confirmed elsewhere in the academic literature (Osofsky & Society for Research in Child Development, 1993; Osofsky, et al., 1993; Bentovim & Williams, 1998; Farrington & Loeber, 2000, p. 745; Rossman & Ho, 2000; Glasser, et al., 2001; Kim, et al., 2006), which makes protecting them an even more significant challenge. It is important to note that this cycle of violent behaviour appears to be more applicable to males, whereas females are more likely to become involved in non violent crime such as property crime, drugs, or public order and experience repeat victimisation in adulthood (Widom, 1989, p. 4; Batchelor, et al., 2001; Widom, Maxfield, & National Institute of Justice, 2001), though as we shall see from the presented literature, the landscape is changing.

The proliferation of gangs in the US is widely documented (Thrasher, 1927; Hagedorn, 1990; Maxson & Klein, 1995; Farrington & Loeber, 2000, p. 739; Klein, 2005; Short & Hughes, 2006) and whilst the UK picture is still being developed, the link with youth violence and the emerging 'gang' culture needs to be taken into account when examining youth victim preventative strategies. Male gang members have relatively high levels of violence, either as perpetrators<sup>5</sup> or victims before they join a gang<sup>5</sup>. Nonetheless their use of violence increases with membership and interestingly decreases when they leave (Farrington & Loeber, 2000, p. 739). Whereas women's levels of violence differ, for example it dramatically increases between gang affiliation

<sup>5</sup> In a report for the MPS and Government Hallsworth and Young described a gang as a relatively durable, predominantly street based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernable group for whom crime and violence is integral to the groups identity (Hallsworth & Young, 2006)

and first pregnancy and decreases with pregnancy and childbirth (Chesney-Lind, 1993; Gilbert, 2002; Fleisher & Krienert, 2004). Generally young people living in urban areas are more violent than those living in rural ones (Farrington & Loeber, 2000, p. 740). Living in a bad neighbourhood significantly predicted official and reported violence (*ibid*). UK analysis into violent street robbery in London identified that most crimes occurred in predominately poor areas with high ethnic minority populations. Historically a significant amount were carried out by 16-19 year old Afro-Caribbean boys on lone white females on foot (Barker, et al., 1993). Farrington *et al* also suggested that situational factors play a significant role in victimisation prediction. These findings however do need to be tempered with the literature that discusses the challenges of crime reporting and statistics (See Maguire (1997) for more detailed discussion).

In the UK, stranger violence tends to happen in the street, open spaces, nightclubs and bars. UK studies linked alcohol both in the victim and the suspect(s) as a major contributory factor (Farrington & Loeber, 2000, p. 741; Finney & Britain, 2004). Individuals' report that involvement with group violence is either to protect a friend, that they were attacked, a rite of passage, or having a loyalty (Cohen, 1971; Farrington, 1993; Finney & Britain, 2004; White, 2006).

Having an understanding of why and where violence occurs is useful data in terms of planning and organising protection strategies. The use of violence connected with the illicit drugs industry is well charted in policy and research archives. However, whilst perhaps an obvious point to examine, the collateral fallout is often overlooked. In his paper on the increase of youth violence,

Blumstein (1995a) proposed a hypothesis which not only included the more staple ingredients of youth violence and the drugs industry, such as the effect of the drug, economic compulsion, or violence used as a means of doing business in the illicit drugs industry, he also adds a fourth dimension, which he described as the 'community disorganisation effect of the illicit drug industry' (Blumstein, 1995b, p. 27; 1995a). In this he describes a scenario where weapons are routinely carried and used to settle disputes. These are not necessarily drug related but maybe just used to gain respect, instil fear or assign kudos or status to an individual. In other words once weapons and violence are commonly used in the illicit drugs market they become more prevalent in the larger community (*ibid*). Pitts also found extensive evidence of this practice among young gang members, and identified that violence was not just restricted to other 'gang members' but also to anyone who happened to be there, or appeared to 'disrespect' the perpetrator or his/her peers (Pitts, 2008, p. 99). The link between violence, respect and status is a strong one. Young people see respect as a transitional step towards being accepted as citizens on their route into adulthood (Gaskell, 2005). This, as we shall see is important factor that is often neglected in youth policy making (*ibid*).

A frequent problem that occurs when attempting to research 'fear of crime' is that surveyors typically include a set of questions that ask the respondent 'how likely they think' it is that they will become a victim of a specified crime (Chadee, et al., 2007, p. 2). Situational factors that have already been discussed such as media reporting, high crime areas and perceptions of violence will all play a significant part in influencing the respondent's answer.

However Chadee suggests there is perhaps too much emphasis placed upon perceived risk and not enough on actual risk. This methodological practice ultimately runs the risk of becoming an inefficient cornerstone of UK government crime control policy (*ibid*) as Parton reveals in relation to ECM:

*“The system is to be set up in the name of improving the welfare of all children. The names and key personal details of all 11 million children in England are to be recorded for access by professionals from a wide variety of disciplines. The vast majority of children so recorded will not be at risk of suffering significant harm or anything approaching it”.*  
(Parton, 2006a, p. 990)

The outcome of this is that substantial public funds are invested in the wrong areas and therefore those that may be less obviously at immediate risk and in need of some level of protection from state resources are compelled to devise their own safety strategies (Finkelhor, et al., 2005).

Hollway and Jefferson go even further when they examine methodological and theoretical assumptions. For example it is a basic assumption in much social science research that if the words used are the same and if they are communicated in the same manner, they mean a similar thing to all people in the sample (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Goodey adds a further dimension in terms of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, arguing that young boys develop to adulthood through a discourse of masculine power and gender identity construction. That is, what they think or how they are socialised into thinking what ‘an ideal man should be’ i.e. fearless, non-feminine and so forth. In the main they openly declare this belief when asked the ‘how likely’ question in the presence of their peers. However anonymity questionnaires actually reveals the pervasiveness of their fear beyond the constraints of peer group

discussions, where the need to display masculine strength often emerges (Goodey, 1997, p. 402), hegemonic masculinity will be revisited in Chapter 4.

### **1.5 Prevention Strategies**

Despite an apparent recklessness and inconsideration in some young people's behaviour, many of them actually have an extensive and rather sophisticated knowledge of the dangers that surround them (Cockburn, 2008, p. 87). They adopt strategies such as hanging around in groups in public spaces as a means of safety and protection (*ibid*). However as Cockburn points out, many of the policies and strategies adopted nationally and locally actually end up putting young people at a greater risk of harm. Whilst restricting the access to certain areas at certain times may seem a logical way to corral, manage and control young people, it also forces them to go to places where they may be more at risk. The way young people have been constructed by academic and popular discourse over the years has had a significant impact into how society deals and responds to them. This in turn arguably has had a significant impact into how they deal and respond to society. It is therefore necessary to deconstruct some of these concepts in order to achieve a sensible point of departure in dealing with the issue of youth violence and so in order to achieve this, young people should be presented with an opportunity to contribute to the discourse.

The majority of the policies, strategies and literature relating to young people are at best offender centred. Understanding how young people feel through their own personal discourse in terms of safety is lacking in the literature yet it is so critical and fundamental if we, as social scientists are to responsibly

complete a balanced analysis of the world of youth violence and victimisation in order to ensure policymakers are properly informed to make the right decisions.

We have seen that the existing policies for protecting young people as they go about their lives appears to be piecemeal and the key message from perhaps the one policy that was intended to protect them, ECM, more or less tells them to do it themselves. However the main question that needs addressing is 'do they actually feel that enough is being done to make them feel safe?'

The next chapter will look at the methods used to address that question.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methods and Methodology**

Understanding the world we live in and how we adapt to the ever-changing circumstances of our environment are perhaps two of the key drivers for what Cox describes as 'curiosity driven science' (Cox & Cohen, 2011, p. 12). Trying to understand how young people view their position in the world, how they adapt and mature is pivotal to the construction of each phase of the research process (Harden, et al., 2000). As Jenks reminds us, childhood is a relational term grounded in its relationship of difference with adulthood (Jenks, 1982), which in turn links us to the threat to the validity of the research process brought about by the influence of the researcher (Robson, 2002, p. 172). This is not only in terms of personal bias, but also by the affect their actual presence has with the setting, shaping and focus of the study (*ibid*). It is also important to be particularly sensitive as an interviewer when considering the reliability and validity of what young people provide. Young people are frequently 'bracketed off' as a group in opposition to adults rather than recognising the similarities in the them (Valentine, 1999, p. 150). But interviewers should be aware that often children hanker to be identified as 'grown up' and frequently respond well to adults (*ibid*).

This chapter will begin by examining how adopting a social constructionist perspective can enable us to understand how young people construct their place in the world. It will outline the methods and procedures undertaken throughout the course of this research. There then follows a discussion as to why semi-structured interviews were used to produce the data, followed by a

discussion of the sampling framework that was used in order to identify and recruit the young people. This will include a brief summary about those young people and the schools they attend. The penultimate section explores the analytical process and how the analysis was carried out.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter I have elected to refer to myself, the researcher, in the first person. The primary reason for this is to place myself firmly within the research environment, acknowledging my contribution, responsibility and influence in terms of the production of the data throughout the whole process. The young people, the interviewees, will be referred to by their pseudonym, as young people or narrators throughout the thesis.

## **2.1 Social Constructionism**

Knowledge is produced through the organisation of language and social practices into particular discursive formations and comprise of discourses (Hall, 2001; Wetherell, Yates, & Taylor, 2001; Foucault, 2007; Holt, 2009) and these discourses are intimately tied to the structures and practices that are lived out in society (Burr, 2003, p. 76). It therefore is in the interest of relatively powerful groups that some discourses and not others receive the stamp of truth (*ibid*). As I shall highlight through the voice of the narrators, the assumptions of truth that constitute these powerful discourses can have a significant impact upon how individuals construct the world.

If we can start to understand the existing ways we actually understand the world and our place within it, we can then legitimately question, resist and seek to alter them (Foucault, 2007). By doing so we can then begin to

explore and understand discourses that have been previously marginalised (*ibid*) and therefore start to give a voice to those whose accounts of life have been lost or ignored.

So whilst the aim of this research is to try to understand how safe young people feel through their personal narratives. It also seeks to identify the effects of the more powerful discourses that public safety policies sit within, focusing upon the impact that these policies often have on the young people that they are arguably intended to protect, especially in terms of service delivery and young people's expectations. By giving young people a voice, we can begin to understand what they want and what they feel they actually get, set against the political expectations of the Government and other state institutions such as the police service, which are often constrained by financial restraints, resourcing, public opinion, competing demands, shifting priorities and political expediency.

## **2.2 Methods and Procedures**

*“To overcome adult-centred interpretations.... it is essential to employ a methodology that allows youth to speak from, and be appreciated for, their own perspective”.*

(Barron, 2000, p. 45; Gaskell, 2005, p. 103)

In this section I will discuss some of the key methodological and ethical decisions made during the design and conduct of this research. Whilst the main discussion will be about the semi-structured interview, I will also touch upon the use of narrative interviews, as this initially was my preferred option, and the supplementary data such as my journal, photographs and local media samples.

*Ethically speaking*

Careful consideration to all ethical aspects that may affect the veracity of the research findings, bring harm to the participants or damage the reputation of the research sponsor should be carefully considered throughout the research (Fox, Green, & Martin, 2007, pp. 95-111). Discussions about ethical principles of the researcher, the research process, the research subject and perhaps more specifically, transgressions of them tend to be dominated by the following four points:

1. Whether there is harm to the participant
2. Whether there is a lack of informed consent
3. Whether there is an invasion of privacy
4. Whether deception is involved

(Diener & Crandwell, 1978; Robson, 2002)

Ethical guidance was also drawn from the Economic and Social Research Council document which is underpinned by the Research Ethics Framework (ESRC, 2010) and the British Society of Criminology, who advocate that criminological researchers ensure that research is ethically undertaken to the highest possible methodological standard and the highest quality in order that maximum possible knowledge and benefits accrue to society standards (British Society of Criminology, 2006). The Framework expands upon the four above points and takes into account the independence of the research (removing affiliation bias), confidentiality & anonymity and that the research should be of a high quality (Bryman, 2008, p. 127)

A careful audit, using these points was undertaken regularly throughout the research process and these will be discussed in more detail throughout the rest of this chapter. When conducting research with potentially vulnerable populations, it is important to take appropriate measures to protect participants during the research experience (Healy, 2009, p. 180). In addition to this, the project research proposal was submitted, reviewed and approved by both the University of Portsmouth ethics committee and the Metropolitan Police Service Strategic Research Unit prior to the commencement of any work.

#### *Giving the Youth a Voice – Narrative Interviews*

In her study exploring the experiences of parents issued with a Parenting Order (PO), Holt drawing upon (Riessman, 1993, p. 2) suggested:

*“The entirety of the PO experience comprises of a number of episodes which lack edge in both space and time and it is the use of narratives which ‘impose order on the flow of experience.’”*  
(Holt, 2009)

Acknowledging that there is much debate about what ‘narrative data’ constitutes, her research defined the concept as ‘storied’ data, incorporating the whys, the ‘how’s’ and the ‘what’s’ of the experience (*ibid*).

Children are agentic in the determination of their social lives. As such, they are not the mere recipients of contextual influences but, are active in the construction of their worlds (Irwin & Johnson, 2005, p. 821). Coles further suggests that children formulate important opinions about their social, political, and cultural contexts that are not simply reflective of their parents’ ideas (Coles, 2000).

The desire to give young people a voice, especially on such a topical subject as youth violence is based on the assumption that young people have gone unheard within policy and academic forums (Barron, 2000; Gaskell, 2005, p. 90). Gaskell sees this notion as cause for concern on two fronts; firstly, young people seem to have been ignored by policy makers and academics alike. Secondly, she argues children and young people have not simply been excluded from academic research, but their voices and experiences have been overtly and covertly controlled throughout the research process (Gaskell, 2005, p. 90). This is often done in the name 'protecting' young people or contextualising them not as individuals, but as a low level component within the family unit, in need of nurturing, protecting and play, as illustrated in the detailed analysis of Disneyland by Hunt and Frankenberg. In this study they analyse the attempt to universalise an idealized and accepted version of childhood which is embedded and enfolded in conventional family values and roles (Hunt & Frankenberg, 1997, p. 107; James & Prout, 1997, p. 3). The study reveals that in Disneyland, adults are encouraged and indeed expected to re-experience the ideological reconstruction of partially remembered childhoods, where idling time away in play is legitimated and the responsibilities of adulthood removed (Hunt & Frankenberg, 1997, p. 122). In this world of fantasy both adults and children are constantly reminded of what the role of being a child is about. The relevance of these findings to this study is that it suggests there is a constructed expectation that reinforces young people's position and status within the social structure as 'closeted individuals at play' who should have no concept or involvement of the harsh realities of the real world. However as will be shown in Chapter

3 and 4, people as young as 10 construct their world far from the idyllic safety of Mickey and his friends and have a true realisation of the dangers they could encounter on a day to day basis.

Alternatively, research outcomes often describe and create child experiences with reference to their parents. For the purpose of illustrating this point, it is worth quoting Qvotrup:

*“It does not matter whether the terms ‘socio-occupational groups’ or ‘social classes’ are used. It is clear that children are divided between such groups or classes. It is not my idea to deny the existence or the importance of the traditionally used socio-economic factors, but in applying them we may also hide another interpretation: that there may be a reality, which is common for children irrespective of their parents’ backgrounds. This reality might furthermore be one, which in principle differs from the reality of adults. This is exactly the point, which is obscured by dividing children according to variables, which do not directly belong to them”.*  
(Qvotrup, 1997, p. 85)

So whether a child’s perceived voice and activity has been truly realised and by whom, actually, in many cases, remain in doubt (Stafford, et al., 2003).

I therefore wanted to present some young people with an opportunity to provide their own narrative accounts on the subject of safety, seeking to produce detailed stories of their experiences that would otherwise be curtailed by more structured techniques (Riessman, 1993). However what I had initially overlooked was what the impact of being ‘interviewed’ would have on young people, especially very young people. This became apparent after 2 test interviews (not recorded). I soon realised that by asking a single question in the hope of inducing a flowing narrative account, I had placed the narrator in an uncomfortable position, one where they struggled to move on from without some kind of prompt i.e. another question. It was clear they wanted to give their view, but the complexities of the issues made it more

difficult for them to articulate into a flowing free account. I therefore refocused the strategy to what I felt was a more appropriate, ethical and productive technique under the circumstances, the semi-structured interview.

*The necessity of structuring interviews when researching young people*

Semi structured interviews are particularly useful when dealing the with sensitive issues such as victimisation and violence (Crow & Semmens, 2008, p. 119). It allows the interviewer to support the interviewee without necessarily asking them to relive a traumatic event through a more intense, free flowing cognitive technique.

The decision to use semi-structured interviews in place of narrative interviews was grounded in the notion that the semi-structured interview provides an opportunity for the researcher to hear the participant talk about a particular aspect of their life or experience (Willig, 2001, p. 24). This was the original aim of this study. In contrast to the 'single question' that generates the free flowing account provided by the narrative interview (Holt, 2009), the interviewer drives the interview by a list of questions or topics. However in the case of the semi-structured interview, the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply and the questions do not need to stick to a rigid schedule (Bryman, 2008, p. 438). This provides the interview experience to be more akin to the free flowing narrative interview, whilst safeguarding the wellbeing of the young narrators by providing them with a structure or framework to help focus their thoughts. Semi-structured interviews in contrast to the narrative interview also reduce the dynamics of what Wengraf & Chamberlayne refer to as 'power-reversal' (Wengraf & Chamberlayne,

2006, p. 51). Therefore presenting the interviewer with the opportunity to interrupt or challenge any unexpected comments or accounts and keep the process focused. It is worth noting that the notion of removing the power from the narrator is not necessarily a good thing. The narrative account belongs to the narrator, irrespective of their age and they should feel empowered to give their account. The main benefit however especially when interviewing young people is that it provides the researcher the opportunity to keep the interview focused and help the narrator when they perhaps struggle to articulate a point they want to make or expand on.

The drawback however is by allowing the interviewer this form of 'control' over the interview process it places the interviewer in a position of power and arguably restricts the narrator's opportunity to give a continuous account and make the appropriate decisions into how their narrative is told. These considerations however demand that some kind of balance needs to be struck so long as the ethical integrity and protection of the interviewee takes primacy.

The distribution of power within youth research was a central consideration to my practical approach to this research. The need to understand, manage and be sensitive to the obvious gaps in ages, size and social status (Matthews, 2001, p. 117) between the subjects and myself were pivotal considerations in my strategy.

Like Gaskell (2005, p. 93), I wanted to approach the research as a way to explore and examine young people's own articulated experience of safety. I entered this forum with no prior knowledge, pre-conceptions, or expectations

as to what they may say. Therefore from the outset, in some ways, I was consciously trying to mitigate the obvious power relations that would be present. To explain; as a criminal investigator, I usually conduct interviews based on some prior knowledge of the matter in question, I have some idea of what the final collective narrative may look like, as more often than not I have more pieces of the event than an individual may have, this together with being a police officer undoubtedly places me in some position of power. However in the case of these particular semi-structured interviews, I had no knowledge of the narrator, no idea of what they may or may not say. The interviews took place in their schools or homes, so that I was in their environment and they could choose to say nothing. I was an outsider and they were in control of what their own narratives would be or even if they wanted to remain or not.

#### *Youth Group Interviews*

As a secondary means to address the 'power relation' dynamics I chose to conduct some of the research as a group interview. By doing so I was seeking to reduce the power base that a one to one interview may present by allowing a 'strength in numbers' situation. However I was conscious on two fronts around the potential risks of using such a strategy. Firstly, there was risk that it may become a focus group where the stronger characters would take over and secondly I was concerned that people may not say what they really want to due to the influence of peer group dynamics (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1975, p. 11; Asher & Coie, 1990, pp. 3-10; Crow & Semmens, 2008, p. 125).

As Crow *et al* (2008) point out, there is a blurred line between the terms 'focus group' and 'group interview'. A group interview is a way of doing interviews with people more than one at a time, and you can use the same schedule as you might for a semi-structured interview. Focus groups on the other hand are usually used to explore a more in depth subject with the main interest being on the dynamics of the groups (Crow & Semmens, 2008, p. 123).

