GANGS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE,
THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

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For my children: Leon Esimi, Adjoba Esimi, Ebela Esimi and Ayekaba Esimi

For my wife: Mame Aya Gifty Cudjoe

Every single letter that I typed symbolises a second that I lost to spend next to you and with you.

<u>SELF-ANNIHILATION</u>

Oppression, lack of determination,
Obsession with petty wealth acquisition
Lack of future, our abundant ammunition
Pride, love, unity and peace, are now in extinction

Gunfight in my doorstep
Alcohol, drugs, another prince stabbed to death
Gangs that own nothing not even their soul
Tribal shottas, dreaming to control the world

Now my brothers become bloods and dogs
Now my sisters become bitches and whores
Our young men want to become Gs and thugs
And our young women dream with pre-nubs
Our elders have no time for educating us through folktale
Spending their time in betting shops and brothels
And our grannies have no more healing hands
No soulfood, no more wise advice
Too many grandchildren, nieces, nephews and grownups to rise
Self-mutilation, spirit and soul evaporation
Lack of sense of humanity of my nation

A need of a quite space to think and breath
Reflect on where we going, can't see through this mist
Smoking powder going up to my brain
Wounded warrior, getting insane
Our mind does not have peace to heal
With beats, rhymes, percussion and rhythm always filled
And we think that these things our lives will tow
Our favourite channel becomes MTV Base; how low can you go?
Unconsciously or consciously embracing what we love the most
Crack-cocaine, hard drug straight to our brain in granule
Now they put its name to our favourite channel
And our beloved programme, YO MOMMA!! How suitable
For more of our series, you always can tune TROUBLE

It's time to stand up and understand
That our nation and our future are going down the drain
Time to comeback to the hey days
Where our souls and spirits were connected with our brain
Sisters and brothers, truthful human beings
Young men and young women, for their mind liberation fighting
Our elders are the pillars for our nation upbringing, powering and healing
It's time to recognise, we'll get nowhere without direction
Shipwreck during our passage, a passage affected by a 500-year storm
Acknowledging our Self-annihilation
The only blessed path to our future rhomb

Self-annihilation
Sequel from the times of the plantation
Actions initiated as response of our frustration
Soul starvation, poverty, insecurity, desperation
Community deterioration, unfocused retaliation
Gunfights, gossiping and disrespect
Down fall, we're crawling in the trench out of despair
We should learn to love ourselves as we used to do
If we mastered to hate one another
We definitely can relearn to love one another, I'm sure

Self-annihilation
Extermination of our nation
Foolishness is all you see
Make sure you do everything possible to change our destiny
Love, life, respect and unity
Steps for a better future, you're the key
Unify and fulfil your role, given to you by the Almighty

God's Sun ©
http://reversones.blogspot.com

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To Maria Perez Asensio (my *iaia)*. To Nsama, the one and only who with great kindness holds the sky over our heads please do not let it fall, just yet. In humility to the ancestors, who guided and guide me on this new journey of critical thinking and analyses.

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Abstract

Youth gangs and youth offending groups have been perceived as a growing threat in Britain since the early 1990s, especially in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow and London (Home Office, 2008). However, little is known about the reasons for their existence, their structure, their whereabouts, alliances, conflicts and criminal activities or why children and young people (C&YP) join gangs.

Goodhope, which is the anonymised name for the London Borough researched, has one of the highest rates of recorded violent gun crime offences and is part of Operation Trident, which deals with 'Black-on-Black' crime (Hales, 2005). This appears to be the result of inter-gang violence. The Metropolitan Police (2006) identified between 16 and 22 gangs within the Borough. This report explores the different criminological, developmental and sociological theories for their existence and gives an overview of some of the possible reasons why C&YP join gangs. Social commentators noticed that the majority of gang members in London, including Goodhope, are predominantly African-Caribbean (Bullock and Tilley, 2002); therefore, this report will explore the conceptual framework for this occurrence.

This small piece of research evaluates and assesses the impact, positive and negative, that Goodhope gangs have on C&YP, their families and their communities.

The research consisted of 17 semi-structured interviews with two gang members, four young, three parents of gang members, three parents from the community, six practitioners, a trans-generational (six people) focus group, and a (seventeen people) focus group with young adults. It further gathered information through an electronic questionnaire and through Youth Offending Team (YOT), Metropolitan Police (MPS) and Social Care Services (SCS) notes. For confidentiality purposes the Borough, the postcode, participants' names and gang names used have been anonymised.

The research was based on the postcode LZ12. It was found that the area, based on participants' experience, has a significant problem with gangs; their criminal activity mainly involved selling drugs, intimidation, knife and gun crime, inter-gang and sexual crime. The gangs are both risk and protective factors for C&YP living in the area.

Key findings include:

1. An estimated 93% of C&YP (5 to 24 year-olds) living within the LZ12 area do not belong to a gang
2. Gangs appear mainly in socio-deprived areas
3. Some young people living in this area join gangs for protection
4. For some young people gangs are both a protective factor and an important element of their identity
5. It is estimated that between 50% - 80% of C&YP between the age of 10 and 17 are indirectly affected by gangs
6. Goodhope needs to map the local gangs to ensure that effective strategies to reduce gang violence are designed

<u>Aim</u>

The overall aim of the research is to give an overview of the C&YP experiences of gangs in LZ12. It also aims to contribute to general knowledge about gangs in the UK. Finally, it aims to support the Borough of Goodhope by giving an overview of some of the experiences of their residents living in gang-affected areas, with the intention of allowing Goodhope to understand the seriousness of this matter for these communities and to derive some exit programmes and gang-reduction strategies.

<u>Objectives</u>

1. To contribute to UK knowledge around gangs

2. To explore the existence of gangs within the LZ12 area of Goodhope

3. To have an overview of their structure, whereabouts and numbers

4. To understand the positive and negative impact of gangs

5. To analyse the legal framework and duties of the Local Authority (LA)

6. To analyse Goodhope's strategies to tackle gangs

Chapter 1 Introduction

Agnes Sina-Inakoju was shot in the neck on 14th April 2010 while eating fast food with friends at Hoxton Chicken and Pizza. It is believed she was not affiliated to any gang (Metropolitan Police, 2010). Nevertheless, the perpetrators are believed to be from a local gang. Similarly, on 25th March 2010, Victoria Tube station in London was the scene of a fatal stabbing as about 10 to 15 teenagers aged between 15 and 16 years old and in school uniform chased a teenager and killed him in one of the busiest stations in Britain (BBC, 2010).

In the last decade gang-related fatal incidents have made the headlines almost weekly. This apparent new wave of violence and apparent new phenomenon of youth gangs has frightened society. The Borough researched, Goodhope, and in specific the area of LZ12, is seen as one of most gang-affected areas in the UK (Hales, 2005). For instance, the Goodhope local newspapers announced that there was a *"Gang War on the Streets"* last winter. This was only one of many times that gangs made the headlines; on this occasion it appears that more than 40 children from Ogun and Hulk estate cycled into Superman estate and launched a vicious attack as retaliation for a shoot out that occurred at the Ogun estate a few days earlier. The C&YP, who ranged from 13 to 16 years old, were wearing their distinctive colour bandanas at the moment of the attack where two people were stabbed (King, 2009).

This small piece of research intends to explore and give an overview of the reasons why this occurs. To do so, *Chapter 2* describes the history of the youth gangs in Britain. This history focuses, as well, on the appearance of youth gangs in the

Black community, as it is evidence that gang members in Goodhope and London in general are predominantly Black (the Centre for Social Justice, 2009). It then looks at the research that has been carried around this subject, such as Metropolitan Police (MPS, 2006) Pitts (2007 and 2008) and Hallsworth and Young (2004), which give us some understanding of the gang problem within the UK. It finishes by looking at the number of gangs in the UK and the understanding of the matter.