Smith *et al* add some cautionary advice to help separate the two. They state if the researcher is convinced after ensuring, through detailed transcription, that the participants are able to discuss their own personal experiences and intimacy, then the data may be suitable as evidence of 'lived' experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 71). As we shall see, there was a moment that I thought that the strategy was failing. But as the group interview progressed, it became clear by the significant contribution they all made, that the narrators felt more empowered by the group situation to say what they felt, and were less intimidated by my age, size or social/professional status. In fact there was little difference from the response I received from the one to one interviews and the group interview.

### *Field Journal*

Throughout the duration of the research, I kept a personal journal in which I noted down observations relating either directly or indirectly to my research experience. This included observations in the location where the research was conducted in terms of police patrols, and environmental features such as the streets, public spaces, housing estates, street lighting, and telephone kiosks. I also visited the main town centre that was referred to by a number

of the narrators during their accounts, in order to look at the social and spatial dynamics these narrators talked about, for example:

*“There is a real sense of apathy in the town centre. The civil disturbances, the austerity measures and possibly the thoughts of winter drawing in seem to be taking grip. Young people dressed in summers iconic fashions loll about from shop to shop or just hang around. The young men “performing” to their willing audience of young women, - who can look the ‘coolest, hardest, loudest, funniest’? Two young Black boys (15?) boxing each other as a large group (20) of young black girls look on. Some appear impressed, others busily texting on their phones. Two elderly White women (70?) walk past, look back and shake their heads. Are they remembering this town centre as a very different white homogenous working class place? Who knows? ...”*

(Personal Journal Entry 8<sup>th</sup> September 2011)

I also had a number of informal discussions with young people I encountered outside the research agenda *per se* and who were willing to talk about some of the issues. Whilst I felt it was unethical to record these spontaneous discussions, they were extremely useful to contextualise some of the more associated issues such as class, race, violence, association with authority and policy. The notes from this journal were used to inform the analytical process.

A free local newspaper was distributed weekly to every household in the community where the research took place. There is also a more comprehensive edition that is charged for. Although no in depth analysis has taken place, both were regularly consulted to get a flavour for the local issues and news.

### *Visual Notes*

In addition to keeping a journal I also took a number of photographs, again to contextualise the accounts the narrators had presented. This included graffiti,

the open spaces, the streets and the town centre environment. Whilst these photographs were used as part of the research process they could not be included in this final research document, as they would disclose the location of the research.

### **2.3 The search for my ‘Homies’<sup>6</sup>**

This section explains the procedures and activities that led to the accounts I obtained from the young people. It begins by explaining the procedure that I went through to identify and make contact with the young people and their families. It then goes on to outline a pen picture of those young people that were interviewed, before finally dealing with the course and conduct of those interviews.

#### *Finding the young people*

The initial backdrop for this research was a small study I conducted in 2009, where I had examined the effects of media reporting of youth violence on the parents of school aged children (Bhairam, 2009). I initially planned to expand on that group and seek to interview their children. However upon reflection a number of issues made me reconsider this position. Firstly, some of the literature revealed that parents can have a significant influence upon their children’s development and perceptions of life situations (Baumrind, 1966, pp. 888 - 892; Darling & Steinberg, 1993, pp. 487- 489). For example Dadds *et al* showed that parental influence made the child to be more cautious and avoid social risk taking ‘based on the parents own value judgements and experiences’ (Barrett, Dadds, & Rapee, 1996; Barrett, Rapee, et al., 1996;

<sup>6</sup> Street slang generally used by young people for a person/friend from the local hometown or neighbourhood

Dadds, et al., 1996). I therefore felt there was a risk that this set of children may be influenced by their parent's views or any discussion that they may have with them prior to any subsequent interviews. Secondly, in my role as a senior policing practitioner for violent crime, I was becoming increasingly interested in the effectiveness of the Every Child Matters agenda (HM Treasury, 2003b). As already outlined in the previous chapter, this policy was aimed at protecting *all* young people aged 0-19 and that the ages of these children would be much narrower than that.

My aim was to interview between 10 and 15 young people and I wanted to capture diversity in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and social class as best as I could within the sample. I initially began by exploring the possibility of interviewing young people within the age range who had been victims of violence related crime, as I felt their experience could be analysed more easily against the aims of the Every Child Matters. I approached the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) with my proposal, and it was approved. Having identified a significant number of potential interviewees I then proceeded to contact their parents for permission to participate. Whilst I made it clear from the outset that my role and purpose of contact was to act as a researcher, I was ethically bound to also inform them I was a serving senior police officer. This did not prove problematic and was met with approval from all the parents I spoke to. However, one parent whilst offering to support the research, then declared their child had recently been the victim of very serious assault that had not been reported. As a senior detective I have a professional responsibility for the care and support of victims of crime and therefore personally went to visit the family with a

specialist support officer to report the matter. It was at this point I realised the sensitivities that were required to carry out my job, could, under these circumstances, conflict with my role as researcher. Upon reflection I also became conscious that by asking victims of crime to re-live their experiences I was a) subjecting them to revisit their trauma, b) presenting them an opportunity to disclose other offences or evidence that they had not disclosed at the time of their initial report, which could invalidate the integrity of my research or an investigation and c) potentially causing complexities for any future criminal justice processes such as disclosure issues that may conflict with my role as a police officer and my ethical responsibilities as a researcher. These elements placed me in a difficult position as a practitioner/researcher (Fox, et al., 2007, pp. 76-94). Following discussions with the MPS and my supervisor we agreed that it was too problematic to continue using victims of crime as participants, I was therefore recommended to review my strategy.

### *The Participants*

Having reviewed my selection strategy, I approached Westshire<sup>7</sup> Education Authority (this, the subsequent establishments and names are fictitious to protect the anonymity of the participants).

Holt (2009, p. 80) correctly signposts the importance of ensuring that the social positioning of the narrators are factored into the research process to help contextualise and present a balanced understanding of the issues under investigation. This was problematic for two reasons; firstly I was dealing with

<sup>7</sup> All areas have been labelled with fictitious names taken from the National Policing Exam OSPRE ® (NPIA, 2012). The subsequent demographics however are real.

young people who may struggle with the concept of classifying themselves through a sociological lens and coding process. This therefore would have made me reliant on their parents' or adults interpretation of their social positioning and perhaps hidden the true views of the children (Qvortrup, 1997, p. 85). I personally am well aware of the power of being defined through the eyes of others. I am of South Asian appearance, yet my family are from British Guyana in South America. I have spent most of my life justifying to others that I am neither Indian nor Pakistani, despite being told at the tender age of 10 by a teacher "Well you must have been Indian once!" Secondly, some of the establishments I spoke to were keen not to be seen as labelling their young people in a socio-economic demographic manner, which I respected and therefore looked for alternative measures.

As a result of this I researched local demographic data by using the latest available census of London in order to pin point an area that would increase the chances of providing a more balanced and diverse rich sample. This led me to the London Borough of Westshire.

#### *Westshire – Demographics*

Westshire has been identified as a "growth" Borough and has been earmarked as the main driver for growth in South London in the period up to 2031. The population currently stands at 335,479 and forecast to experience a net increase of 45,000 (385,000) (Westshire Strategic Partnerships, 2009) by 2031 (Westshire Strategic Partnerships, 2009)<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Fictitious name to protect anonymity, researcher has record of original document

Westshire was once considered one of the quieter policing areas within the Metropolitan policing boundaries, with its rich mix of white middleclass suburban areas, aspirational white working class households, and a small proportion of ethnic minorities making up the wider community (Office for National Statistics, 2001). However much has changed in the last 10 years. In 2001, the demographics at the north end of the Borough, Sandford<sup>9</sup>, was approximately 50% Black or Minority Ethnic, (Office for National Statistics, 2001) with an asylum screening unit situated in the town centre, this number is probably now an underestimation (*ibid*).

In the south of Westshire is the more affluent ward of West Ferry<sup>10</sup>, with a population of 11,916. Over 25% of the population are over 60, with a lower level of ethnic and faith diversity than the rest of Westshire. 87% of the population are White British, compared to 67% in Westshire. In comparison to the rest of the Borough, the school-aged population is not becoming ethnically diverse at all (Westshire Strategic Partnerships, 2009)<sup>11</sup>.

Due to the shortfall in secondary schools in some of the poorer neighbouring Boroughs, children and young people travel into Westshire making it now the largest school youth population in London (Westshire Police Service, 2008)<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Fictitious name to protect anonymity, researcher has record of original document

<sup>10</sup> Fictitious name to protect anonymity, researcher has record of original document

<sup>11</sup> Fictitious name to protect anonymity, researcher has record of original document

<sup>12</sup> Fictitious name to protect anonymity, researcher has record of original document

The search then led me to the following establishments:

**West Ferry Primary School (4 - 11)** – This is a middle class Church of England primary school primarily made up of the local children of professional people. The school's primary ethnicity is white, though there has been evidence of an increase in the ethnic diversity in the last few years.

**West Ferry Secondary School (11 - 16)** – This is a new Academy style school, historically underperforming with low take up from the local residents. Pupils were mainly from the poorer area of Sandford and were of low to middle ability. A high proportion of pupils are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, and included a high number of pupils that have been excluded from other schools. Pupils stayed here until 16, as there was no six-form facility, the majority went on to West Ferry College (see below), though many left to go to vocational or trade college, or employment. However since achieving Academy status a substantial amount of money has been invested in the school, there has been a significant upturn in the overall performance and the introduction of a six-form from September 2011. This has resulted in an increase in local professionals sending their children to this school.

**West Ferry College (16 - 18)** – This is a low performing college which recruits again mainly from the Sandford area. It also has a large number of students from overseas, whose first language is not English. Many of this group are displaced residents from war torn or troubled countries such as Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Romania. This College has also

received considerable investment, though it is too early to analyse what impact this has had.

In addition to this, a number of young people were identified from within local youth and community groups who are shown as 'Other Volunteers' below.

I approached the Principals and leaders of each of these establishments and outlined my proposal. They agreed to support the research and the Primary School, College and community groups were served the letters as shown at Appendix One and Two (redacted for the protection of anonymity). It was agreed that only pupils from years 5 and 6 (9 to 11 years old) in the primary school would be canvassed, as it was felt younger pupils may feel uncomfortable or get distressed talking about fear and safety. Interestingly, the Head of Learning and Development for the secondary school, felt that given the schools poor history in terms of anti-social behaviour, he would personally promote the research to parents and pupils as part of the Citizenship education syllabus. Letters were still provided to volunteers in order to protect the integrity of the research process.

#### *Introducing the Young People*

##### **West Ferry Primary**

<b>Narrator</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Visible Appearance</b>
<b>Steve</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>Elliot</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>Brian</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>David</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>Sally</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>White</b>

### West Ferry Secondary (Group Interview)

<b>Narrator</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Visible Appearance</b>
Doug	M	11	White
Tony	M	11	White
Katrina	F	11	White
Francesca	F	11	Black
Deepak	M	13	South Asian
Winston	M	13	Black
Natalie	F	13	Black
Gabrielle	F	13	Black

### West Ferry College

<b>Narrator</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Visible Appearance</b>
Peter	M	17	White
Shirley	F	17	Black

### Other Volunteers

<b>Narrator</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Visible Appearance</b>
Phil	M	16	Black
Grace	F	17	Black
Sarah	F	11	Mixed Race (White/Asian)
Felicity	F	16	White
Joel	M	18	Sri Lankan
Christina	F	18	White (Polish)

*Lets Talk – Where professional and researcher meet*

As a professional criminal investigator with over 27 years experience I am mindful of the power relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Gudjonsson, 1984; Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 1994; Clare & Gudjonsson, 1995; Pearse & Gudjonsson, 1999; Gudjonsson, 2003; Kassin, et al., 2010). The narrators were aware that I was also a Detective Chief Inspector with the Metropolitan Police and these dynamics were further compounded by their comparative young ages. It was also important for me to acknowledge the threat of persuasive communication brought about by these power dynamics (Atkinson, et al., 1996, p. 648; Pearse & Gudjonsson, 1999; Kassin, et al., 2010). But in a study of children suffering from Cystic Fibrosis, Macdonald (2008) contested the 'plethora of arguments', which assumed the power imbalance in the research setting in favour of the researcher and found:

*'Children in our research had their own way of exerting control<sup>13</sup> over the interview process and appeared to be able to use strategies deliberately to protect themselves from our 'predatory' interrogations in the quest of knowledge'.  
(MacDonald & Greggans, 2008, p. 8)*

However, specifically in terms of cognitive response theory, where it is argued that when people receive persuasive communications, they will attempt to relate the new information to their existing knowledge about the topic (Greenwald, 1968, pp. 147-170; Petty, Ostrom, & Brock, 1981, p. 13), it was necessary to ensure that I neither invoked supportive or unsupportive thoughts when addressing the narrators from the outset and throughout the process.

<sup>13</sup> Going to the toilet at difficult questions, using parents to get released, feigning tiredness (MacDonald & Greggans, 2008)

The first consideration was my appearance. I felt wearing casual clothing would be less imposing than a suit, however as we shall see, one young person actually associated smart suits with a strong sense of being safe. Before the interview began I re-introduced myself, informing the young person that it was OK to call me by my first name. I briefly explained to the young person about two key functions of research in a language that they would understand. Firstly 'scholarly driven'; that is to enhance knowledge of a subject or theory and secondly 'service driven' research; that asks how services to young people can be better delivered (Curtis, et al., 2004, p. 87; Gaskell, 2005) however I emphasised that this research fell more into the latter category.

I then gave them a relaxed but structured introduction that comprised of the following<sup>14</sup>:

*"Hello, I am Robin, thank you very much for helping me today. I am doing some research, which means investigating like a detective into how safe you feel when you and your friends go out. I am also keen to know how you think adults see you.*

*I am going let you do all the talking, I want you tell me everything, but will help you if need be. Some of the things I say, you might not understand, that's ok, don't worry. If it is unclear, stop me and I will try to make it clearer.*

*There are no wrong answers or right answers this is just about how you see things. Is that OK? We can stop at anytime; you don't have to answer any*

<sup>14</sup> Some of this was slightly altered for the older narrators

*questions you don't want to. I will be recording it as I don't want to miss anything and will be writing some notes as we go.*

*Do you have any questions before we start?*<sup>15</sup>

We organise our experiences in terms of stories, and present them as a structured account to ourselves and to others (Sarbin, 1986). I wanted the young people to tell me their stories and so putting them at ease was an important part of the methodological and ethical considerations. Having decided on a semi-structured interview approach I turned to Kvale's ten-point interviewer model a reference framework:

- *Knowledgeable*: is thoroughly familiar with the focus of the interview
- *Structuring*: gives purpose for the interview, rounds it off; asks if interviewee has any questions
- *Clear*: asks simple, easy, short questions; no jargon
- *Gentle*: lets people finish; gives time to think; tolerates pauses
- *Sensitive*: listens attentively to what is said, how it is said; empathetic
- *Open*: responds to what is important to interviewee and is flexible
- *Steering*: knows what s/he wants to find out
- *Critical*: is prepared to challenge what is said
- *Remembering*: relates what is said to what has been previously been said

<sup>15</sup> Documented in my personal journal

- *Interpreting*: clarifies and extends meanings of interviewee's statements with imposing meaning on them.

(Kvale, 1996)

In addition to this I also adopted the two further points added by Bryman:

- *Balanced*: does not talk too much or too little
- *Ethically sensitive*: is sensitive to the ethical dimension of interviewing, ensuring interviewee appreciates what research is all about, its purposes and that his/her answers will be treated confidentially

(Bryman, 2008, p. 445)

Interviews of duration more than 30 minutes are likely to tax a younger child's powers of concentration (Faux, Walsh, & Deatrick, 1988; Morison, Moir, & Kwansa, 2000, p. 123). The interviews in this study lasted between 15 minutes and 65 minutes in the case of some of older participants and were digitally recorded. It was evident that as the interviews progressed, the narrators, particularly the younger ones, started to display signs of fidgeting, wandering, and loss of focus.

## **2.4 The Analytic Process**

Discourse analysis involves a detailed analysis of discursive resources, which, in this particular project, involved interview transcripts. Whilst discourse analysis involves a conceptualization of language as constructive and as functional (Willig, 2001, p. 98) there is an element to our lives that is, at least, partially non-discursive that critical realists would argue form

personal and societal constraints upon people's actions and understandings (Sims-Schouten, Riley, & Willig, 2007, p. 103) that I wished to capture. These include elements such as embodied factors, the physical nature of the world or power structures (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999), coercion or the material organisation of space (Parker, 1992) or as Willig states, phenomena that can be observed and experienced that are generated by structures that maybe social, economic or biochemical (Willig, 1999).

By adopting a critical realist analysis approach three key advantages are presented as Sims-Schouten points out:

*There are three advantages in taking a critical realist, rather than relativist, approach:*

*1. Critical realism enables an analysis that can consider why people draw upon certain discourses, by proposing that the extra-discursive provides the context from which the use of certain discourses is more or less easily enabled;*

*2. Critical realism can explore the impact of material practices on discursive practices; and,*

*3. This approach does not only map the ways in which participants use discourse in order to construct particular versions of reality, but it also positions their talk within the materiality that they also have to negotiate.*

(Sims-Schouten, et al., 2007, p. 103)

There are two major versions of discourse analysis and whilst they share a concern with the role of language in the construction of social reality they address two different sorts of research questions and identify with different intellectual traditions (Willig, 2001, p. 95). Discursive Psychology was inspired by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis and their interest in the negotiation of meaning in local interaction in everyday contexts. It studies what people do with language and emphasises the performative qualities of

discourse. Foucauldian discourse analysis on the other hand, was influenced by Michael Foucault and poststructuralist writers who explored the role of language in the constitution of social and psychological life. It is concerned with the discursive resources that are available to people and the ways in which discourse constructs subjectivity, selfhood and power relations (*ibid*). It was for this reason that this study adopted the poststructuralist critical realist approach.

Once the initial group of interviews had been conducted, a lengthy period of transcription followed. This proved to be an extremely important part of the whole research process for me, as this deep and sustained engagement with the data caused me to identify some significant analytical insights. I made note of these in order to develop them through the analysis and subsequent interviews. For example, in one of the early interviews, I found that I was dictating the pace and tempo, which the transcript revealed as quite a clumsy encounter. The information I gained was still useful, but this reflexive activity helped me become a more efficient interviewer. Transcription is also the first stage where data starts being shaped by the researcher's own theoretical decisions over what is important and what can be omitted (Dunne, Pryor, & Yates, 2005; Holt, 2009, p. 88). For example I adopted Jefferson's notation technique (Jefferson, 1990) (See Appendix Three) and whilst I placed importance on the pauses, emphasis and reactions, I found it almost impossible to gauge time to such a degree as dictated by Jefferson, I therefore opted for 'whole' seconds instead of tenths, but used the key techniques throughout.

After the transcription I carefully read through each of the transcripts several times, making notes and looking for themes. Very soon, it became apparent that the key themes and concerns were being echoed by most of the young people. Many of them had not had first hand experience of violence *per se* and so imagined scenarios had been presented to them as a prompt, however, despite their lack of first hand experience of violence, they all seemed to have constructed similar perspectives and strategies. These similarities presented me with an opportunity to start placing the data into a framework and once I had uploaded the transcripts into NVivo 9 data management software, I was able to code the data into a number of themes. These included: *How safe they felt, Environment, Views on Police, Views on Government, Previous Victimisation, Protection Strategies, ECM, Violence, How they see teenagers, How they see adults and How they think adults see them*. As I went through each account I was then able to further code by assigning sub codes to each theme, these allowed me to introduce 'characters', 'actions' and 'plots' (Ricoeur, 1991) which allowed the data to be weaved into a story and so the use of 'structuring' axes (e.g. gender and Race), ideological discourses (e.g. responsibility, status) and materialities (e.g. clothing, wealth) were also coded. As Holt helps to explain:

*It is the mobilisation of these aspects of their lives that might be identified as the 'context': that which is made significant by its constraint and/or enabling of experience.*  
(Holt, 2009, p. 89)

Whilst this process divided the individual's accounts into a thematic framework, I was conscious and concerned that I may lose the value of the individuality of the narrator. I was therefore cognisant that when I wrote the findings up, that not only were the common themes analysed and discussed,

but also they were done so with the verbatim accounts attributed to the individual narrator in the body of the text, which is where Jefferson's model did add value.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter outlined the need for a critical discourse analysis approach given that my primary aim was to understand how the discursive context to shape the young peoples' narrative accounts of their understanding of violence and safety in public spaces and how these interpretations are transformed into safety strategies. It highlighted the need to ensure that the young people were empowered to give their accounts with minimum interference from the interviewer whilst ensuring that the power dynamics of interviewer and interviewee were ethically managed. It further highlighted the need to keep hold of both the subject and the temporality of the narrative, which can be at risk of getting lost in discourse analysis.