Chapter 3 describes the difficulty of designing strategies without a clear understanding of the definition of a gang. It is understood that definition is the first step that Goodhope or any other LA is recommended to take, in order to design a gang-reduction strategy. Based on the evidence gathered, when referring to gangs, this report will be generally referring to:

> *"A geographically street based collective of young people who*
>
> *are described either by themselves or and others as a group for*
>
> *who either collectively or individually crime and violence is part*
>
> *of their characteristic"* (Esimi, 2010)

Chapter 4 gives an overview of a range of different theories from psycho-developmental theories to traditional criminology theories *'the Chicago School'*. Here the research explores if the *socio-economic and Human Ecological* theories from *'the Chicago School'* are relevant. It tests: *social disorganisation*, *self-control, social control, zonal hypothesis* and other conceptual thoughts. The

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research then looks into a critical evaluation of *'the Chicago School'* by examining its limitations and modern studies and by critically analysing the concept of 'excluded communities' (Young, 2007). It finishes by exploring some theories of the oppressed, by looking into some theoretical understanding with regards to the so-called *'Black-on-Black crime'* and the theories of *'self-annihilation'* (Wilson, 1991; Freire, 1993).

The report then, in *Chapter 5*, describes the demographic and socio-economic background of the Borough and critically analyses if any of the theories suggested above are of any use to explain the high incidence of gangs in LZ12.

In *Chapter 6* the methodology is outlined. Here the reasons for qualitative research are explained. Evidence was gathered by interviewing C&YP, their families, community members and practitioners; two focus groups with residents and youths were further conducted. The findings are critically analysed in *Chapter 7*. This chapter draws on the structure, mapping, alliances and conflicts of 'five' LZ12's gangs (*Hulk, Ogun, Superman, Bonds and Starman*). The hypothesis of why C&YP join gangs is analysed in *Chapter 8*. This chapter looks also at the impact, positive and negative, that gangs have on C&YP, their families, and their communities and on their education. It then looks at cases within these gang-affected areas where C&YP are achieving and not involved in gangs. Finally, it looks at the role of girls within gangs as victims and perpetrators.

Chapter 9 looks at the legal framework and the general duty that Goodhope has to

safeguarding its C&YP. It then critically evaluates the services and strategies available to deal with crime reduction in Goodhope and these are put within the effectiveness of tackling gangs. To finalise this chapter, recommendations are given on the urgency of designing a tailored gang-reduction and exit strategy for Goodhope for the benefit of C&YP.

The thesis ends in *Chapter 10*, by critically analysing the process of the research. It looks at the strengths, limitations and learning outcomes from conducting primary research for the first time.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Most of the gang literature in the UK still concentrates around the similarities and differences between the youth gangs in the UK and US (Pitts, 2008; Palmer, 2009; Young *et al*, 2007), even though as early as 1966 David Downes stated that there were no evidence of American style *'youth gangs'* in the UK (Downes, 1966 in Pitts, 2008:2).

Evidence of gangs in Britain is documented as early as the year 1536, when homicide laws were updated to allow the charge of all gang members for a murder carried out by one of their peers (Hallsworth, 2002). However, real preoccupation around youth gangs in Britain started during the 1950s, when the media reported public concerns around Teddy Boys' gang fights, vandalism and robbery incidents (*Pearson 1983:18*; Osgerby 1998; Palmer, 2009). Their violence took Britain by surprise (Pearson 1983). During the sixties, gang-related activity and crime, especially violence, was perceived as a national problem due to the high level of crime that was being experienced in certain parts of London (Fyvel, 1963; Pearson 1983). We can find, also, hooligan gangs making it into the newspaper headlines (Osgerby, 1998).

Home Office (2008) explains that around 1980, the Pepperhill and Gooch gangs appeared in Manchester. These gangs emerged to control the drug market (mainly crack cocaine). At this point, connection between well-organised drug dealer gangs and vulnerable youth groups emerged. These gangs of vulnerable youth were used

to sell the drugs at street level; this fuelled gang-related violence, similar to that experienced today. During the same decade (1980-90) street gangs in the West Midlands evolved from drug gangs. The most notorious gangs were the Johnson Crew and the Burger Bar gang. Throughout 1990s, these gangs were associated with more violent actions (Ibis: 20-1). Contemporaneously, skinhead gangs made their appearance in Britain with inter gang based club fighting (Osgerby 1998). They appeared more structured and British youth culture diverted from the traditional gang view into a more organised and structured youth gang with crime as part of their identity (Osgerby, 1998). Finally, in Liverpool around 2002 and 2003, vicious gang-related violence (including shooting and murders) was commonplace as gangs emerged to control local drug markets (Home Office, 2008: 17-18).

2.1 Is it a Black thing?

Hagedorn (2007:16) argued that the biggest assumption of *'the Chicago School'* was that delinquency was not racialised. However, he later states that it may be a good *"starting point for the theoretical reconsideration of gangs in the global city"* (Hagedorn, 2007: 27). On this line, Bullock and Tilley (2002) exposed that gang members in London, Manchester and Birmingham are predominantly from Black Caribbean background; this view is also supported by MPS (2006), Pitts (2008) and other social commentators.

Tony Blair, in 2007, said that gangs are not a social-disorganisation, as '*the*

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Chicago School' would say, but rather, a problem of a section of the Black community. In his own words, he stated that it:

> *"is a problem amongst a section of the Black community …We need to stop thinking of this as a society that has gone wrong - it has not - but of specific groups that for specific reasons have gone outside of the proper lines of respect and good conduct." (Blair, 2007)*

How then did a section of the Black community become so disorganised? Palmer (2009) explains that during the Second World War, there was a massive wave of Black labour migrants from the Caribbean who settled in working class areas. Black mass migration was received with opposition and racism by the British society, especially the media, politicians and White neighbours. Racism, discrimination, verbal and physical attacks were part of new migrants' everyday life. Lack of police protection and their involvement in racist incidents accelerated the formation of organised Black youth groups to protect the community and to provide self-reliance structures (Mullard, 1973; Owusu, 2000; Bryan *et al*, 1985; Palmer, 2009). This is also in line with the comments received by different participants in the focus group. During the 70s and 80s the Black community organised into groups that appeared to be around music 'sound systems' (Owusu, 2000). Furthermore, the participants in the focus group of this research explained that even though they had different names and fights, this will rarely pass from a "bottle up or a punch up". This mainly used to be against racist White boys, who one of the participants described as Teddy Boys.

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Similarly, in the US, the *Group Revolutionary In Peace* (G.R.I.P. now CRIPs) and the *Black Liberation Over Oppressors Dictators* (BLOOD) (Rashidi, 2009) and other Black youth groups organised for the same self-defence purpose, a few years earlier (Rashidi, 2009; Pitts, 2008; Palmer, 2009; Williams: 9). However, evidence shows that these same youth organisations, by the late 90s in the UK and 15 years earlier in the US, started to change their ethos of protecting the community, some petty crime and harmonious coexistence into what Freire (1993:62) refers to as "*horizontal violence"* and killings with other local gangs due to their involvement in the now expanding and profitable crack cocaine market (Pitts, 2008; Palmer, 2009).

In the US, the government tackled hard on Rastafarians selling marijuana. This led to the expansion of the crack cocaine market and a new type of Jamaican drug dealer '*cooking cocaine'* (preparing crack); they were armed, more organised and extremely violent (McLagan, 2005:24). In the early 1990s a mass immigration of crack cocaine dealers from the US flocked into Bond and other areas around London as a result of the *War on Drugs* against the Yardies taking place in the US, bringing with them a rise in Black-on-Black crime unheard of and unseen before in the UK (Pitts, 2008: 80).

These backgrounds are a reflection of some reasons why there is high percentage of Black gang members and gang crime within the UK Black communities. Nevertheless, it fails to explain why gang members' characteristics vary across the

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country, as in Liverpool and Glasgow, gang members are predominantly White (Dawson, 2008, The Centre for Social Justice, 2009).

2.2 The current scene

The view of commander Steve Roberts from the MPS (in Blagrove, 2003) is that:

"I don't think that the problem is serious enough…I don't… see the need for a gang strategy in London …"

Nowadays, there is greater awareness around Organised Criminal Gangs (OCG) than before. British OCGs range from *'local teams of criminals engaged in drug dealing and acquisition crime, through to international gangs committing acts of large-scale importation, kidnap, fraud and corruption'* (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2009:1). The gang scene had brought younger gang members, postcode wars and internal rivalry (MPS, 2006; The Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Home Office, 2008; Pitts, 2008; Henry, 2010). In 2007 Tony Blair and Gordon Brown organised 'emergency summits' to find solutions to reduce the negative impact of gangs and gun crime (Daily Mail, 2007). This current chaotic gang situation was unknown within the UK context (Osgerby, 1998; Pitts, 2008, Palmer, 2009). The causes for their emergence and structure may be unknown and theoretically and fiercely debated by social commentators. However, the effects, especially the negative impact, are palpable and measurable.

In 2007, at least half of the 27 murders of young people perpetrated by young people in London were gang-related (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009:20). Furthermore, MPS (2007 in Pitts, 2008:4) states that in 2007, 28 young people were killed in 'gang related' murders. We learn as well, that in 2008 at least 26 youths died in London as a result of gang-related violence (Laville, 2008). In 2009 there were 14 teenagers assassinated just in London. Whilst this year (2010), counting the murder of Sofyen Ghailan on Thursday 25/03/2010 in broad daylight at Victoria Train Station, brings the number of youths murdered by gangs in London to a total of four (Wright *et al*, 2010).

Another matter unfolding from the current gang-related chaos is the use of firearms (Bullock and Tilley, 2002; Hales *et al*, 2005). Firearms crime among young people has largely been concentrated in the major conurbations. In London, 144 people aged under 20 were victims of Trident murders and shootings during 2006 and 2007. The average age of both Trident suspects and victims is 18. In 2007, 28% of Trident victims were under the age of 20 but in 2003 they comprised only 16% (Association of Chief Police Officers [ACPO], 2007:15).

With regards to the numbers of gangs, there are various projections and debates and one has to analyse those thoroughly. For instance, Channel 4 *Dispatches* in 2003 stated that the UK had an estimated 30,000 gangs in operation (Young, 2009:3), most of which, it should be assumed, would have been adult gangs, although this is not specified. However, we know that six percent of 10-19 year olds (boys and

girls) living in the UK, self-reported to be gang members (Sharp et al, 2004:39).

Blake (2007) reported a total of 257 gangs in London. Whilst The Metropolitan Police (MPS) in its 2005-2006 report *Pan-London Gang Survey* identified between 172 and 174 youth gangs in London (MPS, 2006; Pitts, 2008; Young, 2009). The outcome of this exhaustive report prompted a more focused approach on gang activity and helped to increase the MPS and its partners' knowledge around gangs. Their data are mainly based on police sources. Thus, the number of youth gangs projected in London [and elsewhere] is expected to be much higher (Streeter and Taylor, 2007).

Meanwhile, the police in 2008 identified 2,800 OCGs in England and Wales; this was three times the number of OCGs known to the United Kingdom Threat Assessment (UKTA) in the past. The same report states that Britain is *'ill-equipped to deal with the threat that they pose'* (O'Neill: 2009; HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2009:1). Most of those OCGs are adult gangs. However, a large number of youth gangs could fall under the OCG criteria, based on their criminal activities and characteristics which include *'local teams of criminals engaged in drug dealing and acquisitive crime ... kidnap, fraud and corruption'* as described by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (2009:1) and evidenced by Pitts (2008) and based on the findings exposed later in this report. The disparity in the number of youth gangs reflects the lack of consensus on the definition of what constitutes a gang.

Chapter 3 War of Semantics (Defining gangs)

During my interview with him, Dr (Lez) Williams Henry explained the difficulties in achieving a common ground and stated arguably, that, "*the most famous gang in the UK is the Gang of Four",* meaning the Social Democrat Party (SDP) formed on 26/03/1981.

Gang, thus, appears to be difficult to define. Definition is based on the *structure, durability, territoriality and criminality* of the group. Currently there are two main emerging schools studying this subject in the UK. John Pitts and Suzella Palmer, see most street based youth gangs as part of a bigger and global drug market, with clear structure, whilst Simon Hallsworth and Tara Young, on the other hand, see most of the youth gangs as a peer group with criminality as part of their adolescent process (Hallsworth and Young et al, 2007; Pitts, 2008; Palmer, 2009).

3.1 So what is a gang?

The Victim Support London (VSL) (VSL, 2006), states that there is no clear consensus on the definition of a gang (either from researchers or research participants themselves). VSL preferred to use the term *neighbourhood 'collectives'*, which refers to *crews*, *posses* and *gangs*. It is in these *'collectives'* context, VSL argues, that the media and design of policy see the rise of young people, aged between 10-16 year olds, that are engaging in crime (ibid: 9). On the same line, *Hales et al (2006)*

findings showed that even though half of the participants were identified by the police as gang members, the participants insisted that they were not. Most of them indicated that they had been part of a *'group or collective'* and were able to identify some other gangs/groups, with which they had *beef* (rivalry). However, some conceded that they were conscious that outsiders might have perceived them to be a gang (ibid: 29). This uncertainty leaves practitioners and academics with a bogus understanding of what a gang is. As a practitioner-researcher, it was difficult to research gangs, as everyone had different perceptions of what constitutes a gang. It was observed during the research that participants who were known to be gang members denied this.

There had been various attempts to establish a definition for the UK, (*for instance Bullock and Tilley, 2002: 23 or Pitts, 2007:13*). The current definitions being adapted in the UK focus on the *criminality, durability, territoriality* and *structure.* Currently there are two main definitions and typologies of gangs used in the UK: Hallsworth and Young (2005) and The Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy MMAGS (Home Office, 2008) *(see figures 3.1 and 3.2 respectively).*

Fig3.1Hallsworth & Young (2005) Interpreting Collective Delinquency in the UK
Peer Group: Relatively small, unorganised and transient groups composed of peers who share the same space and a common history. A small focus, offering safety in numbers and physical backup. Conflicts at this level will be localised and time-limited. Crime will be mostly non-serious in nature and not integral to the identity of the group. Typically comprised of individuals who knew each other from school and who had grown up in the same neighbourhood.
Associates: People who were known to each other but not close friends, sharing spaces such as estates or colleges. Periodically engage in low-level criminality. Individuals may be drawn into violent conflict by association.

Criminal Crew/Street gangs:
Can form and evolve for a host of social, familial, extra familial and cognitive reasons. Relatively durable, predominantly street based groups who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, crime and violence make up an integral part of their identity, all members of the gang will be engaged in crime. The crew/gang will give themselves a group name. The opportunity to commit crime for illicit economic gain may be one reason, but not necessarily the prime reason for membership. Activities can vary such as controlling local drug markets. Some members may conduct armed robberies and other offences. Can become involved in disputes with rival crews over drug market activity, but more generally rivalries encompass various levels of conflict, including personal disputes that spilt over into group violence. Guns can be used for instrumental reasons or to settle even the most minor personal argument.