This chapter also outlined the procedures undertaken throughout the research process including whom the young people were and how they were selected, how the analysis was undertaken and how the themes and concepts, which constitute the research findings, were generated.

In the next chapter we begin the exploration of these findings, starting with an examination of how the young people interpret danger and risk as they go about their day-to-day business.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Scary Places - Constructing the Concept of Risk**

This chapter will begin by examining how young people de-construct the idea of 'safety' before going on to explore through their discourses how they construct the concept of risk in terms of personal safety and security when away from their home environment. Foucault (2007, p. 42) argues that there are structure to discourses and in that it is through the various "rules" of discursive formations, (objects, statements, concepts and choices), that the world is understood and, to some extent, also shaped. The extra-discursive then forms not only key elements within discourses (objects, entities, etc.), but also the external structures that discourse applies itself through (e.g. the pre-existing social institutions that become "surfaces of emergence" for discursive objects) (Foucault, 2007, p. 45; Hardy, 2011, pp. 72 -73) This chapter also considers how they interpret the extra discursive components of specific environmental and social features such as lighting, clothing, surroundings that contribute towards creating a sense of anxiety and fear within them.

#### **3.1 Deconstructing "Safety"**

In its broadest sense the use of the term 'safety' covers a multitude of activities, systems and processes within the wider social context. These include a number of discursive resources such as road safety, health and safety, on-line safety, and food and environmental safety. These discursive labels tend to assign themselves to the well being and safeguarding of individuals or communities and in fact in recent times have become the

bedrock of a whole new industry based upon 'safety' (Walters, 2002; Walters & University of Cardiff, 2005; Robson, et al., 2007).

Despite the extent of the everyday use of the label 'safety', the young people's responses highlight the complexity in their interpretation of the term when trying to account for and conceptualise personal safety in public spaces. At first glance this could have significant implications for the young people themselves in terms of how they then go onto address the problems they confront (Burr, 2003, p. 17), but as this study reveals, their 'inability' to simply define and frame the problem, does not appear to affect their cognitive ability to assess and manage the perceived risk.

At first glance, Sarah aged 11 finds the concept almost impossible to break down and describes it in her own way:

*RB How would you define safety what does it mean to you?*

Umm (4) It means that eh? There are eh around you there are people helping you to be safe and eh (10) there (10) huh (10) (.hhhhhhhhhhh) (5).

*RB How would you define safety what does it mean to you?*

It means I know people are there to help me and to show me (4) like when people come into school telling you about how to cross the road and things like that (.hh) I know that people are showing other people how to um (4) eh (3) be safe. (Chuckles) Ommph (4) Eh? (25) (.hhhhh) it means eh um (4) if (2) umm (10) It means that they're eh? (7) there are places that are safe and there are people that can keep you safe such as policemen (4). Umm (5) I know that I am safe when eh there are people around me and um but I don't feel like I am safe when I am on my own (Sarah).

*RB So what does safe mean?*

(10) Sarah then continued to struggle to give her meaning of 'safe' so RB moved it on

In the above transcription I wrongly conclude that Sarah 'struggles' to provide a meaning of 'safe'. However reanalysing the data reveals that she contextualises and frames her explanation by using a more simplified way, perhaps more fitting to her age group, before then moving onto the

functionality of individuals, who she sees in the accepted and normalized role of protectors, such as police officers and friends. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Interestingly she also alludes to what she describes as 'safe places', and whilst she does not say what these are, it is perhaps indicative that she has already constructed notions of what she accepts as 'safe places'. This too will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Felicity, who is 16, also shows how challenging the concept is to describe:

It's about being aware of what's around you because obviously (2) you can't define (1) how safety ever ever (*sic*), coz there is natural stuff (3) so I think you just gotta be aware what's around you (2) like (2) some of the people as well, but (3) I think if you are aware then you are lesssssss (*sic*) in trouble I think (3), Yeah. (Felicity)

Here, Felicity arguably captures the reason for her difficulty in defining safety by describing it in more relativistic terms, asserting the existence of the concept of safety, but highlighting the inaccessibility *per se* of the concept to individuals (Burr, 2003, p. 23), she uses the catch-all phrase of 'having an all around awareness' to construct the term safety.

After a lengthy interview where a number of safety issues had cropped up, Sarah is once again presented with an opportunity to explain what being safe meant to her:

*RB Ok, well lets go back to the original question then, how would you define safety?*

(6) Umm I would define safety as umm (7) ooh (2) a thing that umm

(8) Umm (7) (Sarah)

*RB What are you trying to avoid happening to you? (Prompt)*

(3) Umm (1) Attacks and things like that umm (3) teenagers ganging up on me and accidents that happen (3) umm (4) (Sarah)

*RB It's quite a tricky one to define isn't it?*

Umm Yeah (Sarah)

In this excerpt Sarah now appears to demonstrate that she constructs safety through the discourse of what she sees as risk, using discursive labels such

as attacks and teenagers, as opposed to attempting to just construct the more complex and wider notion of safety.

The young people negotiate constructing an understanding of the term 'safety' in a number of different ways; for example the older ones appear to frame it in a more practical way. Grace aged 17, who is one of the older girls and very involved in the Christian youth movement, places her interpretation within more of a moral based framework:

Umm (3) er (2) not getting hurt? (2) like being in a place where everyone's nice to each other (2) not like angry and stuff. Yeah, stuff like that? (Grace)

Whereas Brian aged 11 and whose father is a police officer, provides a more dramatic and sinister construction of the term:

*RB What kind of things make you feel unsafe?*

R3 (2) Umm like when I go to the park (2) there are lots of like gangsters hanging around. (Brian)

What became apparent from their accounts is the efforts the young people apply to deconstruct the term 'safety' into something they can meaningfully interpret and interact with, then reconstructing the term in a way that they understand and would know how to interact with. Such strategies resonate with Denzin's postulation:

*"Readers create text as they interpret and interact with them. The meaning of a text is always indeterminate, open-ended and interactional. Deconstruction is the critical analysis of texts".*  
(Denzin, 1995, p. 52)

Therefore they are not necessarily 'thinking' safety or 'talking' safety but are responding to the extra discursive components, such as 'gangsters' or 'teenagers' in a manner that affords them to respond safely.

### 3.2 Constructing the Risk

Willig (2001) suggests that construction, explanation and evaluation are interdependent aspects of discourse. Therefore it is impossible to understand how young people construct safety without also understanding how they explain risk through their personal narrative. Parker identified that discourses may be defined as sets of statements that construct discursive objects and an array of subject positions (Parker, 1994, p. 245). Willig further suggests these constructions in turn make available certain ways-of-seeing the world and certain ways-of-being in the world (Willig, 2001, p. 113).

With 'safety' being the discursive object of their narratives, the concept of positioning is critical in trying to understand how the young people construct the wider explanation of risk. By positioning themselves as potential victims, they were able to articulate what they perceive are the elements that heightened their exposure to risk of victimisation, we shall explore some of those elements next.

#### *Environmental Influence: Alone in the Dark*

The young people attribute a number of environmental factors to their exposure of risk when they are out alone in public and open spaces, 'Alone in the Dark' was a significant factor that increases the perceived levels of risk. The effect of lighting in personal space is an important consideration when assessing ones own personal safety (Adams & Zuckerman, 1991). Just how effective it actually is, has been the subject of a significant amount of research (Atkins, Husain, & Storey, 1991; Ramsay & Newton, 1991; Shaftoe & Osborn, 1996; Boyce, et al., 2000; Clark, 2002; Eck, 2002), whilst

in terms of overall effectiveness as a crime prevention tool is questionable, there is evidence to show that as a reassurance strategy it is effective (Akashi, Rea, & Morante, 2004; Morante, 2008; Knight, 2010; Unwing & Fotios, 2011). It is particularly significant to the young people as Brian explains:

*RB You take yourself to school, it's getting darker, how do you feel about walking now?*

(2) Er yeah, well sometimes I go to football on Wednesdays in the winter (.hhh) (2) so I um sometimes ask people for a lift because I don't really like walking (2) (.hhh) It's er my house is quite (2) not, er, it's quite a way from here so (2) er I have to walk (2) (.hhh) quite a way and I don't really like walking along in the pitch black.

*RB Why is that?*

R3 (.hhh) (2) because (2) as I said (2) (.hhh) teenagers and things (Brian)

In this extract Brian identifies his vulnerability to danger and risk brought about by the darker evenings. This makes the walk home for him feel more precarious and therefore positioning him more towards victimisation by unknown elements. Vulnerability brought about by darkness was shared by a number of the young people, irrespective of age and gender. Francesca, aged 11, provides a lively narrative of travelling alone at night and in which her sense of fear is evident:

*RB You travel some distance, how do you feel about travelling in the evening*

(4) (hh) >Umm (2) tut (2) my friend in primary school, she's in year 6, she lives around the same place as me, so we went to the same primary school so sometimes < (2) > see her on the bus and also there is a girl here that goes to the school. She's in year 9 she lives in the same area. Coz my area is kinda packed together, kinda all situated in like <(3)> the same place <(4)> Coz it's blocks of flats < so (3) I get on the bus with them if I'm early enough (*Note: Francesca spoke fast and excitable during this part of her account*)

Whilst this extract makes no reference to the term darkness, the sense of her apparent vulnerability brought about by the combined impact of darkness and the built up estate where she lives is clearly evident in her interview and

will be reinforced later. Francesca also repositions herself into a less vulnerable situation by travelling with her friends. Interestingly, 10-year-old Steve states:

“I haven’t been in the park on my own” (Steve)

But then goes onto reveal an interesting construction of fear:

Sometimes when I don’t see people I feel a bit freaky in the evenings. Sometimes if I am in the park and I’m on my own and there’s people, and they’re coming up to me I won’t see them coming. That makes me a bit uncomfortable, but if I was with my friends again I’d feel a lot safer. (Steve)

In the extract above, Steve constructs a situation where he is on his own and there are people present, but it is so dark he can’t see them, and indicates that the darkness causes him sufficient anxiety to make him feel extremely vulnerable. Interestingly, Steve constructs this perception despite his earlier assertion of having never been in the park on his own. It appears that this frightening ‘park’ account maybe entirely constructed from what Hollway and Jefferson describe as ‘horror film’ imagination (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, pp. 8-9). This arguably indicates that he has constructed the world under these conditions with a sense of risk and dangerousness.

Felicity’s account provides a more practical insight into the risks of being out alone after dark.

During the evening, because like, more like nightlife is associated with (1) not trouble, but like, a bit more danger. So I don’t think I am as aware during the day as I am in the evening but I don’t know why it makes a difference really. You would never go to, I think it’s just common sense, go to a park at night by yourself, it’s just commonsense like. You’re just saying ‘hi I am alone and it’s dark’ that’s just common sense you wouldn’t do that. (Felicity)

Felicity’s approach is one she constructs as ‘just common sense’; however it is unclear what she means by that phrase, but her narrative acknowledges

an increase in her awareness of her surroundings as it gets darker and her sense of safety becomes more acute. Her account also acknowledges a more intense sense of risk and danger if out alone at night in a park, which she proposes to manage simply by avoiding placing herself in what she sees as very dangerous situation.

*On the Town: Negotiating Risk in the Big Wide World*

Each of the young people has a constructed view of the risk they face in the outside world. Whilst the context varies somewhat by gender and age, many of them share a common narrative and construct a sense of dangerousness that in fact each accepts as an everyday risk.

Katrina, aged 11, has just started going to secondary school on her own, and she walks about a mile each way. She constructs her vulnerability in many ways, but the one that appears to cause her greatest concern was expressed through her own suggestion of being abducted:

Um (2) when (1) I eh, because part of my journey to school I have to walk on my own (2) just down the road (3) umm (.hh) (2) I don't like it when eh vans (.hh) and cars pull up next to me eh (hhh) er I just find it a bit like scary (3) because I don't know who they are and stuff (3) (hhh) (Katrina)

Interestingly this fear of abduction is shared by many of the younger people:

(1) Err I feel good, but then sometimes I feel a little (1) unsafe, just in case somebody is going to pull over and say "Ah, do you wanna get in my car, get a lift to school" like. (Elliot)

Here Elliot, aged 10 also draws upon a common interpretation of child abduction (Glassner, 1999; Griffin & Miller, 2008). Sally aged 11, too voices concern about being abducted by a stranger on her way to school:

(2) (.hh) Well er I don't feel like that safe, because I prefer it when I'm with someone, but (2) er (laughs) I feel like someone is going to take me

*RB Abduct you?*

Yeah, Um (hh)

*RB Why?*

(2) (.hhh) Well, because there's been a lot of news that people are abducting children (Sally)

Personal research and knowledge (*Head of CID for local area at the time of interviews*) revealed that there had been no news reports about abductions or abductions in the area at this time, but in her broader narrative Sally reports that her mum worried for her because "she might get abducted or attacked by teenage thugs". David, an 11 year old also expresses his concerns about the risk of being stalked by a stranger:

Erm (4) it makes you feel they are looking at you for a reason (3) like they might wanna try and follow you like (2) guess where you live (3) (hh) and get information about you (David)

Francesca once again provided a more telling and personal account based upon a personal event that happened to her when she was younger:

There was once when I was going home (2) I was walking (3) 'cause the bus was taking long (.hh). So I started walking and it was kinda dark (hhh) and erm (2) 'tut' I started walking (2) then this man (.hh) >he was kind of tall, he was dark and he was walking< (.hhh) and then he (3) kept on then >walking and walking the same way as me (.hh) and like< (2) each way I was walking and when I crossed the road he was walking the same way as well. >He kept on walking the same place as me (2) he started walking faster and faster and he then, (hh) I then, he and I turned my head and he was right there again< (2) . Then I ran (2) > I turned my head and there he was there again umm (2) and so I kept on walking and I started running all the way home (.hhh) still walking the same way as me but I was right in (2) front (.hh) of my er um flat so I went in< (3). (Francesca)

In this excerpt, Francesca relives her experience and the fear of risk was once again evident in the way she presented her narrative. However, despite being a truly frightening experience for Francesca, the matter was never reported to the police as her family felt she would not be believed.

Travelling on public transport is a major concern for the majority of the young people; buses in particular pose a real threat especially when travelling upstairs. Where and why they sit in particular places will be covered in more detail in Chapter 4, however it was evident from each of their narratives that they construct sitting upstairs on a bus as a risk:

Umm because all the (3) because I've learnt that all the umm (2) people who think they are cool, sit at the back and they are the most likely to do something to you (Sarah)

In this extract Sarah associates the back of the bus upstairs as an area that poses a very real risk to her. Tony, aged 11, too constructs a similar position:

Well I sit downstairs for a few reasons. One, I always feel safer downstairs coz (2) <I don't know why but upstairs has a kind of got a reputation as being < (1) er the bad part where all the (.hh) trouble happens yeah? And um the reason number Two is my favourite seat in the world is downstairs I just sit there (3) and read or like (Tony)

Mixing a bit of humour into his response, Doug, also 11 expresses his concern about sitting upstairs on the bus:

I sit downstairs because (3) well sometimes I can't be bothered to go up (laughs) (3) umm but I don't know why but I feel a bit more (3) (.hh) secured down the bottom (Doug)

It is not just the younger ones that associate risk with sitting upstairs on a bus. Peter, who is nearly 18, drew upon a personal experience where a friend of his was robbed in front of him whilst sitting upstairs on a busy bus:

(3) .... (hhh) (*Names friend*) were sitting at the back of the bus and I was like (2) a few seats ahead of them because there was a bit of erm (2) crowded so um a > a guy comes over and asks for his phone er um it was like it was erm broad daylight (rising inflection) he just asked for his phone erm straight up < it was a bit (3) er yeah (pause) (Peter)

Peter looked shocked as he recounted the incident and was noticeably uncomfortable. Shirley, aged 17 also outlines her reason for sitting downstairs, which she constructs on the basis of the following violent incident:

I use to sit on top, now I tend to sit downstairs. Because I heard one time, some boys were sitting and it was my friend's brother and they wanted his blackberry and he (2) (.hh) got stabbed in the neck or something on the bus, (3) yeah he got stabbed.

*RB So you now sit downstairs*

Yeah, well the only time I will sit upstairs is when it's empty and I won't sit at the back, I'll sit at the front. (Shirley)

Phil, a 16 old Black youth, who describes himself as very 'street' and 'afraid of nothing', presents a slightly different account:

Depends (2) but normally upstairs near the back (Phil)

Here, Phil puts himself in the very spot where none of the others would go. In his broader narrative he portrayed himself as no nonsense 'tough' guy. Excluded from school, he openly has no respect for authority or many normative values and positions his personal discourse very much in the 'bad, tough teenager' box, which will be recounted later in this chapter. However in this instance his view changes when presented with the following imagined scenario:

*RB If a group of teenagers got on and sat where you were, how do you think you would feel?*

Umm (3) depends (.hhh) but I don't think I'd move. I'd be careful getting my stuff like phone or pod out (4). If they were like loud black guys I think I might move though.

*RB Why?*

Ummm Like eh if I was on my own I'd be worried a bit coz like I said they'd shank you if they are pi\*\*ed at you (Phil)

Interestingly in this excerpt he initially remains within his 'tough guy' framework, holding onto his position on the bus. However, having himself then introduced into the imagined scenario 'loud black guys', he moves towards a more racialised construction of risk as he goes onto follow the

recourse of the others i.e. moves, which he justifies by implying that loud Black guys will 'shank' (stab)<sup>16</sup> you.

Train travel can present a more fearful experience as passengers tend to be in confined spaces and opportunities to exit them are restricted (Tulloch, 2000, pp. 461-463) In the main the younger interviewees hardly ever travelled by train, and even less of them claimed that they had travelled without parents. In most of the accounts that were presented, the number of passengers was the key indicator when it came to managing the risk. Felicity stated:

(3) Umm (3) I don't like personally being on a train in an empty (1). I don't like being on a train like ummm (3) by myself with say like a few people I'm always hoping to get on a busy carriage and stuff and I (2) I don't know it's umm (2) I don't to tend to feel unsafe a lot of the time (Felicity)

Brian shared the same view:

*RB What about a train? What would you be looking for?*  
(6) erm, (3) I would erm (2) sit in a quite full carriage (Brian)

Although he was quick to point out that if it was full of teenagers he would not get on. David too wants a busy carriage, but again with conditions:

I would get on a carriage with older people not like teenagers (David)

Peter also sought out the busy carriage as he states it was a significant contributing factor towards his personal safety:

Er (.hh) I don't normally travel by train, but on an empty carriage you are more likely to get mugged. (Peter)

Despite being considered a more dangerous way to travel (Department of Transport, 2010), the introduction of free bus fares have helped overcome barriers to travel for many, especially socially excluded groups (Siraut & Gay,

<sup>16</sup> Prison slang (Carpenter, 2003)

2009). It is difficult to establish the young people's views on travelling by train, as the use of them was so infrequent. Cost, convenience and free bus travel are the major factors that make the bus the transport of choice for most young Londoners (Jones, et al., 2012).

*There are Gangsters in 'da' Park – Constructing the teenager group*

Perhaps the most prominent theme that materialised in the interviews in terms of risk was the constructed fear of teenagers and 'hoodies'. Whilst no one definitive description of what is meant by a teenager was established, the common suggestion was 15-17. Phil described his teenage group as:

“Too cool to hang out with mum and dad, too young to go to the pub, so what do we do? Hang around the street and f\*\*\* everyone off (laughs)” (Phil).