Organised crime networks/Crime firms:
Crime firms are essentially groups of criminals coming together to engage in illicit economic activity for personal gain. Crime is their 'occupation.' Almost always includes a degree of drug market participation. Guns are used instrumentally e.g. market enforcement, defensive uses and offensive 'takeovers'. Members may be involved in quasi-legitimate enterprises such as door security.

Figure 3.2 MMAGS (in Home Office, 2008:23)
<u>**A gang:**</u> A group of three or more people who have a distinct identity (e.g. a name or badge/emblem) and commit general criminal or anti-social behaviour as part of that identity. This group uses (or is reasonably suspected of using) firearms, or the threat of firearms, when carrying out these offences.
<u>**A gang member:**</u> Someone who has identified themselves as being a member of a gang (as above), e.g. through verbal statements, tattoos, correspondence or graffiti. This identity is corroborated by police, partner agencies or community information.
<u>**A gang associate:**</u> Someone who offends with gang members (as above); or who is associated – by police, partner agencies or community information – with gang members. It also includes someone who has displayed, through conduct or behaviour, a specific desire or intent to become a member of a gang

 Nevertheless, Bullock and Tilley (2002: 23) explained that:

> "*The definition of gangs is problematic… In one sense almost all who*

belong to informal groups might be deemed to be 'gang' members"

Definition of gang is the first step towards the design of a gang strategy to tackle the impact of gangs (Pitts, 2008; Home Office, 2008). The MPS (2006), and many of MPS's partners including Youth Offending Teams, currently use Hallsworth and Young (2004) definition for gangs (Streeter and Taylor, 2007; Pitts, 2008; MPS, 2006). *(See figure 3)*

Figure 3.3 Hallsworth and Young (2004:12-13)
A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity

This is the definition that was used for our research as a starting point. Nevertheless, most of the participants explained that depending on their level of membership, gang members might not be involved in crime. Thus, some contradictions were devised on this definition. To understand this, we need to look into the reasons why children join gangs. We find the scenario presented by Pritchard (2008)*,* where C&YP join or create gangs through friends to have fun, socialise and commit petty crime and then it becomes a serious enterprise. On the other hand, we have the next step, the reluctant gangsters as discussed by Pitts (2007), Heale (2008) and Walsh (2005).

We found that LZ12's gangs are formed by young people and young adults who

joint for different reasons and in different levels; this made Hallsworth and Young

(2004) definition inappropriate on the preamble of my analysis.

Figure 3.4 This is an adaptation from Rashidi (2009), based on evidence gathered
Wannabe: C or YP that wants to be part of his local gang. He will do whatever he is asked to do or he will commit terrible offences or crimes in order to get noticed by the selected gang and once he is in, he will fight to make his way up quickly.
False Claimer: C or YP that lives in the local area. He uses the name of the gang to gain respect, mainly within the school and he is in danger of being punished for this by the real gang members.
Gotta be (reluctant gangster): C or YP that lives in a gang-affected council estate. He may feel forced to join the gang for different reasons: *relative already in the gang, protection from neighbouring gangs* and *protection from his own council estate counterparts*. Normally used to commit petty crime, as a drug delivery-boy (*runner*), to hide weapons and to ensure safety in number in case of battle.
True Banger: Real gang member. Includes*, Wannabe, Gotta be and Hardcore*. Does not commit crime necessarily but is seen by his fellow gang members and recognised by others as having a pivotal role
Hardcore: C&YP that does not care for consequences. He will be the hit man, the one that burns your mother's house and the one that will *shank* (stab) someone in broad daylight without remorse or second thoughts. He may be known and respected by different local gangs and he may be able to engage and disengage as he pleases.
Bystander: C or YP who do not belong to a gang, they normally are associated irregularly with gang-members, normally blood-related or acquaintance. When fights erupt, they are the most vulnerable. It is reported that 54% of the victims in the US fall under this category (Rashidi, 2009).
Tiny: 6-12 year olds. Mainly used to carry drugs, hide weapons. They are true bangers and are known to carry knives and engage in criminal and violent activities.

3.2 The definition

Through the participants' own definitions of gangs, a more suitable definition for

the context of Goodhope was designed. This definition differs from that of

Hallsworth and Young (2004), as it takes into account the different levels of involvement for gang members. Firstly, it acknowledges that not all gang members have '*crime and violence*' integral to their identity but takes into account the *'joint enterprise'* matter (see Gibb, 2009). Secondly, durability is difficult to measure, as gang members drop from the gang or go into prison among other situations. Therefore, not much attention is given to the time a gang has to maintain a name, but rather for how long the gangs have been in the area. Finally, the same typology of gang membership could be applied to the gang typology with very loose boundaries, as some of those gangs have 50 members, increasing to 200 in times of war (beef/battle). That implies that within the same gang you could find different levels of structure, which are found to be very loose at the very bottom where *false claimers*, *tinys* and *wannabes* will be found, and quite structured on the level of the *gotta be* and *true banger*.

Based on all the above elements and on the definitions given by other participants, which included (young people, practitioners, parents and community members) the definition of gangs used for this piece of research within the LZ12 is:

> *"A geographically street based collective of young people who are described either by themselves or and others as a group for who either collectively or individually crime and violence is part of their characteristic"* (Esimi, 2010)

Chapter 4 Overview

4.1 *"What does not kill you makes you stronger"- Adolescents and their behaviour -*

There are different arguments and theories that hint of the reasons for the existence of gangs. The most obvious, in my opinion, is developmental psychology, which states that adolescents tend to form peer groups, although it is suggested that youth peer groups is ubiquitous and normal (HM Government 2010, Pitts, 2007) whereas youth gangs are uncommon and extraordinary (Pitts, 2008:19).

Herber (2002) explains that adolescence is described sometimes as the limbo between childhood innocence and maturity. This is as well described as a tunnel, which can last for six or seven years. There is the popular notion that this tunnel should be an endurance path for parents and society whiles the adolescence fights and struggles to find their identity. Their behaviour becomes erratic, they detach from family and society and change, it appears, almost overnight from a sweet child into a hooded hooligan on the rampage, committing petty crime and vandalising. This appears to be linked to psychological disorders, which have been increasing since the 1940s (Herber, 2002). This developmental period could be seen as the equivalent of growing through try and fail approach. Childhood strengths are generally carried forward into adulthood; they do not tend to lose these positive attributes suddenly (Herbert, 2002 in Davies 2002:355-363). Thus, developmental theories describe crime in the context of the life course. Nevertheless, some criminologist disagree and believe that developmental theories

do not bring anything new to criminology and that normal criminological theories that do not take into account age are still adequate to explain crime (Bernard et al, 2010: 305) (see appendix 8 for discussion).

Nevertheless, it is well documented that most young people occasionally act in an unusual way and often this is perceived as deviant or criminal (UN, 2003). It is further reported that a high percentage of adolescents (between 40 per cent and 98 per cent) break the law (Pitts, 2008:17). This is part of the process of growing and what matters is the response of their social environment to that act (UN, 2003; Lemert 1972; Anderson et al., 1994; Rutter and Giller 1983). That response will depend on the society or community's social control levels; thus, the enduring UK dilemma of agreeing on the definition of gang, due to the fear of responding negatively, to what could be considered, as we just learnt, a normal stage of development.

4.2 The Chicago School

The Chicago School, classical criminology, tends to explain the emergence of youth gangs and criminal youth groups, in summary, as a result of city growth leading to social pockets of immigrants, which then become excluded communities and are characterised by a lack of social control on their second generation. This second generation, they argued, will form gangs as a result of social disorganisation, lack of social control and the conflict of culture and values

between first generation and second generation. The Chicago School described this process with different theories such as *social control, self-control and human ecology* (Hagedorn, 2007:14; Bernard, *et al*, 2010:147-8; Sheptycki and Wardak, 2005:163; Jupp, 1989:63-64).