By far the most common constructions of 'the teenagers group' by the young people are in terms of threat, violence, risk and danger. Constructing the teenage delinquent not only as a perceived violent risk to their peers, but also to society as a whole in terms of 'folk devils', 'moral panics' and social break down, has a long theoretical and empirical basis within the academic literature (Thrasher, 1927; Cohen, 1972; Young, 1973; Cohen, 2002; McGhee, 2005; Pitts, 2008; Bhairam, 2009; Caudill, 2010). Ironically, none of the group, all of whom were yet to complete their teenage years, had anything truly positive to say about the 'teenager'. Phil's point of view perhaps sums up the general feeling in the most appropriate way when he was asked about his views on teenagers:

“ ..... (Laughs) because one group that hates teenagers more than you lot (*adults*) (4) (.hhh) is (slowly) other f\*\*\*ing teenagers (laughs)”(Phil)

In the majority of cases, the notion of teenage aggression and threat goes uncontested, this was despite none of the young people ever having been attacked or victimised by teenagers. They view the teenager, in particular the teenage male, as an entity to avoid at all costs as Felicity explains:

*RB So if you were to see a group of 15- 16 year olds hanging around what would your view then be?*

Well you probably (2) wouldn't want to look too much, but umm (3) obviously like they're probably up (1) like (2) there's no harm done with them but then (2) you've always got that little question in your head because of the stereotype of them (3) you'd like keep your distance and you wouldn't like look at them (laughs nervously) (Felicity)

Felicity, who is from a middleclass background, attends a private school, and describes her self as pretty 'streetwise', has never been the victim of violence. In this extract she provides an account of her feelings towards being confronted by a group of teenagers that she appears to have grounded within a stereotypical framework. She is unable to explain why she feels this from her own personal perspective, but later in this chapter she describes how she feels society's construction of teenagers have probably influenced her to construct a bias view. Elliot makes it very clear through a series of responses how he would feel if he saw a group of teenagers:

*RB What if you had a group of teenage boys and [you a group of them  
[I'd definitely stay  
away*

*RB That's interesting why [would you do that?*

[because usually, you see teenagers being  
N A U G H T Y, you know? Being ( )

*RB So would you be intimidated or scared by that?*

Umm (2), well yeah, really, I would , ummm (Elliot)

In this short response, he expresses concern that implies the very thought of teenagers worries him. His anxiety heightens as he goes on:

(3) well I would eh (2) I would just not go near them and I would just stay away (.hhh) (*anxious here? voice getting higher*) and not get

involved with any of them, I'd just stay away (.hhhh) (*more anxious*)  
(Elliot)

And finally .....

Well I just think it is really horrible, (1) quite scary (Elliot)

As will be shown later, gender does have some influence on the situation for these young people. Shirley, a 17-year-old Black girl from the more socio-economically challenged part of the Borough, Sandford, presents an interesting perspective on young black teenage girls, introducing the importance of appearances to increase their 'street' status:

Some of the people that think they are bad are only like that when they are with their friends yeah?

*RB Do you think you are at risk or potentially at risk from them?*

(2) Um yes, sometimes, yes, depends (1) (.hhh) What they're wearing, this is how I would know. (1) If it's a girl it depends how they have their hair, telling you yeah? Girls like, not bad yeah? But they think they are, they do their hair in a certain way and dress a certain way, same with boys (2). For girls yeah? this is going to sound so big yeah? 'coz I do it as well (.hh) they kinda slick their hair and they have slicked here (*Indicates to slick on her edges hair*) that's kind of our style but (.hhh) I use to have my hair all slicked here 'coz of my big bush and that people, like boys use to tell me I'm ghetto (*impoverished, neglected disadvantaged residential area of city*) and that.

*RB So the common theme here is the teenagers worry you?*

Yeah (Shirley)

This type of street culture has evolved through what Anderson describes as the 'Code of the Streets' and has become an important route in constructing and shaping the discourse of young people, irrespective of their class or social background (Anderson, 1999; Brezina, et al., 2004). Anderson explains that young people have to negotiate the two orientations of 'decent' and 'street' in order to find a balance between achieving the desired 'middle class' financial and social status, and 'survival' on the street. This is done through an accepted set of informal rules, 'the code', which govern interpersonal behaviours such as appearance, violence, respect and status

(Anderson, 2008, p. 82). It is through these concepts of appearance, culture and status, Shirley starts to align and construct the group of girls to a more defined teenage group. Easily recognised by their appearance and behaviour, an appearance that is designed to send a message and that message is one of belonging to a powerful group. In this extract, she highlights her own vulnerability from what she sees as a powerful group and her subsequent compliance by adapting her 'big hair'. She explains, that by leaving her afro natural, she exposed herself to being considered poor and neglected and thus not cool<sup>17</sup> (Pountain & Robins, 2000; Bird & Tapp, 2008), therefore laying herself open to intimidation or violence from this group. She goes on to explain how important this whole image is for young people in terms of recognition, respect and fear:

But clothing, boys baggy, big chains, have Rolex and that (.hh) girls (2) girls will have everything co-ordinated. So they have a pink top, pink socks, pink pumps (1) everything has to be kind of (3)  
*RB Is that a uniform, where's it come from?*  
(.hh) (2) I don't know, it comes from swagger, everyone talks about swagger and 'they're bad for wearing that' or something. Swagger's like your clothing, you wear (1) how you dress, how you co-ordinate everything (2) (.hhh) so yeah (Shirley)

Interestingly a theme starts to develop in her narrative of what makes a group more imposing and threatening. Clothing as a 'uniform' is dismissed for the more 'cool' label, namely 'swagger'<sup>18</sup>, which identifies the wearer as someone 'bad', powerful and accepted. Clothing and in particular a specific style of clothing has become important to all the young people in terms of identifying what they think constructs 'powerful' and 'respected' teenage

<sup>17</sup> The word "cool" may have originated in the U.S. jazz scene of the 1920s, but it captured a sense of originality and fashion that had long existed in various guises. It has been associated with generations of young people (see Pountain & Robins, 2000 and Bird & Trapp 2008 for deeper discussion)

<sup>18</sup> How one presents themselves to the world (Shirley) .To walk or behave in a very confident and arrogant or self-important way (*OED*)

groups (Hethorn, 1994, 1999; Hethorn & Kaiser, 1999). Even the school uniform has found its place in the discussions (Bodine, 2003).

As Pitts points out:

*“(Young gangs).... Appear to have a virtually obsessional preoccupation with status and respect. This is institutionalised into gang culture in the form of an elaborate non-verbal and clothing based etiquette, the breach of which can ‘get you killed’. And this preoccupation is spreading.”*

(Pitts, 2008, p. 92)

Grace, a 16-year-old Black girl, who comes from a very devout Christian background, emphasised the importance of ‘street’ style through the same narrative of appearance, which was also evident amongst her peers from the church, and whom she stressed did not ‘come from troubled backgrounds’. She highlights through her extended narrative that these symbolic fashion items, contribute towards her group and in particular the young Black men getting mistaken as violent teenagers:

Oh (2) Yeah definitely, you never hear good things about young people do you? You don’t often see when young people do things good, things that help people? Like I know lots of young people in my church who do lots of kind things, but you don’t read about that or see that on the news do you.

RB *Could that be though, that they are different in appearance and not perhaps newsworthy?*

(Laughs) what do you think they dress like? monks and nuns? (laughs again)

RB *(Laughing) No, but they don’t, I suppose dress like the ‘Violent’ teenagers you talked about*

(2) (Laughs loudly) That’s my point Mr Bhairam, they do (Grace)

Here she reinforces that appearance in terms of fashion is equally important to her group of young friends, as the group identified by Shirley. But that appearance comes at a cost, in particular to the young men, where they become viewed more widely as ‘dangerous young men’ because of the associative link made to violence and the style of clothes they choose. Grace

too then picks up the link in relation to a girls group she knows and how they seem to construct themselves within the group, be it mixed or just female.

Again, it highlights a desire to show a position of status, power and respect:

*RB Does the clothing affect how you look at them then?*

Yeah, but I know like the girls who hang with the Gangs, I am talking about the Black girls by the way, I don't know much about what the White girls do, they dress real sharp, you know? Relax their hair; wear very expensive clothes (3) it is all about image status and respect.

*RB You say just the Black girls?*

Well, yes, like I said I don't know about the White girls, but of course there are White girls who hang out with the Black group? You know? They are the same; they follow like the Black style (Grace)

Fashion has been at the heart of the construction of a young person's identity for generations, and through the contemporary narrative of fashion, one can also see the links to violence and risk. The smart turn out of Mods and Rockers in the 60's, the aggressive jeans, braces and Doctor Martens of the Skinhead movement in the 70's, and the bondage trousers, pins and spiked hair of the punk movement in the late 70's. Today, one particular item of clothing that has been constructed as an immediate indicator of 'danger' to nearly all the young people was the hooded sweatshirt or more commonly known as the 'hoodie'.

By the early 'noughties' in the UK, the hoodie had become directly politicised, symbolising the furtive menace of Britain's inner-city teenage population. In May 2005, it was banned by the Bluewater shopping centre in Kent and later by several schools in England and Wales. One teenager was even served with an ASBO banning him from wearing one for five years (Braddock, 2011). A brief search of the academic literature, using the search terms, 'hoodie, youth and violence' yielded over 1600 articles. Whilst it is hard to comprehend how a comfy, utilitarian item of clothing has become the

ultimate symbol of exclusion and menace (Braddock, 2011), Hall and Jefferson (2006) go some way to offer some suggestion. Arguing that by 'resistance through rituals' the hooded top is a distance away from the world of the office and has become symbolic of 'being up to no good', very much as the leather jacket was in the 50's and bondage trousers in the 70's (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, pp. xi-xii). This current study found no reason to suggest that young people, the main user of the garment, disagree with this construction. Gabrielle, aged 13 takes up the discussion:

It's also about people like, like to wear the hoodies, to portray like I'm bad looking, I'm wearing a hoodie, I must be scaring you. I don't think people made hoodies like to make you wear them like that, abuse the fact that they're fashionable clothing, yeah? They use it like a sort of weapon and they scare people with it. I can't explain it (laughs)  
(Gabrielle)

This extract demonstrates just how powerful the image of the hoodie has become in terms of young people constructing it as an indicator of risk. Gabrielle, like Braddock, constructs the duality of the garment, firstly as a simple piece of fashion clothing, and then goes on to underline it more sinisterly as a weapon. Winston, aged 13, also presents a sinister construction of the hoodie in a public social context:

If I see people in hoodies and their hands in their pockets following me (2), say I am going to the > corner shop and there's people following me and you turn around the corner and there's still people following you< you feel (2) really unsafe (Winston).

As does Katrina:

It is kind of freaky (2) when there's a whole load of people with hoodies on (Katrina)

Sarah draws upon a discourse of 'good' and 'evil' when comparing "hoodies" and "nice clothes":

(5) umm (2) er it's because of their looks (3) and (2) like (1) as um they um go on their bikes and BMX and stuff and they always have

their hoods up (3) umm but people like (3) eh it kind of shows me how safe they are by the way they dress (3) because people with hoodies and stuff like that (2) on and umm (2) don't seem very nice (2). People dress like (2) with nice clothes on and things like that (1) they seem kind of safe to me (2) (Sarah).

Yet when asked if she owned a hoodie, her response after a long pause repositioned her view constructing a more behavioural response that manifests itself when the garment is worn by certain people:

*RB Do you have a hoodie?*

Yees (laughs)

*RB So what does that make you then?*

(2) But (10) (.hhhhh) (10) Its eh the way they act (Sarah)

Gabrielle develops the discussion by addressing police attitudes towards

Black men in hoodies:

I don't think I'd be wearing my hood if it's not raining (3) coz I hate like (2) do you know, how they say, the police nowadays? My dad was like walking with his hood up (2) and one of the policemen approached him and like searched him, because they thought he had a weapon or something, because he was wearing a hoodie (2) that image makes it like (2) coz it's broad daylight, (2) makes you look suspicious. (Gabrielle)

Here she positions the discussion in the discourse of a racialised policing response which she constructs as either acceptable or normalised as the hoodie is being worn by someone who is 'suspicious' or up to no good. Police powers to stop and search are enshrined in Sec 1 Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and police activity is governed by Code A of the Codes of practice for the same act. Nowhere in the section relating to grounds for stop and search (Home Office, 1984, pp. 1-15) can any reference be found to wearing 'a hood up in broad day light'. Yet Gabrielle appears to have accepted the 'legitimised' grounds the police apparently used to stop her dad, based on his hood being up in daylight. She qualifies this by stating she would not wear her hood up if it was not raining, as if that would be wrong or

illegal. Winston too identifies the dangers of misconstrued behaviour when wearing a hood up:

*RB So what do you think adults would think of you with hoods up?  
Up to trouble and stuff, trouble (Winston)*

It is difficult to understand how this view has been constructed in the minds of young people without exploring some of the external influences on them. A frequent source of concern the young people raise is the disproportionate bad publicity teenagers receive in the media, as highlighted in Peter's response:

He was wearing a hood and everything that's probably what shaped my stereotype of these people er um (2) that I think have done the crime (hhhh) but another thing that makes me think that they look like that or act like that is (laughs) the media (2) er wherever you see like (2) news reports, they never show anything (4) apart from like young like (3) yobs as people call them.

*RB Are you suggesting that the media show young people in a negative light*

(Instantly) Yes, I do believe that (3) it's I feel they blame young people for a lot of problems (3) (.hhh) but it's not every young person (2) in the whole world is like that (1) (hhh) it's just like saying umm (2) er I can't think erm, it's just like they're stereotyping saying and blaming young people for everything (Peter).

Peter's response is powerful. He localises his argument to 'every young person' and argues that young people get the blame for everything wrong.

He goes on:

But another thing that makes me think that they look like that or act like that is (laughs) the media (2) er wherever you see like (2) news reports, they never show anything (4) apart from like young (3) yobs as people call them. (Peter)

Here he draws on media influenced discourse, where young people are described as 'yobs'

Grace shares a similar view, but localises her personal position more in the racialised discourse of Black youth:

*RB Do you think then, there is a bad perception of young people?*

Oh yes, especially young Black people, you only ever see bad things about young black people on the news and in the papers. People think we are all muggers and gangsters. But not just Black you know, when do you ever see a nice story about a young person (2) Umm I don't mean like where they are good at sport or music, but like where a young person does something good, you never see it. (2) Umm it's all negative, so people think that all young people are troublesome. My granddad once told me if you tell a dog it's bad enough times, it will eventually believe and become bad. (Grace)

It is interesting to note how she implies a warning in her final sentence by arguing that if a child is told it is bad enough times, it will eventually fulfil that philosophy.

Felicity, who is white middleclass, also shares this view:

Even on the news, you never see 'this young black kid did this today, which was really good'. You always see bad things about young people, you never really hear, like often in the news you get about one story, which is good and the rest start writing everybody off. But you never really hear good things about young people, only the bad things they've done and I think that's why the perception of young people comes across so badly. (Felicity)

In this excerpt Felicity shares the view of Grace, neither have met and are social poles apart, but she too challenges the discourse of 'young people are bad and are only seen as bad'. She suggests that it has now become normalised thinking. In her wider narrative, she explains that young people have been demonised to such an extent that the perception of young people to the wider public is that they are dangerous, a risk and are out of control, which once again resonates with Cohen's paradigm of folk devils and moral panic (Cohen, 1972, 2002). She then explains that her personal view of young people has been affected and framed by these external influences:

Umm normally they are like young adults 17, 18 but then you can't judge people because people think, like older people think that all young people are like so you shouldn't really but I like (2) it's just the way they come across (*Note Felicity was struggling to reconcile that she too stereotyped young people but RB intervened to remove her uncomfortable state*) (Felicity)

Here Felicity struggled to come to terms with her own prejudices towards young people, but was saved from the challenge by a poorly timed intervention by me. The intervention was wrong, as I had taken control; I ensured that I would not do so again for any future interviews as I felt I could have missed a crucial part of the narrative, but in fact did it once more when Phil became angry. However when she finished her interview she explained that she wanted to try and understand her views. She concluded that she felt it was perhaps a recognition that she was 'maturing' and was starting to construct the world from a more adult centred discourse. Interestingly, Shirley too had a similar 'epiphany' in her attitude, as she has got older:

I can admit yeah? When I was in year 10 (14-15) if I was on my bus yeah? If I was with friends I sit there like some bad girl and play my music out loud. But then one time (2) I saw these, I was on the bus with my friend and these other two girls were doing it and they looked soooo stupid (.hh) and I was thinking 'oh my god' to my friend is that how we look yeah? I went we got to stop doing this. I don't even know why we did it

*RB So one day you behaved in one way then one day you said 'Why am I doing that?'*

Yeah (Shirley)

*Violent Times, Violent Places – What really scares them ...*

Together with the data in Chapter 1, even the most casual search of the academic literature starts to present an understanding of why there is anxiety within young people about being in the presence of the teenage group (Newburn & Stanko, 1995; Berman, et al., 1996; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Welch, Price, & Yankey, 2002; Newburn & Souhami, 2005; Pitts, 2008). In his excellent study of the emergence of the armed youth gang, Pitts (2008) raises the broad issues that have contributed to a significant change in the face of youth crime. One noticeable facet in this change is the

increasing propensity to use violence as a mark of status, respect and territory. This was something that was very much at the forefront of the young people's views. For example Phil a 16-year-old Black youth states how he has constructed the world using the following simple statement:

These are dangerous times, you get me? (Phil)

He also makes it very clear what his position is and why:

*RB What kind of things make you feel unsafe*

Laughs - Big black guys, you (3) you don't wanna f\*\*\* with some of those black boys (laughs) they can be f\*\*\*ing dangerous. Umm (3) you only gotta read the paper they like stab each other up and all that (4) for nuffing you look at one the wrong way (.hhh) and he will shank you (Phil)

Phil enshrines his views in the discourse of the street gang, using gang colloquialisms such as 'shank' and 'stab each other up'. In his wider narrative and beyond he makes it clear that he wants to set himself apart from 'good boys' and align himself to this image of violence and respect, through the discourse of the tough street gangster<sup>19</sup>:

(4) (.hhhh) Look, I am a bit of a player right, the girls like me and I (laughs) well I've f\*\*\*ed about with some who are none too happy with me, (3) know what I mean? (laughs) (4) Look I don't wanna get married or nothing but (3) well erm I have needs (laughs) (Phil)

He goes on:

Ha (2) (.hhh) You f\*\*\* with a girl from someone else's area and their men f\*\*k with you (.hhh)

*RB Men?*

You know what I mean, other men like me? My age (3) ya get me? (*Phil is 16*)

*RB I do. So you're afraid to go to other areas in case you get attacked I ain't afraid of nuffing* (3) (.hhh) but these are dangerous times you get me? And if you can avoid getting a beating (2) or worse you don't go looking for it. (Phil)

<sup>19</sup> Phil displayed a lot of anger; he had been excluded from school and did not like authority. On a couple of occasions the interview was stopped so he could have a break. We spent some time before and after the interview talking, he was a very interesting individual who felt he never reached his potential because of authority, but his group of friends made him feel like he was something special – this resonated with Thrasher (Thrasher, 1927, pp. 12-13)

Violence and oppression in youth culture through the medium of music is extremely well documented in the literature (Greeson & Williams, 1986; Rosenbaum & Prinsky, 1987; Lawrence & Joyner, 1991; Kitwana, 1994; Johnson, et al., 1995; DuRant, et al., 1997; Rich, et al., 1998; Armstrong, 2001; Johnson & Cloonan, 2009). Grace highlights the wider discourse of Black youth violence and it's link to the music scene:

(4) Umm, I think there is like a culture with young Black boys, it's all about respect and where you are in the group, so they like have to prove themselves you know? I don't know really, there are lots of things on the TV and papers? You know about being cool and like well, I don't like the word, but Gangster (3) It's in their music and everything, it's wrong I think  
*RB Why? It is only music isn't it?*  
It fills their hearts with hate and violence (3) it should be love and peace (3). It gives them false hope (Grace)

The connection with youth gangs and drugs is also well documented in the literature (Blumstein, 1995b; Silverman, 1995; Curtis, 1997; Farrington, 1998; Howell & Decker, 1999; Hawkins, et al., 2000) and even those involved at street level dealing have extensive criminal careers and a penchant for violence (Pearson, et al., 2001). Through the lenses of socio economic improvement and extreme violence, Grace attempts to explain why she thinks that young men are attracted to this violent world:

All these like 'bad man' images (3) well; they can't all be Puff daddy or Jay Z can they? and well, I don't know, but drug dealers and stuff may make big money but I don't suppose they live very long to spend it do they? It's like even if they were the like top drug dealer or whatever, someone is going to want to take that title aren't they and I think that's serious business. You don't like say I'm moving in now 'bye', you kill the other person and take their position (Grace).