Social control theory is based on the idea that it is natural to have a criminal desire and maintains that human beings will only commit crime if there are no boundaries that stop individuals from committing those offences or crimes (Burke, 2001; Vold, et al 1998). There is the argument that crime is an occurrence of any ordinary man, there is no need of motivation. The family, the community and the state should establish social restriction and control and these boundaries are either followed or ignored by the individual (Garland, 2001, Morrison, 1995; and Vold et al, 1998). Thus, youth gangs and their criminal activities may be seen as normal, especially where there are no social controls or boundaries as it appears is the case in the area researched. This is believed will encourage low self-control in their youth.

These same principles of social control theory could be applied on an individual level; this is known as *self-control* theory. *Self-control* theory assumes that self-control can be achieved through the internalisation of the social constraints that individuals encounter at an early age and remain thereafter within them (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). They emphasised that the most common reason for low self-control is loose boundaries during childhood (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990 in Burke. 2001; and in Vold et al 1998). It is supposed that this lack of self-control may lead to not having any commitment

towards social norms and boundaries (Elliot et al 1979 in Burke, 2001).

Durkheim (1979 in White et al 2000:63) argued that societies, communities or neighbourhoods which lack social norms (anomie) for their individuals' behaviour will find themselves at breaking point; thus a neighbourhood without social control would be expected to have high levels of crimes (Ibid: 63), and youth gangs. Durkheim hence saw crime as a social phenomenon and as a result of social disorganisation (Ibid: 63; Burke 2001:101). Burgess (1925) developed the concept of *Human Ecology* (Burgess, 1925 in Park and Burgess 1925 in Jones, 2007:127-129). At the heart of *Human Ecology* were the *zonal hypothesis of city development* and the five radial zones. Departing from the centre, we find the *innermost zone* (zone one), which is considered a non-residential and business area. The next is *zone of transition* or zone 2, known also as *inner city*, or *excluded communities* in the UK (Walklate, 2005). A socially deteriorating environment characterises the zone of transition, which happens to be the zone researched. Burgess (1925) argues that these neighbourhoods are characterised by factories and poor migrants. Zone three is where working people who migrated from zone two settle. The other two zones, 4-5, are considered to be well-off residential neighbourhoods (Burgess 1925 in Park et al 1925 in Jones 2007:127-129; Walklate 2005:13; Maguire et al 2007: 53).

Zonal Hypothesis was central to this research, as it was tested and it appeared that it could be one of the elements for the existence of gangs in this area. Shaw and Mckay (1942) identified that juvenile delinquency and youth gang membership is

high in the zone of transition and lower in the residential zones (Shaw and Mckay 1942, in Maguire et al 2007). Furthermore, Shaw and Mckay (1931 in Jones 2006:128) observed that areas with high rates of crime generally had a high rate of *'Negro' [sic]* and *'foreign born'* families, a high percentage of families on benefits and a low level of home ownership (Ibid: 128). This appears to be in line with our findings described below in this work.

Zonal Hypothesis presumes that crime does not decrease or increase because of individuals' behaviour, but rather, is an attribute of the social organisation or lack of it (Jones, 2006:128; Maguire et al, 2007: 531 Walklate, 2005:13). Rapid change in population leads to social problems. An area characterised as a zone of transition will frequently experience social changes. This leads to instability and distrusts (Walklate 2005:13) and also leads to loose control of the local youth (Bernard, *et al*, 2010:147-8). It is further highlighted, that schools and pupils will be affected, as a result of continuous bombardment of new pupils (Volt 1998:147). These areas are isolated from the majority of society and are stereotyped as being *'contaminated, filthy, offensive to morality and olfaction'* (Ruggerio, 2000 in Young, 2007 in Hagedorn, 2007:54). This exclusion is implemented in three different avenues: Labour market, whereby the insecurity, short term contracts and unemployment are prevalent; exclusion from civil society forming an underclass characterised by illiteracy, family pathology and general disorganisation and this underclass is stigmatised as being the scroungers and demons of modern society. And finally, these communities are discriminated against by the state through a disproportionate percentage of immigrants and poor at all levels of the CJS (Young, 2007 in Hagedorn, 2007: 55)

4.3 Alternative to traditional criminology

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) suggested some limitations to the links between social disorganisation theory and the emergence of gangs. Their findings showed that excluded communities had several criminal organisations. They also pointed out that these neighbourhoods were well organised but with different aims. This suggested, they believed, that social disorganisation did not exist in those communities (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Vold 1979; Cullen and Messner, 2007). On the same line, Young (in Matthews and Pitts, 2001: 31) explained that even in the slums, excluded communities and ghettos, there are social organisations. The only difference between these and those of other communities is that they support crime.

Moreover, Shaw (1931) found that only a small 20% of the youth living in the so-called excluded communities were known by the CJS (Shaw 1931 in Vold et al 1998:142-143). This is in line with the UK Black community experience. Eighty percent of Black (African and Caribbean) communities live in England's most deprived areas (House of Commons, 2007: 30). However, in 2003-04 92% of Black young people aged 10–17 were not subject to disposals in the youth justice system (House of Commons, 2007:5). Thus, it could be argued that the *Chicago School*'s thoughts and theories, although pivotal in helping to understand the reasons for the emergence of youth gangs in certain areas, appear to lack relevance when disseminated.

This raises the question of how relevant the '*Chicago School'* is in the UK and elsewhere in 2010. Hagedorn (2007) explains that we should not discard their theories but rather update and complement them with modern theories. For instance, Young (2007 in Hagedorn 2007:68) explains that the so-called excluded communities are not that much so in late modernity. He argues that *'physical, social and moral boundaries are constantly crossed'*. The mass media, mass education, the political system and other statutory institutions carry a process of cultural and value inclusion that cannot be denied and all different layers of society absorb it. He further explains that the 'excluded communities' are going through a *bulimic* process. This implies that the underclass cannot live isolated from the rest of society. It is a society that includes and sets the standards to follow but at the same time it excludes and punishes those who it wants to include. As Young (2007) put it, modern society has both strong *'centrifugal and centripetal currents'* (Ibid: 68). He finally explained that the physical barriers are blurred as the excluded/included and included communities mixed through their daily lives and are aware of their similarities and shared values. Nevertheless, he recognises that there is the possibility of subcultures, but denies the concept of a separate culture and different social values between those communities (ibid: 71).

4.4 'Black-on-Black' crime and the theory of 'self-annihilation'

Black-on-Black crime could be argued on grounds of internalised *'self-depreciation'*. Freire (1993:63) stated that *'self-depreciation'* is a general trend of an oppressed community, such as the Black community in the UK. Summarising,

this characteristic means that the Black youth has internalised the negative perspective (stereotype) that the oppressors (teacher, police, judges and society in general) has on them. When the Black youths hear so many negative stereotypes, they believe at the end of these conditions and internalise them. The link between *'self-depreciation'* and high levels of Black-on-Black crime, especially among young Black males, can be explained through Professor Amos N. Wilson's psycho-criminological theories. He explains that males of an oppressed community undergo a more extreme oppression by their oppressors than their female counterparts. This is due to the oppressor's expectation of a more fierce resistance to their supremacy from the oppressed males. Moreover, to maintain physical, psychological and socio-economical oppression, the oppressor needs to weaken and undermine the masculinity of oppressed males, in this case the Black male, by attacking their self-esteem, negating and destroying their self-concept, self-perception and self-confidence (Wilson, 1991: 33).