The interconnection between violence and status is also commented on by Phil; in this excerpt he explains how he terrorised a young man to raise his status in the hope to get sex with one of the girls in his group:

*RB What did you do?*

(5) Like I said (2) I'm not afraid (2) ummm but I aint't stupid. If some geezer thinks by slapping me (2) he'll get a bit of fanny then I'm going to be slapped (3) simple

*RB Has it happened before*

Kinda umm well once

*RB Did you get hurt*

Umm (4) (.hhh) Nah, (3) Umm (3) (.hhh) I did the slapping. It was when I was younger. We were hanging in the park smoking and shit. Some kid came through we were (3) umm like f\*\*\*ing about and loud (6) This kid came through (3) he was f\*\*\*ing scared so I like asked him for a fag (3). I felt really big (laughs) he didn't smoke, so I stood in front of him, he was bigger than me but he was shiiiiittting himself, so I just got louder. The girls were shouting and stuff (3) I slapped him around the head, not hard, but he went bright red (4) everyone laughed especially the girls. He looked so scared and I thought he was going to cry, I told him to f\*\*\* off and he ran off. I pretended to run after him (3) the girls laughed more and shouted at him (*there was a long pause here where he just stared at the floor*) (Phil)

Despite his tough exterior, during this narrative he appeared ashamed, as he explains:

Dya know I felt really bad, I can still see his face now, holding back the tears (8) AND I never got any fanny (laughs ... RB Comment: *cracks a joke - but this was not like his normal confident cheeky laugh again I think he was quite ashamed - broke for a cigarette*) (Phil)

Shirley, Phil and Grace come from what they personally describe as poor backgrounds, and their narratives both in and out of the interview context were filled with the violence of the street. Joel, a Tamil refugee, has also experienced personal violence from within his own London based Sri Lankan community:

I was in a chicken shop in *Lambeth*<sup>20</sup>, I had split from my cousin, a group of boys surrounded me and started pulling me about, I was scared but they didn't like take anything. They were asking me what I had, where I came from and what was I doing in their area.

*RB Do you think they would have hurt you*

Yes, they meant business, I ran and found my cousin and we drove away from Lambeth (Joel)

<sup>20</sup> The actual locations in Lambeth and subsequent references by other participants have been removed

Joel<sup>21</sup> is a confident young man, who had witnessed firsthand extreme violence in his home country of Sri Lanka before coming to London as a refugee. In his pre interview conversation, he shared some of the episodes that shaped the way he looked at the world. He had lost family members in violent events and ultimately becoming displaced, moving to the UK. He was asked how he compared safety between the two countries, his response proved interesting. He viewed the UK as 'probably a safer environment', but he stated he felt the authorities did not have a real understanding of what was happening at ground level, and that in his opinion, parts of London were 'really very unsafe for young people'. In his excerpt above he mentions, visiting Lambeth, a location many of the young people perceived as 'unsafe', he also mentioned visiting a friend in Hackney<sup>22</sup>:

When I got there I was lost so I asked a youth, 'is there a policeman around?' the youth laughed and said "Policeman? they don't come around here, they're too scared, they never come around here" (Joel)

Being away from their 'own' territory made them feel very susceptible to violence. Felicity for example describes her view of Lambeth:

Yeah (quietly), Lambeth, I get the vibe (1) it's very (1) very rough (1) yeah (laughs) like even if you drive through the high street, it's not even about the people, you see graffiti, like shops closed down, you see like loads and loads of shops closed down and it's like abandoned and you see people you wouldn't tend to (quietly) associate yourself with (Felicity)

Shirley has a similar view point, seeing parts of Lambeth as real 'no go areas' if one does not come from there:

*RB Do you go far from your area you talked about Lambeth how far would you go from where you live. Do you think you are risk or potentially at risk?*  
(2) Um yes, sometimes, yes

<sup>21</sup> Joel has been in the UK 4 years, his dream is to become a London policeman

<sup>22</sup> Actual Location removed

*RB If you went to a different part of London*

*Oh Yes* if I was to stay local I'd be fine but if I was to go to (Lambeth) or (Southwark<sup>23</sup>) certain areas where people hang out, yeah probably

*RB Why is that*

Because loads of my friends tell me like, if you go there, there's just loads of gangs that just hang around there. The sort of thing yeah? (.hhh) they take a spot and they say like that's our spot. If you don't know anyone through it, they're gonna get tough kinda thing (laughs) they don't have to have a reason

*RB It's territory?*

Huh Huh (Nods), I've gone through Lambeth the meet one person I go through Lambeth a lot I usually go to get my nails done, but the times I go, I go like during the day sort of like. I usually get up at 7 (morning) to get my nails done for like 10, just to be out of Lambeth safe on time (Laughs) (Shirley)

Yet despite these views, Lambeth has the 12<sup>th</sup> (out of 33) most expensive housing stock in London<sup>24</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explored how young people constructed 'concepts of risk'. In the first section it considered the accounts of where the young people tried to explain what the term 'safety' meant to them. It found that whilst none are able to express or summarise it in any simple format, they construct it in a way that is meaningful to them to manage. It then went onto see how young people construct risk set against a series of common themes. It found in many cases the external environment plays a significant role in their daily negotiations as they move from place to place. The effect of darkness cause them to identify risks, real or perceived, that affect their decision making in terms of where they went and what they did. Using the public transport network too is not a straightforward activity, as one would expect; the narratives reveal a consistent concern about travelling upstairs at the back of

<sup>23</sup> Actual Location removed

<sup>24</sup> UK price house Jan –March 2012 - [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in\\_depth/uk\\_house\\_prices/html/ah.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/uk_house_prices/html/ah.stm)

the bus. Drawing upon personal and anecdotal accounts, most of the young people construct upstairs as an area of risk and danger, associating it with 'bad' people. Some of the younger participants see the danger of being abducted by a stranger as a very real risk as they make their routine journeys to and from school or just being out and about. There may be no basis to this belief, but it none the less, was etched into their construction of risk.

The second half of the chapter touched on the more fearful aspects that affect the young people, it was clear from their accounts that the teenage group is seen as something to avoid. There were a number of explanations that were apparent, *the teenage group, the hoodie wearer, and the violent teenage gang*. They all draw upon common themes, such as violent offending, power, respect and territory together with institutional influences such as the media and the police which shape the perception of the teenager in the public domain and as such assisted many of the young people in how they positioned and constructed the teenager in the wider context. Taking these notions of risk and harm, the following chapter explores the young people's narratives and views of community safety provision together with the strategies they use to mitigate harm and increase their personal safety.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Dangerous Times, Dangerous Places – Constructing Strategies of Safety**

#### **4.1 Constructing Strategies of Safety**

In the last chapter it was established how young people constructed personal risk when negotiating the outside world on a day-to-day basis. What was revealed was that irrespective of age, gender, race or social standing, all of the young people assigned a high level of risk to their daily lives that was so far removed from the halcyon representations of the 60's childhood I experienced that is represented in narratives by authors such as Enid Blyton<sup>25</sup> (Rudd, 2000). For all of these young people, the world presents dangers and risks that they have to negotiate daily. This chapter will explore their views on community safety provision together with the strategies and safety concepts that the young people adopt to navigate their way through everyday activities.

This research was born out of my interest in the effectiveness of the government policy Every Child Matters. A policy that developed into an ideology that was to promote the safety, well-being and development of all young people; it is therefore at this point the chapter begins. It will then move on to examine and explore the concept of responsibilising safety and how the young people independently set strategies for themselves. This will include an examination of how they see group dynamics and how they mobilise themselves individually and collectively for protection. There will then follow

<sup>25</sup> English author who portrayed childhood in the UK as quintessentially white, middle-class and halcyon

an account of how they see gender roles and how this influences their risk management processes and finally we examine their views of ‘the authoritative guardians’, those agencies that are mandated to protect them such as the Government and the police.

#### **4.2 Negotiating Safety - Does EVERY Child REALLY Matter?**

When this research commenced, the central tenet of the proposal was underpinned by the government policy Every Child Matters and the subsequent action plans. Whilst this has been covered in some detail earlier in this thesis, in order to set the context it is useful recapitulate the key discussion points that underpinned the strategy, before hearing from the young people.

In early 2003 a landmark review by Lord Laming into the death of Victoria Climbié was presented to the government (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009b). Its impact was to take public sector thinking around the protection of young and vulnerable people to a new level. In September, following Laming’s report, New Labour published the Green paper entitled *Every Child Matters*. The emphasis to this strategy was very clear, with an overarching objective to the protection of young people primarily in the home, by using the multi-agency partnership frameworks that were now established. It was to be a wide and innovative approach to the well being of children and young people from birth to 19 with an aim for every (*emphasis added*) child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they needed to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

(HM Treasury, 2003b, p. 6)

Its publication together with the passage of the Children Act 2004 marked a significant watershed in the thinking about children's protective services in England.

However after a series of incidents and an increase in serious youth violence, the government soon acknowledged that the social landscape had significantly changed and that young people had become more noticeably at risk in a context that was wider than just in the home (Home Office, 1997; Metropolitan Police Authority, 2001; Home Office, 2008; Metropolitan Police Service, 2008, 2009b, 2009a; Home Office, 2010, 2011b, 2011a). Therefore this policy was 'upgraded' to include a series of action plans intended to take the protection of all young people to a new level. Not only in the home environment as traditional child protection strategies had previously dictated, but to the wider community such as public and open spaces, the public transport system or anywhere where young people could be at risk (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008c, pp. 11-30). This was to be achieved through a series of networks and activities involving youth engagement and a multi-agency framework (HM Treasury, 2003b, pp. 1-23).

The subsequent Children's Plan, built around the framework of ECM was intended to make England 'the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up' (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007, p. 3; 2009a, p. 5). But just how they were to implement and communicate the existence of this ambitious strategy and engage with the young people was unclear from the outset. The discussions that follow with the young people indicate that the policy has failed to reach a significant part of its target audience (HM Treasury, 2003b, pp. 13-14):

To Sarah:

*RB Have you heard of Every Child Matters, it's a policy by the government that I mentioned at the start*  
No (Sarah)

To Felicity

*RB Have you ever heard of the policy Every Child Matters?*  
(3) No (Felicity)

To Peter:

*RB Have you ever heard of Every Child Matters?*  
No actually, I haven't eh; the only time was in your letter (Peter)

To Shirley:

*RB have you ever heard of Every Child Matters?*  
No (*Shirley is studying to become a child counsellor/psychologist and much of her studies relate to children and young people*) (Shirley)

To Phil:

*RB Have you ever heard of Every Child Matters?*  
(4) (Rubbing chin) ... Yeah (nods) (.hhh) (Laughs) only kidding nah (Phil)

To Joel

*RB Have you ever heard of Every Child Matter?*  
Noooo? (Joel)

To Natalie:

*RB Do you think you benefit from Every Child Matters?*

No, don't think so, no, Most children don't what it is, what the policy is  
(Natalie)

To Katrina (after again explaining what Every Child Matters was):

I think they should use it, I don't think they are using it as much as  
they could do (Katrina)

To labour the point would be futile, but from the 21 young people interviewed  
only Winston had heard of Every Child Matters and he was not really sure  
what it meant to him. Perhaps Grace summed up the views of the young  
people most appropriately:

*RB Ok, Have you ever heard of the policy Every Child Matters? (3)*

No

*RB It is a Government policy that was designed to make young people  
safer*

Umm (2) no, never heard of it, (3) eh (2) doesn't really work does it?  
(Grace)

In the discussions that followed most of the interviews, the young people felt  
that there was a need for government to engage more meaningfully with  
young people. This is not a new concept and the failure to engage at a  
strategic level with young people is well documented in the literature  
(Matthews, Limb, & Percy-Smith, 1998; Valentine, 2000; McDowell, 2001;  
Skelton, 2001; Pain & Francis, 2003; Alderson & Morrow, 2006). The young  
people feel that an opportunity has perhaps been missed in the Every Child  
Matters strategy as Joel explains:

If they want to protect young people, they need to involve young  
people, not just blame them for everything. I think the government just  
don't trust us, and so perhaps it will never get better no matter how  
many young people die. (Joel)

In one sense it was disappointing, though perhaps not surprising given the literature, to discover such a dearth of knowledge and understanding from the young people about ECM, even though it was a strategy that was intended for them (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007, 2008c, 2009c, 2009a). On the other hand it was interesting to go on and discover that irrespective of their ages, backgrounds or gender, the young people have taken responsibility for managing their own safety.

### *Responsibilising Safety – Doing it our way*

Whilst ECM sought to be the champion of every young person's safety by using a multitude of government funded initiatives (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009c), the impact of the recent finance and austerity strategies throughout Europe (Arestis & Pelagidis, 2010; Leventi, et al., 2010; Fontana & Sawyer, 2011; Monastiriotis, 2011) are likely to result in a radical shift of thinking, leading more towards what Garland describes as a responsibilisation strategy (Garland, 2001, pp. 124-127). Instead of addressing crime in a direct fashion through the criminal justice process, the strategy of responsibilising safety seeks to tackle the problem by redistributing the task of crime and safety control by rendering other actors responsible (Garland, 2001, pp. 124-126; Kelly, 2001; Skinns, 2005; Hinds & Grabosky, 2008). Burchell (1993) argues that (neo) liberal practices of government 'offer' individuals, groups and communities new opportunities to participate 'actively' in various arenas of action 'to resolve the kind of issues hitherto held to be the responsibility of authorized governmental agencies' (Burchell, 1993, p. 29). Here, individuals, groups and communities are 'encouraged freely and rationally, to conduct themselves' (*ibid*). In this mix,

the actors are not only non-governmental partners, but also key individual actors such as property owners, residents and individual citizens (Garland, 2001, pp. 124-127). The interviews revealed evidence that young people are already responsabilising their own safety strategies, with little or no help or direction from elsewhere.

None of the young people reported ever having been the victim of a violent episode. Therefore in order to gauge during the interviews what response they would take if confronted by a precarious situation, they were presented with some hypothetical or 'imagined' scenarios involving an interaction with a group of unknown teenagers. Whilst few methodological papers exist on the use of the vignette technique within social research, what the available literature does clearly demonstrate is the ability of this technique to capture how meanings, beliefs, judgements and actions are situationally positioned (Barter & Renold, 2000, p. 308). Further evidence of the success of this technique is also documented elsewhere in the academic literature and was therefore felt to be an appropriate method to use in this study (Carroll, 1978; Finch, 1987; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Robinson & Clore, 2001). From the narratives that originated from these scenarios, it is evident that the young people have already constructed an armoury of tactical options to protect themselves in the event of problems, as Sally explains:

*RB Um Interesting so if you are walking along the road and you see a group of teenagers walking towards you quite a way away from you, what would you do?*

*(2) Umm (nervous laugh) I feel like running a mile. I get a bit scared (laughs) (2) I know it sounds stupid.*

*RB So would you keep walking towards them?*

*Noooooo!*

*RB What then?*

*I'd turn the other way*

*RB What if they pushed you*

Um (3) I'm sure er I've got like two choices, I'd either let them and they'd like go (3) hopefully (laughs) or I'd run but then they'd probably hurt me more (3) that's why I said I'd like stay there (Sally)

In this account, Sally constructs a strategic narrative, which provides her with two options, the first is to stand and take whatever they do to her, and the second is to run. Interestingly she constructs the opinion that if she was to run, the outcome is likely to be more severe than if she remained. In her wider narrative she was unable to explain how or why she had constructed that opinion, but was clear that she alone had taken the responsibility for making it:

*RB Why would you stay there? Were you advised by someone?*

No, I decided it myself (Sally)

Elliot too had a cognitively prepared similar strategy:

*RB If you were on your own and you got into trouble or were scared, what would you do or try to do, say if you were walking home from school and two or three teenage boys start shouting at you?*

I'd like umm (1) ignore them and just stay away

*RB what if it got really scary?*

(2) I would definitely run, sprint straight home and tell my mum (Elliot)

Again, Elliott states in his wider discussion, that he had prepared this response to danger himself, with no reference to internal or external influences such as police talks or parents. Grace provides a more pragmatic approach to her safety. Constructing a more instinctive discourse, she explained her response to the problem:

*RB You think safety?*

(2) I suppose yeah, but not like 'I must be safe' 'I must safe!' (laughs)

*RB But you do think in like a safety model?*

(2) Umm, uh uh, but I suppose we all do don't we? I mean we don't just move around randomly (3) like I don't walk in front of a car or try and cross a railway line. It's like (4) (laughs) I don't know (laughs) I just do it I suppose. (2) Common sense? Yeah I suppose common sense

*RB If you got into trouble and a group of mixed teenagers, boys and girls suddenly confront you, what would you do?*

Umm I'm not sure (2) I think I'd be scared. (3) Yes, I wouldn't do anything stupid, I'd give them what they wanted I think.

*RB So you would give up your property?*

Yes I would, things can be replaced, but I would not want to get hurt (Grace)

In these excerpts Grace constructs an instinctive based approach to her safety. To her, these strategies are simply 'common sense', a process which Aristotle defined as a higher-order perceptual capacity which unites and monitors our five senses (Gregoric, 2007). As the discussion broadened, Grace then returned to the importance of her religious faith explaining how that too played a big part in how she viewed her safety and protection:

*RB So what kind of things make you feel unsafe?*

Well (2) Umm it's hard to say, because I always feel like protected by God (laughs)

*RB So you always feel safer?*

Yeah kind of you know?

*RB I think so, you like have your faith and that protects you?*

Yes (2) in many ways, it is very spiritual (laughs) it's hard to explain (laughs)

*RB Ok, try and describe that to me*

Ummm (3) well like I have God in my heart and his love is all around, so I feel peaceful and safe, no matter what the danger. (Grace)

For balance, it is important to note that the discourse of faith and religion has had far reaching and powerful consequences throughout history including the killing of women tried as witches in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Sprenger & Summers, 1928) and the destruction and the devastation caused on 9/11 (Kean & Hamilton, 2004). The link to power, violence and oppression is evident in the academic literature (Aden, 2004; Ellens, 2007; May, 2008; Kraybill, 2010; Reimer, 2010) yet there is also a peaceful more harmonious, spiritual discourse that is can be found (Weigel, 1991; Alger, 2002; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Silberman, Higgins, & Dweck, 2005; Steinhauser, et al., 2006; McKiel, 2007; Smock, et al., 2009). It is through the latter that Grace appears to construct her sense of well-being. While she accepts that her

physical body is vulnerable to pain and suffering, she believes that nothing can harm her soul and spirit and to her:

..... that's the bit that matters (Grace)

The strategies the young people deploy do not solely involve them on their own and there is evidence, as will be shown, that they do work with others for help. However one of the most unexpected points worthy of mention that they introduced in a number of the discussions was the use of the payphone or call box as a means of communication in an emergency. In this modern era, the vast majority of adults (92%) carry a mobile phone (Ofcom, 2012). From the 21 involved in this sample, only two did not have one, but claimed they were getting them within weeks of their interviews. Yet despite this, most still had concerns about the lack of phone boxes. Brian was the first to pick up the point:

*RB How would you call the police then?*

If I go to the telephone box it's free or go into a shop?

*RB How many telephone boxes are there that you pass on your way home (lives about 2 miles from the school)*

(8) Err one, oh dear ....

*RB Do you think that's enough?*

No, there should be more!

*RB Would that make you feel safer?*

Yeah a lot!

The lack of phone boxes became a concern for a number of the young people as Sally and Sarah point out:

*RB How many telephone boxes are there on your way to and from school (journey is 2 miles)*

(2) er Two?

RB do you think that is enough

Er (2) no and they are right next to each other (Sally)

*RB How many payphones are there near you*

(5) Umm (3) I think there is one (both laugh)

*RB Do you think that's enough*

No!(Sarah)

Even Peter who is 17 and has a 9 mile each way journey to college, appeared taken aback when he realised the lack of phone boxes:

*RB Where is the nearest payphone (to the college)*

Up on the corner

*RB Do you pass many on the way home/to college (9 mile journey)*

Eh, no (4) I don't in fact that's (*the one on the corner*) is probably the only one, that's shocking (Peter)

Each of the young people has knowledge about the existence of pay phones, but in the case of Grace and Felicity something even more remarkable was revealed:

*RB What about a pay phone*

Umm, well yes, but umm you don't see them (4) in fact you don't do you?

*RB Have you ever used a pay phone*

No, never, to tell the truth I wouldn't know how to (laughs) (Grace)

*RB If you didn't have a mobile phone how would you contact the police?*

(3) Ask to borrow somebody else's, (4) there's never any phone boxes I think I know (2) uh one no two there's one in Reigate and one in Purley (*RB Comment: these locations are about 13 miles apart*) That's all I know of the phone boxes. I've never seen anyone use a pay phone before, I've seen them (payphones) I think I've seen about three, but I've never seen anyone making a phone call (Felicity)

British Telecom (BT) owns the vast majority of payphones in the UK. They claim that there are 63,000 payphones in the UK, which are primarily dispersed throughout inner city areas, there are very few in rural areas (British Telecom, 2012). However their long term strategy is to phase them out due to costs and lack of use, there are no future plans to invigorate or provide even a free emergency phone option (Bhairam, 2012).