This strategy of extreme oppression against the Black male in the UK is partly implemented by the Criminal Justice System (CJS) (Baldwin and McConville, 1979 in Skellington 1992; CRE, 2007; Braham, *et al*, 1992, HC, 2007; HM Goverment, 2009). Recent research provides evidence that Black people are eight times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police, six times more likely to be in prison and three times more likely to be arrested than their White counterparts (House of Common 2007:5; CRE 2007:34-35; HM Government, 2009:2). A Ministry of Justice's report highlights that *"a decade after the Stephen Lawrence inquiry branded the police institutionally racist" (*Ford and O'Neill 2009), Black

people continue to be highly targeted, by the police and the other CJS bodies. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) investigated the processes of the National DNA Database (NDNAD) concluding that this was *'ethnic profiling'* by the police and branded their approach as unlawful (CRE 2007:36). The percentage of Black people stopped rose by 322%, compared with an increase of 185% for whites (Riley et al 2009: 29; Ford and O'Neill 2009; Travis 2009); and these are some indications of how oppression can be exercised through institutionalised racism.

Once oppression is settled, *Povey (2003:32)* explains that there is no hope in youth lives, in this case, Black youth. Furthermore, Povey (2003) implies that if the only future that they see is criminal life and they have a low life expectation, it should be expected that with such a degrading view of their own lives, they do not have any respect and value for the lives of others.

Freire (1993) argued that oppressed communities are formed by divided individuals that had been shaped by the situation of oppression and violence. These are situations whereby one group (government, police, teachers, judges), oppresses another group (Black male, Black community). This instance is in itself a situation of violence. Furthermore, the same author expressed that there would not exist oppressed communities, such as the Black community, without prior violence to establish their subjugation *(Freire, 1993).* *Fanon (1963)* agrees and adds that individuals living in these oppressed communities will express their violence, which has been imbedded in them by the oppressor, against their own people. *Freire (1993:62)* explains that this is one of the characteristics of the oppressed, which he

refers to as, *'horizontal violence'*. Like the so called 'Black-on-Black crime', *'horizontal violence'* happens because the oppressor exists within the oppressed people, and when they attack their own they are indirectly feeling they attack the oppressor. All this oppression and attack to masculinity is summarised by Wilson (1991:34) as *'reactionary masculinity'*. In Liverpool and Glasgow where gang members are predominantly white (Dawson, 2008, The Centre for Social Justice, 2009), these theories could be applied, thus they are not specific to the black community but rather to oppressed communities.

Whatever academic analysis and debate is taking place around gangs' emergence or existence in certain areas, there is one thing that cannot be hypothesised or theorised; this is the fact that since the last decade youth gangs and specifically the escalation of some of those gangs' criminal actions, appear to be a big concern for the British public, (Daily Mail, 2007; McLagan, 2005:39; Pitts, 2008: 4; Blagrove, 2003; Heale, 2008; Cheston, 2010; Midgley, 2008) especially to communities such as Goodhope.

Chapter 5 Background of Goodhope and LZ12

5.1 Demographics

The 2001 census shows that Goodhope had a population of 263,466 residents. By 2007 it was estimated that the population was 289,000 of whom 54.7% are Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) (Goodhope, 2001:5). Goodhope is the second LA in England and Wales where the BME population is larger than the White population (Goodhope, 2001:5; Goodhope, 2009:9). 36% of Goodhope's residents were born outside the UK, just over half (51%) were born in England and almost 5% were born in the Republic of Ireland (Borough of Goodhope, 2001: 17).

Table 5.1 Goodhope population movement

	All people		All people in 'BME' ethnic groups	
	Total	Total %	Total	Total %
Moved within the area	13,158	5	8,160	5.7
No usual address one year before census	4,732	1.8	2,497	1.7
Moved from within the UK	14,833	5.6	5,525	3.8
Moved from outside the UK	5,633	2.1	2,710	1.9
Total migrants	38,356	14.6	18,892	13.1

Goodhope (2001:11)

Table 5.2 Goodhope's population Breakdown
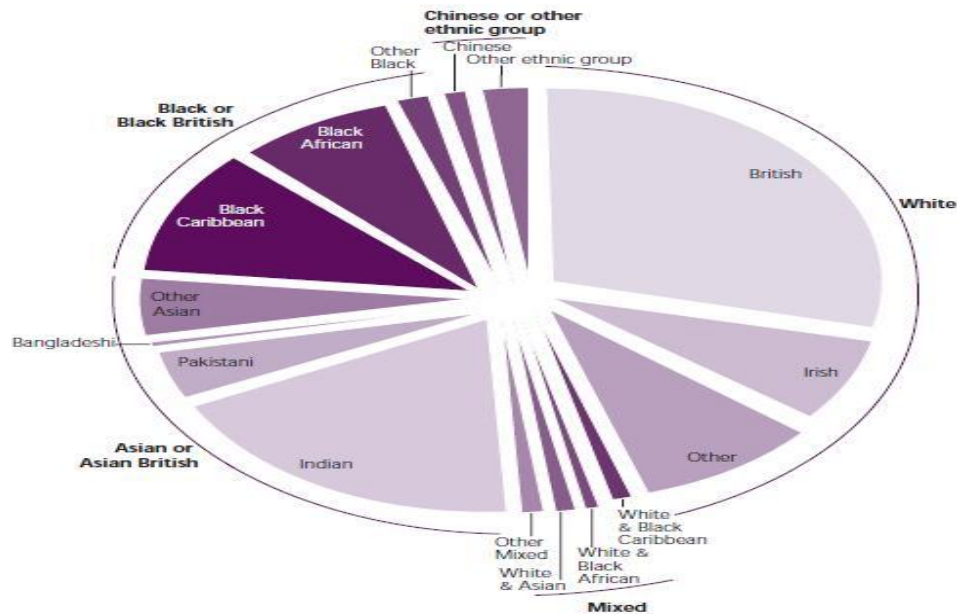
Goodhope (2001:6)

5.2 Socio-Economics

Goodhope has some of the most extreme areas of deprivation in the UK. It is within the 15% most deprived areas in England and Wales. More than 20% of the residents live in overcrowded households, becoming one of the Local Authorities with a larger than average household size in London (Goodhope, 2001:5; Goodhope, 2009:9). Goodhope has great contrast; it has areas (mainly the south of the Borough), which are considered to be inner city and other areas, which are considered to be suburbs (Goodhope, 2009:9).

The Borough is split into north and south. In a nutshell, the south side is where the deprivation takes place, whilst the north side is almost the opposite, with economic affluence and a high rate of homeownership (Goodhope, 2004). The deprived south side of the Borough is disproportionately Black populated, while the affluent north side is mainly White and Asian populated. However, it is not all polarised, as there are pockets of affluence in the south and pockets of deprivation in the north (Goodhope, 2009).

These areas of deprivation are characterised by the largest number of under 16 year olds, 4, 416 (27.7%) of residents in the Superman area, and the highest proportion of young adults (16 to 24 year olds) 2,161 (17%) in the Mountview area. The Superman area of Bond has as well the highest number of single parents, social housing and families receiving benefits. All these details illustrate that a high percentage of the families living on the south of the Borough are living in socio-economic deprivation (Goodhope, 2001:11; Goodhope, 2009: 13).

Table 5.3 Age distribution of children and young adults

All Ages	Total 1991	Total (%)	Total 2001	Total (%)
0 to 4	16,509	6.8	16,310	6.2
5 to 9	15,785	6.5	16,060	6.1
10 to 14	14,614	6	16,499	6.3
15 to 19	14,560	6	16,667	6.3
Total	61,468	25.3	65,536	24.9

Goodhope (2001:11)

Deprivation can be measured by looking at the number of children receiving free schools meals, as *'this is the best available indicator of the social* [-economic] *backgrounds of students'* (Major, 2001). In Goodhope there are 6,148 pupils (28.5%) eligible for free school meals. A primary school in Superman has the highest number of children (75.9%) receiving free school meals (Goodhope, 2001: 34). The Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) placed Goodhope within the 10% most disadvantaged Local Children's Services Authorities in the UK (Goodhope, 2009: 12).