Most of these young people refer to phone boxes in their narratives, nowhere in the academic literature could any commentary be found in relation to the use of telephone boxes/kiosks as a means of safety and whilst the

discussion of phone boxes caused a moment of light relief in many of the interviews, a more serious side was evident, a collective summary included:

- Back up if mobile phone was stolen
- Back up if there was no signal
- Back up in rural areas
- 999 is free (though most networks provide free emergency calls)
- Provides a sense of reassurance for young people and parents

We shall now look at the way they protect themselves on the public transport network.

*Clark Kent<sup>26</sup> drives our buses!*

Protective mechanisms are essential in extreme, life-threatening situations; but they are also essential in every day life (Graziano & Cooke, 2006). In Chapter 3 we saw how the young people construct the elements of risk when travelling on the public transport system. In this section we shall explore the strategies they construct to negate this risk together with the reasons that underpin those decisions. In order to provide some context, the following table shows the number of reported incidents on UK buses for 2006/2007.

<b>Crime Type</b>	<b>Total</b>
Homicide	5
Assaults Passengers	9,895
Assault on Staff	12,000
Robberies/Theft Person	25,000
Criminal Damage	81,000

Table 2: Number of reported crimes on UK Buses 2006/2007 (Department of Transport, 2010)

<sup>26</sup> Clark Kent (Superman) fictional character created in 1932 by Jerry Siegal and Joe Shushter,

All but one of the young people had stated in their narrative that if they were alone on a bus, they would sit downstairs. The reasons they provide do not differ considerably and in essence indicate that upstairs and in particular the back of the bus was a dangerous space to many of them, as Sarah explains:

*RB What about public transport, when you're not with your family do you use public transport*

I sometimes use the bus

*RB Where do you sit*

Um near the bus driver

*RB Would you sit upstairs*

No

*RB Why*

Because I feel that the bus driver cannot really see you, he can't really get out quickly if something happens, umm coz I've heard of stabbings and stuff but they are upstairs, because obviously the bus driver can't try and do something if they are all the way upstairs, (5) and you can't really see them properly umm upstairs (Sarah)

In this excerpt, Sarah constructs the bus driver as the protector of those that travel on the bus. She further constructs this 'superhero' as a man. Yet despite the levels of violence that bus drivers personally encounter (Kompier & Di Martino, 1995; Banner, 2005; Tse, Flin, & Mearns, 2006; Department of Transport, 2010) this is a theme that reoccurs with the other young people.

She continues:

*RB When you do sit upstairs, whereabouts do you sit?*

At the front

*RB Why not the back?*

Umm because the front is easier to get to the stairway to get down the stairs quickly and the back is also harder to see for the bus driver because I know there is a kind of mirror for the bus driver to see and that's at the front umm and I don't really like the back that much (Sarah)

In this excerpt Sarah constructs her safety strategy based on her surroundings and ability to remove herself from danger, much as will be seen in all their strategies. Sarah and the others appear to have constructed what Hediger describes as a flight zone. By using their active attention to their

surroundings and spatial cognition they appear to construct a margin of safety around themselves (Hediger, 1955). In her wider narrative, she states that she has never seen or experienced violence, yet she constructs the upstairs of a bus as a dangerous space, one to avoid and then constructs the bus driver as having some kind of immunity from the harm that she herself fears. By doing this she appears to construct bus travel as a managed risk with suitable protective measures such as escape routes and the driver, in this response she is not alone:

*RB If you were to go on a bus on your own how would you make yourself safe?*

Eh? (5) I would (2) sit down, yeah.

*RB Why is that?*

Eh (3) because (2) I ( ) I eh don't know know but (2) what eh I'm (1) nearer the driver and if something went wrong I'd feel safer he would step in. (Brian)

Brian also constructs the driver as a male protector who would 'step in' if trouble broke out. In the following excerpt David also constructs the bus driver as someone being ready to jump into action if the need arose. He begins by sharing an incident that occurred when he was on a journey, which, as he later explained, became the reason for him adopting his downstairs seating strategy:

*RB Have you ever been out when you've feel really unsafe*

(4) Erm I was out on a bus once (3) and then I heard something happening upstairs (2) and then a man walked down (3) er um and he looked a bit scary he started swearing and stuff (hhhh)

*RB Where do you sit on a bus?*

(5) Umm downstairs

*RB Why is that?*

(2) Umm (2) because if something happens upstairs (2) erm the bus driver has umm less time to get up there (David)

From these brief excerpts it is unclear what the young people think the bus driver will actually do in terms of intervention when they 'get there'. However,

it is apparent from their commentaries that they are confident that the driver will do something to intervene.

*RB Do you use trains?*

Err (2) yeah sometimes, but not a lot because they are expensive, so I use the bus more

*RB Where do you sit?*

Downstairs, normally near the driver (2) Umm, it is easier and if there is any trouble, the driver is near you to step in or you can just get off. (Grace)

Grace and Felicity, as we shall see, also see safety by being near the driver, so much so that when they travel on a bus, like Sarah and the others, they construct a safety plan that positions themselves close to driver and the exit.

Umm If I'm with my mum (2) I normally sit upstairs right at the front or downstairs > or round the back bit or if I'm on my own, I'll sit round where the bus driver is, right at the front or like the back bit ( ) Coz (3) If I'm at the front > if anything happens I can just go to the bus driver quickly or he can be sure of what is happening beside him so the you'll know nothing's happening and I'll know < (1) that I'm safe (Francesca)

Once again the driver is constructed as a man who will not only intervene, but from Francesca's view, has total control over her safety.

Katrina also constructs the superhero character, whom, like a coiled spring, is waiting to fly into action if there is a problem:

It depends where I'm going (2) If I'm going to Westshire Town Centre with my friend (2) then I sit at the top, because it's like a long journey and stuff but if I'm going into West Ferry then I sit at the bottom um (1) 'tut' either at the back (1) like the sort of middle or if I'm like on my own (.hh) I sit at the front because A) it's easier to get off I don't have to like run downstairs and eh B) I quite like sitting at the bottom because (2) because (.hh) you feel like more safe and stuff

*RB Is that because the driver is there?*

Yeah (2) he can stop anything or take their oyster away and stuff like that (Katrina)

With trains, the strategy is slightly different; in these circumstances it is an assessment of the appearance of the other passengers that dictate where the young people position themselves.

*RB What about the train, what would you be looking for when you got onto the carriage?*

(7) Someone who looks reasonable who er (2) looks like reasonable er who would like call the police for me if I were like (fades)

*RB Would you be happy with people my age ?*

Yeah, if they were like in suits

*RB so it's quite important what they look like?*

Uh Uh and also what they talk like (4) (giggles) a bit loud

*RB I've got jeans and a t-shirt but normally wear a suit. I wore jeans so I did not intimidate, yet if you saw me on a train like this, you wouldn't be comfortable?*

Well it's more likely that someone would get a job with a suit on, they'd be more careful; they won't have a criminal record (Sally)

While adults appear to take it for granted that appearances can be deceiving young people may not be able to understand such disassociations (Deak, 2006, p. 546). Here Sally demonstrates this by constructing her decision based purely upon the clothing that the other passengers wear. She associates and constructs the use of suits and 'proper speech' with safety and non-criminal behaviour. Whilst age was a relevant factor, for her it is more important how they dress and speak. Whether this is an appropriate strategy, is subject to debate. On the one hand as we shall see from the others, there is a kind of childlike logic that smartly dressed, well-spoken people, are responsible and therefore potentially safe. However on the other hand dressing smartly and speaking correctly are also some of the techniques that sexual predators deploy as part of the 'grooming' process (Ben-Yehuda, 2001; Mcalinden, 2006). Even so, Sarah too sought out what she has constructed as a safe image sharing some of Sally's views:

*RB If you were to travel on the train though, where would you sit?*

I would try to sit with people like people who are adults and children that I think look safe

*RB what does a safe adult look like then?*

Umm (2) umm I find umm safe adults look like they have children with them and umm eh? They seem to be smartly dressed

*RB What do you mean by smartly dressed?*

Sometimes in a suit ummm or just eh like nice jeans and a nice top rather than umm (1) trainers and track suit bottoms just sitting there umm just glaring at the floor and things (Sarah)

Here, Sarah also associates danger and safety with a specific style of dress, aligning her seating strategy upon the appearance of the other carriage users. However it is not just the younger participants that construct risk from appearance, as Felicity explains:

*RB We kind of touched on when you use the train. When you actually get on the train do you consciously look for a type of carriage?*

Yeah, like (2) as I said, (1) if there's two carriages and one is really busy everybody is sitting down, or one is really quiet if (2) a (1) a couple of teenagers are being noisy, you would tend to go to the busy one where there is less chance of trouble, so that you can remove yourself from the situation. But you wouldn't tend to go on a quiet carriage where there are only a few people there, because you don't know what they are like. Where as if there are more people (2) not only you feel safer, but also you're (2), I don't know what the word is (2) but yeah (laughs) (Felicity)

In this excerpt Felicity, justifies her choices in that noisy teenagers are more likely to cause trouble and therefore need to be avoided, even if it means going into a busy carriage with no seats.

This section primarily examined some of the lone strategies of self-protection that the participants deployed. This chapter will now explore how young people exploit the group situation in order to maximise protection for themselves and each other.

### *Safety in numbers – Being part of the Crowd*

Humans are social animals who work, play and defend together in highly interdependent groups and relationships (Neuberg & Cottrell, 2008, pp. 63-64). By joining together in coalitions and interacting with one another in interdependent ways, we are better able to acquire and protect critical resources and accomplish fundamental goals than by facing these

challenges alone (Campbell, 1982; Richerson & Boyd, 1995; Neuberg & Cottrell, 2008). Of the many common themes that the young people established, working together was perhaps the most powerful in terms of personal safety. In this section the young people provide their accounts of safety through the framework of group dynamics and gender roles.

I feel safe when I am with my friends, because I know if anything happens they're always there (2) umm to help and they can go and find help (1) err umm if anyone's in trouble. And I can help them if they're in trouble (Sarah)

In this excerpt Sarah constructs her safety through the discourse of a collective, where it would appear there is an expectation within the group that they will help each other in times of trouble. The essence of this narrative is underpinned by self-protection within the group though she does make reference of going outside the group to get help. Grace very rarely goes out on her own and relies quite heavily on the group environment for her well-being:

*RB Do you go out much on your own?*

Not really, no I tend to go out with my friends or family

*RB Do you feel safer in numbers then?*

Yeah, I think most people do, it makes sense doesn't it? I think in a group you are less likely to get trouble and you kind of help each other out if there is any problems, (2) I know we would. (Grace)

She continues:

Well it kinda depends? Like I do a lot of stuff with my church ya know? And I don't (3) umm, like the other girls I know, just hang about? (3) do ya understand? Not being funny, but my life is a little more structured than some of my school friends? Well (3) it's funny, well not funny, but I'm a Christian yeah, and most of the people I go around with are peaceful and generally happy (3) Ummm (3) we kind of always help each other? (Grace)

As can be seen Grace adopts a similar stance to Sarah, here once again she draws upon the peaceful spiritual effect of her faith and then she makes the link between this and the group she spends her spare time with. These too

are Christians, and in her narrative she constructs peace and happiness through the collective power of their friendship reinforced by faith. She also seems to recognise risk through the construct of 'just hanging around' and constructs the success of her well being within the context of having a meaningful structure.

The size of the group was not always quantified, and in many cases the numbers did not need to be big to provide that element of safety. With Deepak, it does not matter if there were actual friends present, just as long as there were people around:

I feel ok as well because there are people around to help me if there's something going on (Deepak)

Issues of children's personal safety and the risks and dangers they face in the course of their daily lives have become key social and parental concerns in the UK (Roberts, Smith, & Bryce, 1995). To many of the young people, their families are an extension to the concept of the protective friendship group who play a significant role in their safety:

I travel with my sister and somebody two doors down (*names*)

*RB So there is a group of you?*

Yes and (*names*) has a phone (1) (.hh) well, (1) (.hh) I just feel safe when my family's there, actually sometimes (2) I just don't (sighs)

*RB so would it be fair to say the thing that makes you feel safe is more your family?*

Yeah or my friends, much safer (.hhh)

Umm (.hhh) well I would feel quite alone and scared if I was on my own, but will feel much safer with my friends and family (Elliot)

Shirley constructs her family security slightly differently:

But if I didn't have my sisters and that, I would be vulnerable.

*RB What would you do if you didn't have your sisters and friends*

Laughs loudly

*RB Are they important to your safety*

Oh Yes, they probably are, but I'd say because of my mum, she's like a really tough person and it's like (3) I would have probably picked it up from her. I'm nice to everyone and some people say I'm too nice

umm (2) I'm too much of a push over, but if I have to I would stand my ground from what I've learnt from my mum (Shirley)

Parents and children draw on particular familial events in order to make sense of existing risk, and agree legitimate risk management strategies (Backett-Milburn & Harden, 2004, p. 433). In this excerpt Shirley constructs the family group not only as a coalition who would step in to protect her, but also one who significantly influence her responses in terms of how she manages her own safeguarding. The makeup of the group is also influential in how they go about managing risk; this was particularly noticeable among the female participants, as we shall see in the next section.

#### *Big Boys Don't Cry – The dynamics and functions of the mixed group*

Research on youth groups indicate that what young men and women do, tend to mirror and recreate particular gender divisions of power and normative heterosexuality and that youth groups are unmistakably a domain of masculine dominance, a domain that reflects the gender structures of power in society (Messerschmidt, 1993, pp. 88-89). The narratives of the young people are constructed with specific reference to these roles and responsibilities, whereby the boys are constructed as the powerful protectors of the girls.

Sarah provides an interesting insight:

*RB Do you think girls are more scared than boys?*

(4) Yeah

*RB Why do you think that?*

Because I think boys feel like, they're more like, they feel more muscular and they're always like ready but girls don't really have fights. Like, the boys do but they're always and they don't get scared that much but girls do because they don't normally fight and things like that

*RB Where do you think that idea comes from, it's interesting?*

I think it comes from the war, because they're always sent out to fight and the ladies always stayed there and had to do the umm the men's work they did before they went to fight (Sarah)

Whilst parents and relatives were historically the chief agents in the deployment of gender roles, they were actively supported by institutions such as doctors and educators to reinforce the position (Foucault, 1978, p. 110). Though just 11, Sarah constructs the role of protector, based upon the historical and institutional discourse of men going to war and constructing the role of women within the discourse of the economies of war (Elshtain, 1995; Offer, 1995; Rubin, 2000; Kessler-Harris, 2001; Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002; Acemoglu & Lyle, 2004). Mac an Ghail argues that heterosexuality is a highly fragile, socially constructed phenomenon and suggests that schools alongside other institutions attempt to regulate and reify sex/gender categories (Mac an Ghail, 1994, pp. 44-45). Picking up on the gender roles Sarah illuminates the basis for her construction:

*RB So at school, do you adopt gender roles?*

The girls do the cooking and the baking and the netball and then the boys do the rugby and the football and the contact things

*RB Do any of the boys do cooking?*

No (laughs)

*RB So it is still very much that role expectation?*

Yeah (Sarah)

In the way she has constructed the gender roles, Sarah provides evidence of Foucauldian discourse analysis, which is often associated with a concern to identify ideological and power effects of discourse. She reinforces Foucault's assertion that the way things are widely represented in society, brings with it implications for the way we treat people (Burr, 2003, pp. 17-18) in this example, the expected roles for girls and boys. There is a growing body of academic literature concerning the involvement of young women in violent crime, including gang affiliation (Batchelor, et al., 2001; Batchelor, 2005;

Brown & Lloyd, 2005; Ringrose, 2006; Batchelor, 2009; Feld, 2009). Just how real this is however is hard to gauge. Batchelor (2009, p. 399) explains how difficult it is to abstract the evidence for two key reasons, the first stems from establishing what constitutes a gang or gang member and secondly most of the qualitative research is carried out by male researchers on male gang members. Ringrose argues that when girls do feature in a 'mean girl' story it is through sensational incidences of isolated girl violence held up as a dangerous risk of uncontained feminine aggression. She states that girlhood is argued to remain carefully regulated, through class and race specific categories of femininity, which continue to produce normative and deviant girls (Ringrose, 2006, p. 406). Whereas Feld believes that a decrease in public tolerance to violence and anti social behaviour has resulted in the lowering of the threshold of law enforcement with a greater emphasis on proactive policing and aggressively addressing minor disorder. This in turn has resulted in an increase of young women offenders being charged with offences that would have previously been dealt with differently, such as a caution or a 'night in the cells' (Feld, 2009). Whilst these findings makes understanding the position of violent women quite challenging, the young people in this study felt that girls could be as violent as boys. Felicity also held the firm belief that boys performed a more protective function within the group:

*RB You touched on the gender stuff, but do you think that girls are more scared than boys?*

(4) I don't think more scared, but (2) Uh (quietly) (2) I don't know (.hhh). I don't know why you always, people always associate males as violent, because females can be violent (1) but (3) (quietly) I don't, don't know why, I literally don't know.

*RB Do the boys you associate with come across as more confident and braver?*

They always seem to get involved and stand up for people and the girls just tend to (2) take their distance. (Felicity)

Some of Felicity's constructions of safety within a mixed group sit deeply within her sub-conscious, as she explains:

*RB So when you are out there, do you make a conscious decision, even with a crowd, in terms of what route you take, if you were on foot, do you stick to main road?*

If I am with people, it depends which people, if I am with girls, like a small group of girls, we probably would

*RB Stick to a main road?*

Yeah, but if I am with a mixed group, or a group of guys then (1), I'd take what's ever easiest.

*RB Right, why the difference?*

(4) (.hhhh) I don't know, they come across tougher and that no one will mess with them. So you always feel a lot sss, yeah you feel safe if you are with guys than you do with girls because, though girls can be like stand up for themselves, they are not going to be as strong as males. But I don't like say 'Oh I am with guys, we want to go this way', we just do it (Felicity)

In this excerpt Felicity has constructed two strategies, differentiating between walking in a mixed group or an all girl group; in the mixed or male dominant group she appears to subconsciously trust the group's collective decision process, whereas with an all female group, she adopts a more conscious safety strategy.

In the following excerpt Shirley voices her concerns, as she points out that the boys are also at risk:

Yes sometimes, but if something finishes at like 12 or 1 something (2) I always get the boys to take me home. I don't hang around with thug boys; I hang around with respectable ones that will take you home and that. Say if there are three girls and three boys, they'll take the first girl home, they'll take the second one home, no matter where it is, then the last girl gets taken home by the boys. Then the boys take themselves, I kinda feel bad because they need to feel safe too, but they think it's better for us to go home. (Shirley)

Here she constructs boys as hegemonic males, who through the power conferred by accepted societal norms are constructed as the dominant group. She goes on to construct them as their natural protectors of the girls, a role that the boys appear to adopt without question (Gramsci, 1971; Connell, 1987; Donaldson, 1993; Messerschmidt, 1993; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Grace however reveals that this hegemonic role that some boys adopt is not always as it seems:

*RB So you think they don't get scared?*

Ummm (2) well, they do, but I think girls get more scared. (3) Well I also think that girls are more vulnerable and like I said boys are tougher.

*RB What, all boys?*

(3) No, I suppose not, (2) well, I know boys that have been bullied and stuff, (2) eh so no (3) But they do like, try to show they are not scared, like tough?

*RB Do you think then that some boys pretend to be tough*

Oh yes definitely, (2) I think they have to; otherwise they'd get picked on or bullied. So they have to show they are not scared and stuff.

*RB That's interesting, why do you think that?*

I just think that with all the gang stuff, young boys have to be tough (2) Umm like, well I am not sure really, but I think a lot of the young guys I know play the tough guy. Even they guys at the church and I know they are not like bad men. (Grace)

Grace was not alone with this view:

*RB Do you think that boys are less scared or they think they've got to show they're less scared?*

I think they've got to show they are less scared

*RB Why is that?*

Ummm (2) well, if they've got a girl with them I think the girl would expect that the boy would umm if someone came up to them, would be there to umm get them away and (2) I just feel like that's their role ummm (2) to be there umm to help you (girls) (Sarah)

Even Phil indicated to what is perhaps a more accurate account of the situation:

*RB Do you think men and women are so different when it comes to fear*

Yeah (3) like blokes don't or won't say they're afraid of anything even if they are (3). If they are at a right scary movie they don't admit it's scary

*RB Would you (laughs)*

Nooo!!! (Laughs) I don't want people to think I am a pussy (Phil)

In these excerpts the young people show that hegemonic masculinity is far from fixed and as Connell explains does not represent a certain type of man, but rather a way that men position themselves through discursive practices (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 842). As Connell asserts, hegemonic masculinity has multiple meanings, a point that some authors have offered as a criticism but that Wetherell and Edley take as a positive point of departure. They argue that men can move around multiple meanings according to their interactional needs and adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments (Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The construction of men as fearless protectors can be found among semiotic analytical findings from images as far back as the Palaeolithic era (Windels, 1949). The construction of the police too has been framed in a similar fashion, often portrayed as a 'Man's world' (Cooper, 2009; Rabe-Hemp, 2009) or as the 'brave thin blue line' fighting back the tide of violence (Graef & Gilbron, 1989; Emsley, 1996; Reiner, 2000). We shall now conclude this chapter with an exploration of how the young people see the role of the Police and Government in terms of making them feel safer.

*The Guardians – The Police and the Government*

It has already been established that the ECM framework has had no obvious impact upon any of the young people, and so therefore it is necessary to try and establish how the young people construct the response of the state provided services that are mandated to protect them. In a survey of attitudes toward young people and youth justice, a nationally represented sample was asked whether they thought ‘teenagers today are more respectful of authority than teenagers 20 years ago, less respectful or the same?’ (Newburn, 2007, p. 716) Well over four-fifths thought that they were less respectful than 20 years ago (Hough & Roberts, 2004). However, Norman (2009) concludes that many young people feel labelled, stereotyped and processed by the police (Norman, 2009, p. 375). She also reveals that young people feel vulnerable and that the police need to include more youth engagement strategies to make them feel safer and involved (Norman, 2009, p. 369). It was therefore against these backdrops that the young people’s views are examined.

Stanko (2009) reminds us that perception of police effectiveness, fairness of personal treatment, the level of police engagement with the community, and local people’s concerns about local disorder, have strong significant effects on ‘overall’ confidence (Stanko & Bradford, 2009, p. 322). The young people vary in how they construct their confidence in policing. Whilst generally performance is constructed as satisfactory, the interviews reveal other factors that have an impact upon their perception. Elliot constructs police performance as follows:

*RB Do you think police do enough to protect young people?*

Yes, definitely yes! (5) They are trying their best

*RB Is there anything else they can do?*

(1) Err not that I know of, no, coz I think they are trying their best and that's what counts (Elliot)

Being only 10, Elliot of course would not be familiar with the nuances of effective policing, but nonetheless, he constructs existing policing activity as effective. Felicity, constructs police performance as good, but argues that they are more effective in reacting to violent crime rather than preventing it:

Yeah, they don't tend to prevent them but they are good at responding to the crime. But (2) Umm I don't know how they could prevent it, because (2) yeah (Felicity)

In her broader narrative she expands on this by explaining that police are very good at responding to serious crime such as murder or riots. Her views are supported by the data. In 2010/11 the MPS had 135 homicides which was an increase of 15 on the previous year, however the detection rate was high at 93% (Metropolitan Police Authority, 2011a, p. 15).

Brian's response was simple:

*RB Do you think the police and Government do enough to protect you?*

Yeah (Brian)

However both Shirley and Grace, construct policing through a more racialised discourse:

*RB Do you think the police and the Government do enough to protect young people*

Umm (4) I don't know, 'coz like when people say that umm (2) (.hh) police officers are a snitch for the government I kinda think like I don't know if I think that. (Shirley)

*RB Do you think the police and the government do enough to make you feel safe?*

Ummm not Black people no, if I am honest, no they don't (3) and I'm not sure they can do enough to protect everyone. There are not enough police officers around, you never see them around much and I don't remember seeing one at night for a long time. Also (2) don't take this wrong Mr Bhairam, but they spend a lot of energy on Black

people. Like Ok, (3) I know I said that young Black men were killing each other, but not ALL, and to stop the violence they tend to pick on ALL young Black people (Grace).

In these excerpts Shirley and Grace construct the police as agents of the government who expend most of their energy targeting Black people rather than supporting them. In this and elsewhere in their narratives they construct young Black men as being at high risk to violence but construct police protective tactics as being hostile towards the Black community. This view is reminiscent of the tactics that police deployed to resolve violent street robbery in the 1980's, that led to the race riots in Brixton in 1981 (Scarman, 1981). The narratives from Shirley and Grace reflect the same concerns that Smith and Gray (1983) found 30 years earlier (Smith & Gray, 1983, pp. 321-326). Their construction of contemporary policing tactics is reflected within the academic literature. Despite the positive work that has been done post Stephen Lawrence in terms of diversity training, BME recruitment, and Race and Faith awareness programmes, police attitudes towards young Black people are sadly still to be found seriously wanting (Macpherson, 1999; Bland, Miller, & Quinton, 2000; Stone & Tuffin, 2000; Bowling, 2001; Bowling & Phillips, 2002; Phillips & Bowling, 2003; Foster, Newburn, & Souhami, 2005; Sharp & Atherton, 2007).

Since September 2000 to October 2011 the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has gone from a strength of 24,695 to 31,500 officers<sup>27</sup> (House of Commons, 2001; Metropolitan Police Authority, 2011b), however as the accounts of the young people unfold, they reveal a reoccurring theme:

<sup>27</sup> This is only police officers – however in addition to the 2011 figures are 5,500 Special Constables and 4,000 PCSOs

*RB Do the police and government do enough to protect young people?*

(4) Um (2) to an extent, I do see police roaming the streets and stuff. But there isn't enough. If you look on an estate there probably isn't enough in and around the estate. (Peter)

*RB Is that the view of you all? Do you think there are enough police officers?*

No (All - Group Discussion)

Umm (3) You don't really see many police officers (Sally)

Perceived low levels of police visibility are linked to police effectiveness, thus making an appropriate patrol function vital to ensuring reassurance and satisfaction (Bradford, Jackson, & Stanko, 2009, p. 35; Bradford, Stanko, & Jackson, 2009). It is apparent that police visibility and numbers are a real concern to the young people as Sarah explains:

*RB Lets go back to the police then, do you think they should walk everywhere, go in cars or what?*

(2) Well I think there should be some walking around so they can get at them quicker, so they don't have to get out of the cars and things like that. But some police should be in cars around like waiting to back people up if something starts like if there is fighting starting.

*RB When was the last time you saw a police officer walking?*

Umm (2) I think was (4) it was on (4) Friday (8 days prior to interview)

*RB Do you see them regularly?*

Yes because there is normally police officers near my school in case anything breaks out

*RB What about when you are at the park at a week-end?*

Yes sometimes but umm not umm all the time though

*RB Are these police officers or PCSO's?<sup>28</sup>*

PCSO's (Sarah)

Whilst there is no connection between Elliot, Peter and Sarah, their education establishments are in the same area and therefore it was useful to see whether they construct a similar perspective:

*RB With regards to policemen ....*

Ummmm

*RB ..... and community support officers, do you see a lot of them about?*

<sup>28</sup> Police Community Safety Officers – Non warranted front line patrol officers (PCSO.Com, 2012)

Umm (4) well (2) not loads, but sometimes I see one or two police support just walking around but (.hhh) but I've only seen two policemen (2) (.hh) once around (Location) but I've never seen a policeman again. (Elliot)

*RB How often do you see a uniformed Police Officer on foot*

Um about once maybe twice a week

*RB What kind of times do you see them?*

Er um it could be about 4pm to about 6pm

*RB What about the evenings have you seen many?*

Eh (2) erm what do you mean

*RB On Foot*

Er yeah (2) you do see some, but depends on how late you are out (Peter)

Their construct of 'regular patrols' was examined as part of the research process. Random observations were carried out in the locations they stated on approximately 16 occasions. These were at times ranging from 2pm-4pm, 4pm-6pm, 8am-9am. With the exception of one isolated period in February 2011 following a violent incident, a police officer or PCSO were only evident on three occasions (Bhairam Personal Journal).

Despite her earlier exertions, Sarah thinks that there are not enough police when she is out and about with friends:

*RB So do you think the police and the government do enough to make you feel safe*

Umm (5) um I think they do, but sometimes I don't feel there are enough people around, like police around and sometimes I see like two officers and they're like way over there when I'm way over here (Sarah)

Staying with her 'reactive' construct, Felicity explains that police are only evident when they know there is imminent risk, but at other times, they are simply not visible:

(2) Yeah in a way but um you never see like police around (3) in (Town Centre) as much (2). When the riots started before it all happened you had that perception there was loads, I was in *Westshire* the day before the riots, umm the day of the riots, this is in *Westshire*, there was police everywhere and you always feel safe because there's police there. But like when you are in a really busy place you

don't see one police, it's like they don't not they don't care but like they're not worried about it and if they get a warning then they are worried about it.

*RB So you don't think there is enough police visibility*

Yeah, if you see something happen, you couldn't run up and go and see a policeman, you have to call, because they won't be just nearby.

*RB When was the last time you saw a cop on his or her feet walking about?*

Not their feet, I hardly ever (2) see them (Felicity)

Gabrielle made it clear that she does not like the police, but she too thinks there are not enough to stem the flow of the violence that she sees occurring in her community:

I know we don't really like the police officers that much, but if it's to do with our safety (2) (.hhh). Look, there's too much knife crime around and (sad voice) it's not really stopping, there needs to be more police around yeah? Maybe next time it could be someone you know, yeah? (sad voice) and although you might be like "Oh I don't like the police" because I don't like them, because they are too um (2) eh too like (laughs) (3) but if you, you got to look out for your safety as well and if you've someone like, if someone that you knew died tomorrow because of a knife stabbing, yeah? You would wanted the police to like have been there to stop it yeah? (Gabrielle)

Phil too had expressed his dislike of the police, but empathised with the difficulties that officers face in their day to day routine:

(4) Kind of (.hh) They try but it's f\*\*\*ing dangerous ain't it? Like I said if you look in the papers everyone is stabbing everyone

*RB Well not everyone*

Look at the riots where were the f\*\*\*ing old bill? They did nothing (3) it's not like they're scared or shit, but they can't do f\*\*k all can they?

*RB What do you mean?*

Well if they arrest a group of Black men they get called racist don't they? (3) If they hit anyone they get taken to court. They can't win, I wouldn't do your f\*\*\*ing job mate! (Phil)

Finally, Shirley provides a more cynical construction for the lack of police visibility:

But they need to be in more places, sometimes I think police officers are scared themselves, I don't blame them (Shirley)

Reinforced as we've already seen by Joel's experience:

When I got there I was lost so I asked a youth, is there a policeman around, the youth laughed and said "Policeman? They don't come around here, they're too scared, they never come around here" (Joel).

The increase in the police numbers referred to earlier set against the lack of visibility that the young people raise as concern, throws a question mark around the effective tasking of policing asset, which is beyond the scope of this study. However as a practitioner, the fact that their construction of personal safety is without much reference to the police, is a cause for concern.

Political apathy and lack of engagement with politics among young people can be linked to the feeling that there is little differences between the parties (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007, p. 127). In a survey on the run up to the 2005 general election only 48% 11-21 year olds stated they trusted government to make laws that ensure people are treated fairly whatever their background, and just 37% 18-24 year olds actually voted (Haste, 2005, pp. 2-8). In this study, the young people's view on the government is somewhat limited but nonetheless reflective of these findings:

*RB So do you think the government are doing enough to stop the violence?*

No, they are worse than the police I think. Don't hear me wrong, I think the police do a good job, really, it's tough and lots of friends and stuff think so too. It's just that they perhaps focus too much on the wrong things, like stopping Black boys and stuff. But I don't really know what the Government do? I know they are looking at like sacking lots of police and stuff to save money. I think that is wrong, we do need the police or things could be bad (Grace)

*RB What about the government?*

Laughs (3) They're too busy lying to us and giving our f\*\*\*ing money away (4) They want to sack lots of cops don't they? And get rid of the army or something they don't care (Phil)

Peter also feels that the government are not doing enough and hints there is even an element of 'lip service' being paid:

*RB Do you think the government and public authorities do enough to protect young people?*

Well (4) er they do provide eh wardens to walk around in our estate and other estates to make sure nothing happens eh (2) nobody is doing anything they shouldn't be (2) but (2) other than that er no. Oh we've got a youth club to prevent people from hanging around.

*RB How good is that?*

Yuk! (hhh) I don't like it (laughs) actually apart from that they don't, they haven't done very much really. I mean they replaced all the lights to make it brighter but that still hasn't done much (Peter)

In their wider narratives the young people argue that the government don't really care and have no idea what is happening at grass roots level. Gabrielle launches quite a scathing attack on the current administration:

(Interrupts RB) I don't think that some of the Government mean it yeah? David Cameron just wants to lead his happy life yeah? He wants to have children and just be rich and stuff yeah? (2) He might just be doing this job yeah? But it's all like for the Camerons' and people like them, that's what I think (Gabrielle)

Felicity states that the government should be more proactive and give young people the chance to sell the positive side of being young:

*RB How about something that says not all young people are bad?*

Yeah because that's, yeah if they did that it would give the chance to young people to show what they are really like, because we always have that 'oh young people, they're up to no good'. But umm (2) if like (2) other generations see, yeah

*RB If you were asked then to get involved with a youth forum would you?*

(3) Yeah, because my opinions are probably, I don't know if they are the same as other peoples. But I have strong ones and I think it'll be really good, because if you see other people's opinions and you can see what other people think and then you can sort it out, like by what people think (Felicity)

Grace feels that the current government are simply out of touch and that they need to meaningfully engage with young people if they are to develop a real understanding of the problems:

*RB Do you think young people then should be more involved in politics, actually shaping the future of the country and being more consulted how things are done. Do you think you have a voice?*

No we don't, I think it's like talking to the police and stuff, the Government maybe should be trying to talk to the young people and see what they think, I am not sure about like politics and stuff, but just listen to young people more let them have a say

*RB If you were asked then to get involved with a youth forum?*

Yeah I probably would actually, and I think you'd find a lot of young people would if they thought they were going to be taken seriously (Grace)

Some of the young people display a willingness to be involved in the political arena, yet political engagement with young people seems to be continuing to decrease. With the evidence revealing that poor communication, political alienation and the lack of cues for engagement are factors that switch young people off and away from political involvement (White, Bruce, & Ritchie, 2000; Kimberlee, 2002; O'Toole, Marsh, & Jones, 2003; Henn, Weinstein, & Forrest, 2005; Sloam, 2007), just how to re-engage with them should be a matter of urgent political will.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we established that the young people have adapted to be relatively self-sufficient when it comes to protecting themselves from victimisation. They have constructed strategies that involve themselves, their friends and their families when interacting with the outside world in order to maximise their safety options. They manage travelling on public transport in a similar fashion, constructing bus drivers as 'superheroes' who 'leap' into action at the sign of any trouble, and have developed spatial strategies to maximise their safety. They also express concern at the lack of available public telephone boxes, inasmuch as that they feel they are an important safety feature, which if nothing else, provide a sense of reassurance. The young people feel that the police play an important role in safeguarding, though they appear to focus substantial energy on targeting young Black people. They also feel that there are simply not enough of them deployed in visible roles to provide the levels of reassurance and sense of safety the

young people crave for. Their view of government is negative, arguing that there is a general lack of engagement and care or understanding towards young people. The young people feel they have been constructed by the government and the media as problematic, rather than being an intrinsic part of any solutions. In summary, the young people come across as self sufficient, neither needing nor expecting very much from those that are mandated to protect them.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions and Reflection**

#### **5.1 Conclusive Findings**

The aim of this research was to explore young people's own perception of violence and safety when out and about in public spaces through their own personal discourse. Such an aim is shaped first and foremost by a conceptualisation of children and young people as active agents whose voices must be central to any attempt to develop an understanding of youth violence and safety (Gaskell, 2005, p. 261). From this perspective it is possible to understand young people's experiences of violence and victimisation, as active, but often silenced agents within their communities (Szybillo, et al., 1977; Kun, 1995; Maundeni, 2002; Gaskell, 2005, p. 261).

This chapter will begin by outlining the key findings of the study; it will then outline a range of conceptual contributions of the research before laying out a number of opportunities for further research. There will be a reflexive section outlining the research journey from the standpoint of a practitioner/researcher. Finally I will end with some concluding comments.

#### *Key Findings*

The research established that violent crime and personal safety in public spaces were areas of real concern for all of the young people and the overall consensus was that they felt that government policy or guardians did not do enough to protect them. Furthermore despite the wide age spread, they have constructed their own interpretations of safety, risk and vulnerabilities together with strategies of personal safety in the shadow of state

involvement. Drawing upon an analysis of their discourse, age differences did not impact significantly on the research outcomes, though the older participants did display a more experienced and reasoned narrative. However in support of previous findings, (Messerschmidt, 1993; Mac an Ghail, 1994; Macpherson, 1999; Stone & Tuffin, 2000; Bowling, 2001; Bowling & Phillips, 2002; Phillips & Bowling, 2003; Feld, 2009) race and gender did make a difference. It was felt that young Black people, particularly men, were singled out for police activity and media attention, being seen as a cause rather than potential victims of violent crime. Young men assumed the roles of protectors without question, and this was underpinned by the attitudes of the young women. Though it was felt that the young men were as susceptible to violence and therefore equally in need of protection. The research findings also supports existing literature in that the young people's concern over the threat of violence in public spaces was a very real one (Coleman & Team, 1985; Smith, 1987; Van der Wurff, Van Staaldunin, & Stringer, 1989; Herbert & Davidson, 1994) and that the risk of violence was a significant construction in evoking fear in the young people (Goodey, 1997; Pain, 2000; Pain & Francis, 2003; Gaskell, 2005) and led to a range of strategies when out in public spaces.

Their fear and perceptions to their personal safety were commonly linked to a number of thematical situations such as time of day, teenage groups, peer victimisation, travelling alone, travelling on public transport and the visibility and presence (or lack thereof) of protective guardians such as the police. Intertwined amongst these components can be found a complexity of links that they have built into their constructions as both the cause of and coping

strategies against personal violence, such as negotiating for respect, group & peer dynamics, territory and dress codes (Thrasher, 1927; Anderson, 1999; Mynard, Joseph, & Alexander, 2000; Brotherton & Barrios, 2004; Anderson, 2008; Pitts, 2008). Whilst the threat from teenage groups was the dominant factor for all the young people, the younger children, those under 11, also revealed a fear of being abducted by strangers. An awareness of spatial and temporal threats, brought about by design and deprivation factors supported the existing findings (Hillier, 1973; Pain, 1997; Bannister & Fyfe, 2001; Abdullah, et al., 2004). Open spaces such as parks, time of day, the top deck of buses, the lack of payphones or certain social housing estates were seen as spaces and opportunities of potential victimisation and were to be avoided especially when alone. The current research supported the hypothesis that fear and the perceptions of threat to personal safety are commonly linked by the vast majority of young people to the activities of groupings and gangs (Thrasher, 1927; Anderson, 1999; Gaskell, 2005; Pitts, 2008). The young people also identified that these groups work together through a series of accepted transactional codes, ethics, fashion and loyalties that appear to be wired within a framework of respect (Anderson, 1999; Brezina, et al., 2004; Pitts, 2008). Although violence was perceived to be central to their concerns, none of the young people had ever been subjected to such but nonetheless they continue to associate teenage groups with potential violent encounters. Whilst the general feeling was that young men were more likely to activate violent behaviour towards them, the young people also acknowledged that there was an increasing sense of violent and anti-social behaviour from teenage girls, which as discussed is also supported by the growing body of

research (Batchelor, et al., 2001; Batchelor, 2005; Brown & Lloyd, 2005; Ringrose, 2006; Batchelor, 2009; Feld, 2009; Berkout, Young, & Gross, 2011; Jones, 2011; S. Young, 2011). Appearances were an indicator of what they constructed as a threatening group. Whilst numbers were a significant factor, clothing such as the 'hoodie', or smart 'street' dress such as 'labelled' fashion wear also sent out a strong message of threat, confidence and respect to them.