Goodhope's deprivation is characterised by high levels of long-term unemployment, low household incomes, dependence on benefits and poor condition in social housing and this is linked to shorter life expectancy and health inequalities experienced specifically within Bond, Mountview and Rangers. These are evidence of the increase in deprivation and this is likely to be increased further by the present economic meltdown (Goodhope, 2009).

Chapter 6 Methodology

6.1 Practitioner-researcher - the challenger-

This research was carried out as a practitioner-researcher. Robson (1993:446-9) explains that a practitioner-researcher is one who carries out systematic enquiry relevant to his job while working. This role brings both advantages and disadvantages when compared with professional researchers. He numbered three advantages as *'insider'* and *'practitioner'* opportunities and *'practitioner-researcher'* synergy. On the other hand, the disadvantages include: time, lack of expertise, lack of confidence and *'insider'* problems (ibid: 447). During the research the advantages above were noticed, as the rapport with professionals, YP and families was already established. It helped further that I knew the structure of the different organisations. Nevertheless, the disadvantages were felt, as certain managements ignored pleas for participation and police and other local bodies refused to share statistics and data due to fear of making them public.

6.2 Qualitative research

The main methodology used for this small-scale research was qualitative. Methodologically, qualitative data is seen as an interpretation of the social construction of the participants and their own understanding of their situation rather than the objective and all-constraining *'reality'* measured and subjected to statistical alien interpretation (Jupp, 1989:29). This method was chosen because it

is believed that qualitative data helps the researcher to understand the personal contexts of offenders and victims and the subjective reasons for such behaviour (Noaks and Wincup, 2004). It is used to understand meanings, definitions and constructions behind their behaviour (Jupp, 1989), in this case, gangs and gang members. Qualitative research, also, helps to know about unreported/unrecorded crime (Coleman and Moynihan, 1996 in Noaks and Wincup, 2004:11).

Triangulation method was chosen, as it supports the findings by combining qualitative and quantitative data. Nevertheless, the electronic questionnaire did not generate enough quantitative data (26 responses), thus, the findings are mainly based on the evidence gathered from the interviews. Qualitative method in the form of (semi-structured) interviews with C&YP, their families and professionals, seemed the most appropriate method to use, as the research did not focus on objective truth but on the truth as the participants perceived it as suggested by Burns (2000). Therefore, the data collected do not represent a general picture of the issue but rather a small sample that could be similar to a wider social experience around the impact that gangs' criminal activities have on C&YP.

6.3 Sample

The evidence is based on 18 semi-structured interviews (children, young people, parents, community members and practitioners) and two focus groups. Semi-structured interviews allowed more flexibility in the order that the questions were asked. An important characteristic of this model is that the interviewer understood the context of the project and had the skills to highlight significant topics.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allowed participants to speak freely and at length through their own perceptions and terminology (Jupp, 1989:29; Bell, 1993:93; Robson, 1993:237-40).

There are young (and adult) gangs spread throughout the LZ12 area researched. However, as this was a small qualitative research, only five of the main gangs have been analysed. These five gangs are mainly chosen due to the evidence received and corroborated and it may or may not represent a general trend in other areas of the Borough or the nation. The data were analysed by using coding categories within a table as suggested by (Robson, 1993) and in this case, a colour system (see appendix 4).

Following Robson's (1993:140-143) suggestions, the sample used was *quota sampling*, to ensure a balanced view of the situation and personal experience and *purposive sampling*, to hear the voices of families and young people affected by gangs. Participants were contacted through practitioners, through other participants (snowballing) and through members of the community. Thus, the participants of this study included C&YP and families involved in gangs; C&YP and families not involved in gangs but living in the area and practitioners. Data was also gathered through questionnaires sent internally for practitioners, as well as through comparing sensitive data on Social Care Systems of known gang members, by drawing on professional experience and through an electronic questionnaire that was accessible to C&YP through profiles in the social networks of Facebook® and MySpace®. A link with comprehensive information was pasted on the profile and explanation of the aims highlighted on the page to ensure that all ethics were

covered.

6.4 Ethics

The data were contrasted with extensive literature review relating to gangs and 'youth groups' and through observation and an evaluation of gang members and gang affected C&YP cases on our team. The research's methodology was intended to be stratified, following Goodhope's demographic structure. However, due to the restricted access to participants, this was not possible to follow fully. All participants had to read an information and confidentiality sheet (appendix 2 and 3). They had to sign a consent form (appendix 3) for the interview, and in the case of minors (i.e. under 16 years) parents had to sign as well as per *'Gillick competency'* (NSPCC, 2009; BAILII, 1985).

All children and young people who were interviewed were automatically entered on a prize draw as an incentive for their time. However, this draw was a 100% chance to win £15.00 high street vouchers. The payment to research participants is not an unusual practice, although it can bring ethical dilemmas and controversy (Noaks and Wincup, 2004: 50). In this case, the automatic win was unknown to them until the interview was finished. There are strong ethical arguments about paying participants, as it could be argued that their stories were bought (Wardhaugh in King and Wincup, 2000:319). Offering payment to participants was used as a strategy to reduce potential exploitation (Noaks and Wincup, 2004:50), as it was believed that the researcher had the moral, political and social responsibility to reward all children for contributing positively, by given their time and their experiences, to their community. None of the clients that I am currently working

with participated for ethical reasons. However, those cases informed my research enormously to understand the impact of gangs.

Almost all interviews and the focus group were audio recorded on pen-drive device. This proved difficult to manage following the ethics and procedures signed for the different organisations (Middlesex and Goodhope). Interviews were saved on a secure folder and the pen-drive was always carried carefully to the office if the interview took place outside of Local Authority premises. The interviews were uploaded onto the corporate computer, which was locked with a personal password. Two of the participants refused for the interview to be recorded. One opted for a written interview and another decided not to participate but remained with us during the focus group. All participants at the focus group agreed the latter.

The Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998 have both had a direct impact on the way this research was conducted and especially on the access to participants (Opsi, 1998a; Opsi, 1998b; Noak and Wincup, 2004). The research was scrutinised by three different ethical review committees: London Borough of Goodhope, Children Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and Middlesex University. Three different ethics forms were submitted and the planning for the research, its aims and its objective were reshaped following the different requirements, feedbacks and advices. For instance, ethics were observed in terms of power balance. Cases from my own caseload were not approached as it was understood that the power balance and the rapport built with the YP and their families could had brought many ethical dilemmas, especially as the participants

may had felt pressurised into agreeing to participate for fear that rejecting could negatively affect the support they receive.

Ethical issues were also well considered with regards to the questions that needed to be formulated to achieve the answers desired, without being too intrusive or insensitive. Due to the theme of the research, some of the experiences explained could not be exposed as the specific and in some cases high profile scenarios will be easy to identify and could put the participants in danger. The research took into account the general criticism that qualitative data is likely to be seen as 'unreliable, invalid and generally unworthy of admission' (Robson, 1993:402) as it is believed that it is biased, especially in the case of YP exaggerating their experiences or involvement with crime to glorify their turf or gangs. To ensure a more realistic and accurate account, this was contrasted against the offences recorded by members of those gangs.

Noaks and Wincup (2004:83-84) explain that protecting participants' and organisations' identity is an issue in criminological and criminal justice research. Therefore, a confidentiality sheet with the confidentiality conditions was read and clarified where needed to ensure confidentiality terms were well understood by all participants. This confidentiality agreement would have been breached in the scenario where the information given posed a threat to the participants or others. Participants were as well advised not to give any names of individuals and not to disclose any crime that they have not been sentenced for. This proved to be a ice

cold bath for most of the participants as they started to jump from the chair and expressed "second thoughts" (Mary) and withdraw their participation afraid of being reported to the police or even worst, being seen by fellow gang members as a "grass" (informant) (Jason). This instance was not only experienced with C&YP but also with practitioners who requested for the interviews not to be recorded as their information could have repercussions of great magnitude for the organisation that they represented.