Despite their concerns or rather further to their concerns all of the young people had cognitively devised safety strategies in one shape or form; the most common one was to move in groups with friends or families (Campbell, 1982; Richerson & Boyd, 1995; Cockburn, 2008; Neuberg & Cottrell, 2008). Avoidance was another key strategy, for example sitting downstairs on a bus or staying out of parks and quiet places after dark, were seen as significant ways to stay safe and avoid violent encounters. Interestingly the young people had constructed bus drivers as a significant means of protection when travelling by bus, portraying them as individuals who seemed immune from violence despite the previous findings (Kompier & Di Martino, 1995; Banner, 2005; Tse, et al., 2006; Department of Transport, 2010). These findings show that gender too played a significant role in their safety strategies. The girls felt much safer in the company of boys, who in turn readily adopted their role of protector. However the current research supported existing findings that quite often the boys had subconsciously adopted this hegemonic positioning through a socially constructed role expectation, rather than necessarily being willing actors (Donaldson, 1993; Messerschmidt, 1993; Mac an Ghail, 1994; Connell & Messerschmidt,

2005). Managing any potential situation was also a key way to avoid peer-victimisation (Gaskell, 2005), for example adapting one's self to be accepted by a high risk group by using tactics such as dress, speech, music and respect was very much in line with the existing research literature (Anderson, 1999; Brezina, et al., 2004; Anderson, 2008; Pitts, 2008).

The young people also revealed that they felt under valued and mistrusted by adults and in particular the media. They revealed this through a series of disclosures highlighting how they continue to be portrayed as wrong doers and as the cause for social breakdown (Schlesinger, et al., 1991; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1993a; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994; Jeffs & Smith, 1995; Garland, 2001; Cohen, 2002; Garland, 2008). As a result they feel that they have little or no currency in the political arena and therefore believe that until they become key actors in the processes, as a number of them desired, nothing will really change (Kimberlee, 2002; Henn, et al., 2005; Sloam, 2007). Interaction with the statutory services was also an issue for the young people, whilst they generally believed that the police were doing a good job, they felt that there was not enough visibility or presence where they were really needed. There was a mixed response in the debate surrounding 'foot versus mobile' patrolling, but they all wanted to see more police officers on foot for reassurance particularly in vulnerable areas such as parks, town centres and social housing estates. There was a substantial amount of concern from all the young people with regards to police interaction with young Black people, in particular young Black men. It was also perceived that officers were profiling 'gang membership' based on ethnicity, dress and location and were using these components as grounds to stop, search and

harass young Black people, resulting in the overwhelming disproportionately of activity against this group (Waddington, Stenson, & Don, 2004; Delsol & Shiner, 2006; Bowling & Phillips, 2007; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010). It was also felt that young Black people rarely received any positive comments in the wider media and through this negative discourse racialised stereotype constructionism was being reinforced (Giroux, 1998; Kidd-Hewitt, 2002; Saeed, 2007; Okoronkwo, 2008).

### *Conceptual Contributions of the Research*

One of the overarching assumptions of this research was that placing the narratives of young people central to the study of young people's lives perhaps provides the greatest insight into their lived experiences. Young people are commonly silenced regarding decisions that affect their day-to-day lives (Szybillo, et al., 1977; Kun, 1995; Maring, 1998; Boylan, 2005). Yet this research argued from the outset that incorporating young people's experiences and views was essential to developing and understanding the issues that affect them. It argued that within the context of youth violence and safety, young people are most commonly understood primarily as 'the problem'. There is often too little consideration of young people's experiences, views and role as potential, if not essential problem solvers to the issues. Running through the heart of this research is the exertion for the need to listen to and act upon the experiences of young people and use these experiences as a basis of theory and policy development (Valentine, 1996; Matthews, et al., 1998; Valentine, 2000; McDowell, 2001; Skelton, 2001; Pain & Francis, 2003; Alderson & Morrow, 2006).

The key conceptual contributions of this research are threefold. Firstly, this

research can add conceptual weight to existing understandings of youth safety models. Secondly, and where I believe the current research has most to offer conceptually, is through understanding experiences and developing policies of safety through the commentaries and views of the young people themselves. The relationship between violence, victimisation and safety is undoubtedly complex, but attempting to understand victimisation and safety in this way affords young people greater agency as expert commentators on their own lives. For example, the fact that bus drivers are seen as guardians by the young people, but not considered so by policy makers is a powerful point. Only when we consider safety in the eyes of young people can it be provided more effectively. It is through this link that I believe original and insightful ways of understanding young people's experiences can be and should be explored.

Finally it is important to highlight the methodological contributions of this research within the context of their personal discourses. Adopting an approach where young people are themselves viewed as experts and valuable for all their views set against the existing research, allows for a more dynamic use of methodological contributions. This research therefore offers perspectives on working with young people within schools, youth groups or policy panels using structured, flexible and participatory tools.

### *Future Research*

There are potentially three main areas that this study has highlighted as important for future research. Firstly, is the issue of involving young people more pro-actively in policy and decision making. Whilst there are some pockets of good practice to show the effectiveness of using young people as

advocates for policy making (Morrow, 1999; Macintosh, et al., 2003; Stafford, et al., 2003; Tisdall & Davis, 2004; Roberts, 2006), there appears to be little evaluation of how effective it is or how it can be improved upon. Linked to this is the issue of 'respect. The term 'respect' itself has become common currency in social policy processes, the media, and is frequently cited as a significant concern for young people by young people (Valentine, 1999; Lister, et al., 2003; Gaskell, 2005; Pitts, 2008; Geldard & Geldard, 2009; Alderson & Morrow, 2011). Therefore there is pressing need to understand what 'respect' means to young people and how the term can best be converted into meaningful activity, that involves and promotes young people into roles that helps them feel they are contributing and not hindering social policies. Intertwined with this is the continued work to de-alienate young people, especially young Black men. Finally the research has established that young people feel increasingly anxious about their own personal safety. However it is accepted that this was a small sample from an area that whilst rich in diversity and socio-economic demographics, may not be reflective of the UK as a whole. Therefore a larger research study involving more of the country would be beneficial to establish a broader picture.

## **5.2 Implications for Practice**

The development from 'pure' theory based to practice-based epistemology is one of the main challenges for the Professional Doctorate (Scott, et al., 2004; Neumann, 2005). One of the key questions academics are now beginning to ask is just how Professional Doctorates are supporting the epistemology of practice? (Lee, Brennan, & Green, 2009, pp. 284-285). Overlaying this

concept upon this research paper, I now wish to provide a framework for some future practice guidance that has derived from the findings.

Whilst there were a number of significant concerns raised by the young people, three of the major concerns they raised included safety on the bus network, safety in open spaces and fear after dark. Noticeably, these are also of considerable priority and concern to the Mayors Office of London (Greater London Authority, 2010, pp. 5-6). I therefore propose to focus on these three key areas:

## **Transport**

### *What needs addressing?*

- Audit of crime problem – identify the problem routes and real extent of the problem
- Young peoples perceptions and views
- Types of buses that have reduced levels crime – single or double deck
- Staffing on buses
- Policing on ‘hot spot’ buses

### *Obstacles*

- Finance and Resources
- Governance (Police or TfL?)
- Analysis

### *Agencies*

- Police (Safer Transport Command)

- Transport for London (TfL)
- Young People

#### *Implications for Police*

- Displacement of crime
- Financial Budgeting
- Resourcing
- Governance and Leadership
- Ethical processes – Stop and Search, infringing on the rights of young people

#### *Implications for Partner Agencies*

- Cost – realigning bus routes, possibly changing buses on ‘hot spot’ routes, staffing.
- Ethical processes – Infringing on the rights of young people
- Validating the importance of the role of the crew

### **Open Spaces and Fear after Dark**

#### *What needs addressing?*

- Audit of crime problem – identify the real extent of the problem
- Young peoples perceptions and views – Where are the problem areas? Not all crime is reported and therefore perceived problem areas are currently incapable of being mapped or secured
- Appropriate levels of security - Phone boxes, CCTV, Lighting, Contact Help Points (as used on London Underground)
- Policing or Warden Patrols in ‘hot spot’ areas - mapped or perceived

### *Obstacles*

- Finance and Resources
- Governance – Who leads Police or Partner Agency
- Joined up analysis – Crime or deprivation impact (Broken windows research)

### *Agencies*

- Police
- ACPO Crime Prevention Lead
- Local Authorities
- Young People
- BT or Phone companies

### *Implications for Police*

- Displacement of crime
- Financial Budgeting
- Resourcing
- Governance and Leadership
- Ethical processes – Stop and Search, infringing on the rights of young people

### *Implications for Partner Agencies*

- Cost – CCTV coverage, lighting
- Ethical processes – Infringing on the rights of young people
- Providing safe open spaces for young people to frequent

## Commentary

At a time where austerity measures are having a significant impact upon the provision of safety to the community, the need for law enforcement and partner agencies to work closer and smarter has never been more pressing. The sharing of services and resources can only prove to be beneficial to all and it is this level of joined up partnership thinking that is likely to have the most effective impact (Carley, 2000; McManus & Mullett, 2001). The police service, the Mayors Office, TfL and Local Authorities are already working together to drive down crime on the public transport system, public spaces and reduce the fear of crime. However it is unclear from the research and experience just how focused or directed this partnership is aligned. By sharing this current research with the MPS, The Mayors Office and TfL through the strategic partnership network, it will be able to inform tactical and strategic decisions based upon the views from the young people. By doing so it will enlighten practitioners in terms of what concerns young people, how young people want to be treated and how young people want to be involved.

It will also be an ideal springboard to embed a working partnership with young people at the heart of the discussion and driving future safety policy, a policy that in essence, affects and impacts upon them on a daily basis. I therefore propose that I will take steps to share these findings with the relevant agencies in the form of an executive summary, a series of presentations and personal briefings to key senior strategic partners through the strategic network.

### **5.3 Research Reflection – *Looking through the mirror glass***

It is hard to believe that the research has come to an end. Over the past three years the concept of young people's views and activities on personal safety has been a significant part of my life. As a policing practitioner with over 27 years experience and a parent for almost 17 years, I thought I knew something about young people; after all I had even been one myself! In my police service I have been closely linked to a number of high profile investigations involving young people including more recently, the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) for the serious London Disorders. The research and my experiences have made me realise just how disenfranchised young people really feel. As part of the research I have read a considerable amount of literature that highlights just how disenfranchised and controlled young people feel, but I now have the added component of the personal narratives and interactions with a group of young people. Much of the conversations we had outside the research process revealed them as bright, keen individuals who really seemed to care. This was irrespective of their race, gender or social class. It was through these same issues that made me wonder what influences my presence, biases, methodology and decision making has had on the overall research and professional practice (Bryman, 2008, p. 698).

As professional practitioner and an academic researcher with a strong interest in public safety, the research process was an enlightening experience. From the outset I was aware that I might encounter some difficulties engaging with the young people. I am after all, a middle-aged man, who holds a position of authority, in a profession that has historically

been linked to oppressing the communities that a significant number of my sample belonged to (Scarman, 1981; Macpherson, 1999).

I was also acutely aware that my position in terms of 'power' was a precarious one and that I needed to demonstrate respect and dignity not only to each of my narrators, but in fact to those that were in 'their environment' if I was to expect any in return.

As I arrived at each establishment it was amazing how much of an outsider I felt. Dressed casually to make my narrators feel at ease, I didn't fit into the context of any of the venues at all. All the interviews conducted on school premises were conducted in either the pupil's common rooms or their classrooms. I was older than most of the staff, but without a suit, I felt I lacked status or position with all whom I encountered. This only changed when I produced formal identification at each reception in the shape of a shiny warrant card with the words 'Metropolitan Police', 'Police Officer' and 'Detective Chief Inspector' emblazoned thereon. One such encounter was interesting and is worthy of comment. The receptionist a White woman, did a double take at the warrant card and said "Oooh, you don't look like a Detective Chief Inspector". "Really?" I replied smiling, "What does one look like?" "Eh well older, like Morse"<sup>29</sup>. As a then 49-year-old DCI with 27 years police service from a minority background, this was a stark reminder that even in 21<sup>st</sup> century "multi-cultural Britain", there are still very fixed stereotypical images and expectations of where people fit into societies hierarchal framework. This had a two-fold affect on me; firstly in the eyes of

<sup>29</sup> Chief Inspector Morse – A fictitious TV detective created by the author Colin Dexter and played by the late John Thaw a White actor who was mid 40s when he started the series.

some, I actually didn't have the powerful image in terms of presence that one might expect from a label such as 'DCI' and secondly and more importantly, I needed to ensure that I was aware of and manage any fixed ideas, stereotypes or pre-conceptions I had in terms of categorising the young people when I met them, if I was to successfully avoid falling into a similar pit.

It is important to note at this point of reflection, that in the 27 years as police officer, I have sensed a rising questioning of police legitimacy, especially from young people. This is also highlighted in some of the literature (Reiner, 2000; Carr, Napolitano, & Keating, 2007; Smith, 2007; Hinds, 2009), and even taking out the wide body of research literature relating to police/youth conflict, recent events such as the university fees demonstrations and the London disorders illustrate that a significant number of young people will no longer be pacified simply by the presence of the police. I therefore needed to accept and respect that some of the young people will 'tell it as it is' which indeed they did.

It would be misleading to declare I did not allow my own feelings to creep into the process on some occasions. For example in part of her account, Felicity became rather uncomfortable coming to terms with her own judgemental views on teenagers. Rather than let her 'ride the storm' I intervened, as I felt sorry for her. This in effect let her off the hook in acknowledging that as she got older, she too was starting to form opinions similar to those she had criticised. There were occasions too, where Phil became extremely angry with the 'establishment'. Again rather than let him confront his demons, I intervened to ease his pain.

My experience with those young people was a remarkable one. It was amazing to see how even the youngest children had points of view they put across very effectively. Though it was not empirically proven in this study, I felt that I shared MacDonald's (2008) experience in that none of them were at all stifled by my presence, age or status and showed particular resolve and resilience in managing me and the process. I was initially a little disappointed that I was unable to conduct narrative interviews, but upon reflection, the semi-structured technique allowed me to build the important rapport with the young people (Morison, et al., 2000; Wilson & Powell, 2001; Irwin & Johnson, 2005), which I think in turn put them at ease, allowed them to be expressive and developed a mutual level of trust and harmonious understanding between researcher and narrator.

### **Concluding Comments**

For the past five years, this professional doctorate has been my friend, my enemy and my constant companion and now as it draws to its end I'd like to conclude with some reflection on the impact my studies has had upon me as an individual and practitioner. It is almost impossible for the researcher to transcend the power relations and I concede that my views of young people when I was young policeman have altered beyond all recognition as my career now nears its end. I now understand that my armoury of solutions in the workplace comes not only from training courses or books that I have read, but in essence are made up from the experiences and challenges I have confronted in my 27 years service. I now understand that I am bound to an epistemology of practice (Raelin, 2007, p. 504) a nexus between work-based and classroom-based learning, which I am neither able to fully explain

or describe (Schon, 1983). During the research process, I began to recognise that these were the same processes being used by the young people to deal with the problems they discussed. They construct the world from their learning, experiences and surrounding environments in the same way the practitioner develops his skills. As I reflect back on 27 years of policing, I am beginning to question how would I have been as a practitioner had I not studied to this high level. My biases and prejudices, opinions and responses, attitudes and empathy have all been re-shaped by the thousands of hours I have committed to study since I started my first degree in 1996. I have developed a greater understanding of the complexities and dynamics policing entails. I am now more aware of the impact my professional presence can have on a situation and perhaps more importantly on an individual's life.

It is on a poignant and rather ironic note that I write these final lines. Yesterday evening at about 9.45pm Kevin Ssali; a 14-year-old boy, was stabbed to death as he got off a number 202 bus in Lee, South London. To me, this acts as solemn reminder that irrespective of what strategies they may deploy, young people are vulnerable and are in need of adequate protection from such harm by those who have promised to provide it.

The young people in this study showed me just how important it is to give all young people a voice. They are not mere commodities of parents, or things to confront and challenge. They are living organisms that formulate valid views and opinions at an age younger than most of us realise and they should be encouraged and presented with a forum to express those views so that they can in fact actively influence the policies that are intended for them.



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## Appendix One

### Letter to Participants and Parents

**Research Project: To find out how safe young people feel & if they think that there is adequate provision to keep them safe.**

My name is Robin Bhairam, I am part-time research student with the University of Portsmouth and a full time Police Officer with the Metropolitan Police Service. I would like to invite you participate in a research study that is part of a Professional Doctorate in Criminal Justice with the University of Portsmouth. In this study I am solely acting in my capacity as a research student.

#### **About the Research Project**

The Children Act 2004 secured Royal Assent in November 2004. The act was the legislative spine on which the British Government proposed to build their reforms of children's services with an overarching aim to improve the well being of young people. Part of this proposal established a joint framework of operation for public service agencies such as the police, social services, health and local authorities, which was entitled *Every Child Matters*. This framework contained five key aims and outcomes, which were:

- Be healthy
  - Stay Safe
  - Enjoy and Achieve
  - Make a positive contribution
  - Achieve economic well – being
- 
- The age range for the *Every Child Matters* policy is 0-19. You fit into this age range and that is why you have been chosen.
  - This project is designed to examine how young people view their world from within this framework, particularly around being safe. In addition, I am interested in establishing through these accounts how those views and opinions were formed and how each young person thinks the future, may look like.
  - The interviews will use a special method called the 'narrative method': rather than firing questions at you, I will instead ask you to tell me how you safe you feel when you are out alone or with friends. I will also ask you to tell me if you feel the Government are doing enough to make you feel safe. You may want to talk about particular experiences which you feel are significant, and these experiences may span a number of years.
  - I hope that the research will be interesting and informative for all the young people who take part. I also plan to pass on the findings to a number of policy-makers and I hope that the findings about young people's experiences will influence future policy decisions, which concern parents.

## **The Interview**

- It is up to you how long you want to talk for, what you want to talk about and where you would like to do the interview. You can stop the interview at any time without giving me a reason and there is no set time which the interview should last.
- During this interview you may have another person present should you wish, if you are 14 or under I would expect an appropriate adult to be present.
- I will not ask you any questions that are not based on what you have already chosen to tell me – in those instances, I may ask you to expand a little more or to illustrate with an example. In such cases, you do not have to expand or illustrate if you do not want to.
- Everything you tell me will be confidential – no one will be told that you have participated or what you have said. However, if you reveal something which suggests that either you or somebody else is at risk of immediate harm then I cannot guarantee confidentiality; I will stop the interview and seek advice from my research supervisor.
- The data from the interviews will be stored securely and written up in a way which ensures that your specific case will not be identifiable in the report. I will send you a summary of the findings once the research is complete.

## **How to contact me.....**

Robin Bhairam  
Address supplied – Removed for sanitisation

*You can contact me any time over the next 6 months if you have any questions or queries concerning the research. If you do contact me and I am not available, I will return your message discreetly.*

## **If you have any further concerns....**

Should you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Amanda Holt who is supervising of this research

Dr. Amanda Holt  
Senior Lecturer in Criminal Psychology  
Institute of Criminal Justice Studies  
University of Portsmouth  
Ravelin House  
Museum Road  
Portsmouth  
PO1 2QQ  
Details Removed for sanitisation

Appendix Two  
Consent Form

*Please tick all boxes and sign below.*

I am aware that I will be asked to talk about my experiences of how safe I feel when I am out alone or with friends and whether I think the Government do enough to protect all young people from harm.

The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose and procedures of the research and the possible risks involved.

I understand that any confidential information will be seen only by the researcher and will not be revealed to anyone else, although I am aware that this may not apply if I suggest either a risk of harm or involvement in criminal activity.

I am aware that all data will be anonymised

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any time without having to give a reason or my rights being affected.

I agree to take part in this research which is looking at the experiences of young people in terms of how safe they feel and their views on the Government's contribution to keeping young people safe.

**Name and Age** (please print)

.....

**Signed**

.....

**Date**.....

**Name (Adult)** (please print)

.....

Signed

.....

Date.....

**Researcher** (please print)

.....

Signed.....

Date

.....

## Appendix Three

### Transcription Symbols

- (5) The number in brackets indicates time gap in seconds.
- (.) Indicates Pause
- .hh Indicates speaker in breath – the more h's the longer the in-breath
- hh Indicates speaker out breath – the more h's the longer the out-breath
- (( )) Non-verbal activity for example ((*banging sound*))
- ( ) Empty parentheses indicates unclear word
- Under Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis
- CAPITALS Indicate a section of speech noticeably louder
- >< 'More than' and 'less than' indicate they are talking quicker

(Atkinson & Heritage, 1984)