To ensure confidentiality, the names of the Borough, organisations, wards, gangs and participants have been anonymised and details of the case studies modified. Accounts that would be easily recognised by practitioners or the general public were omitted to guarantee anonymity as suggested by Beck (2002 in Noaks and Wincup, 2004:49)

Chapter 7 Gangs in Goodhope - The findings -

We tested to see if the "Chicago School" was any where close to support an explanation for the growth of gangs. It is said that between 2001 and 2004, Goodhope experienced a wave of inter-gang fatal shootings not encountered by the Borough before. These shootings rated Goodhope as the fifth London Borough with the highest 'violent gun crime offences'. Efforts have been made to reduce shootings and killings and Goodhope is one of the Boroughs on the Trident campaign which focuses on Black-on-Black crime (Hales, 2005).

The MPS (2006) found between 16 and 22 gangs in the Borough of Goodhope, using their own scrutiny and sources of information. From these, only seven belonged to the LZ12. However, some of the participants, particularly four of the six young people interviewed, were able to identify at least 56 for the whole Borough, of which 21 are located within the LZ12 area.

7.1 LZ12's gangs and their structure

All participants agreed to one thing without exception, and this is that LZ12 has a gang problem that is affecting their lives in one way or another. Various gangs (youth and adults) spread through the LZ12 area. However, as this was a small qualitative research, only five of the main council estates/areas affected by gangs have been analysed and scored against the MPS Harm Assessment Scale

(Appendix 1). These five gangs (*Hulk, Ogun, Superman, Bond and Starman*) were mainly chosen due to the rich evidence gathered through interviews, observation, and data analysis and practitioner experience. The evidence may or may not represent a general trend in other areas of the Borough or the nation.

7.1.1 Hulk Area (scored 167.75)

Although one of the participants who are practitioners and residents from the area stated that "*you can find a gang in every single road. In XXXX there are more drug dealers than crack heads [sic]" Thomas.* We can group all of these gangs into three main interwoven gangs.

This gang is a Criminal business organisation-street gang, similar to the one described by Robert Gordon (2000 in Pitts, 2008:19). It comprises Hulk Man Dem, Hulk Soldiers and Youngerz. Their gang colour is red for the Hulk(s) and black for their 'tinys' the Youngerz. Within their area they are at war with gangs in the Superman estate area with whom they are 'delimitated' by a traffic light. They have a temporary alliance with the Ogun gangs, although this is fragile and unreliable one.

Hulk Man Dem comprises young adults aged 15-35 years old. The core gang, it is believed to be about 30 strong. Their main business is to produce (cook/prepare/grow) and sell crack cocaine, heroin and cannabis. The gang is

composed mainly of true bangers (mainly young people age between 15-19 years old) and hardcore, referred to as gunmen (these are aged between 19-35). They are currently investing their profits in building music studios and opening shops to legitimise the earnings. The elders of this gang are well known by the community for past crimes. It is believed they pull the strings of the drug business.

These strings control the movements of the Hulk Soldiers as well. The Hulk Soldiers' number is unknown but it is said to be about 50 strong (true bangers, hardcore, reluctant and wannabes). Their 'soldiers' are between 13-17 years old. They have a few tinys although it is said they are mainly younger brothers of some of the soldiers. Their main criminal activities are growing and selling marijuana, stealing mobile phones, carrying weapons (mainly knives) and it was said by Wayne (ex Hulk Soldier member) that they have *"easy"* access to guns.

Mainly children between 8-12 years old form the Youngerz. There are not more than 15 members. They mainly group together to socialise. However, through involvement with the cases, analysing databases and following their chronologies and reports sent by the MPS, we know that they are involved in committing street robbery, sexual harassment and carrying weapons. They further engage in shoplifting by all entering in a rampage to the shops.

7.1.2 Ogun Area (scored 119)

The Ogun area is an area that qualified to form part of the regeneration project due

to its high level of deprivation. In there we find the Ogun gang, and the Gadget gang. All are mainly street gangs as defined by Hallsworth and Young (2004) or Esimi (2010). Their gang colour is red. They have alliance with the Hulk Soldiers, although they have sporadic episodes of conflict. It is composed mainly of youngsters between 13-25 years of age; there is also a reduced number of over 30s and a great number of wannabes and few tinys.

Around 30-40 members, mainly young people/adults between 15-28 years old, form the Ogun gang. They concentrate mainly on selling crack cocaine, cannabis and commit street robbery. The selling of drugs appears to be the duty of small percentage of the gang members. They are also known for carrying weapons including guns.

The Gadget gang is situated in a street adjacent to the Ogun council estate. They are believed to be around 15-25 members. Their aims are not criminal. It is believed that they mainly do music. Nevertheless, they will participate in battles against the Superman or other gangs, as they are part of the bigger Ogun gang by their common territory. They stated that they carry weapons (mainly knives) for protection, and are looked down on by the Ogun gang as wannabes. It is believed that they maintain good partnership.

7.1.3 The Superman (scored 183.25)

The Superman estate is also a notorious council estate. This was part of the

regeneration programme (Goodhope, 2001:39). Obviously, the regeneration did not resolve the crime rate, as the same dealers still live in the area and attract younger people into their webs. Their colour is blue and their enemies, the Hulk and Ogun, geographically surround them. This makes them vulnerable and they contra-balance this by maintaining a large membership, by affiliating with other infamous Criminal business organisation type gangs in another postcode area of the Borough and with a famous similar gang, from South London.

Superman is an articulate super gang as described by John Pitts (2008:27). It is composed of four main gangs: Revolutionary But Gangster (RBG), G's of Superman, Superman's Youts and Toonies. These four gangs are controlled by several well-established Shottas (old drug dealers and 'gun men').

RBG are about 30-40 members. Their age is between 13 and 28 years. Their main business is to prepare and sell crack cocaine, heroin, marijuana, modified guns and *mixtapes* (music). They further engage in street robbery, stealing mopeds, carrying weapons and kidnapping (mainly gang members who are caught trespassing in their territory). Their main bases of operations are the old tower blocks, which have been emptied (over 5 years) but not demolished. This gang was supposed to be dismantled according to police accounts but one of the participants stated:

"Their members came to the house party and threaten one of the boys with a gun"
Wayne

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One of its younger members has been arrested a few times for stealing mopeds and for carrying small quantities of marijuana. Furthermore, I observed and recorded (pictured) fresh graffiti with their initials and different tags of the members on the walls of their territory. They have structure and are well organised. Some of the young members were *tinys* a few years back. They were used to carry drugs, mainly marijuana. At the top of the structure we have the 'gunmen' or elder. They are well known drug dealers. The number was not revealed, but it is estimated that there are 5 to 8 of them. Their age is estimated to be between 27 to 35 year old. They are known more by the parents of the young members than by the members themselves. Their role is mainly what could be called street wholesale. This involved the selling of cocaine to the younger ones who will prepare the rocks to sell in small quantities.

The G's of Superman is composed of a group of around 10-20 members who are between 13-16 years old. They mainly hang around the parks within the council estate to socialise and play. They sell drugs (mainly small quantities of marijuana), commit robbery and steal mopeds. They carry weapons (including modified imitation guns). Their robberies are not planned but rather spontaneous. This gang appears to be diluting between the upper level RBG and the newcomers, the Toonies.

The Toonies is mainly young people. It appears to be an up and coming gang established by ex-members of the G's of Superman. Their ages are between 13-19

years old. They are mainly used as shotters (drug delivery boys) in the drug street market. There are around 15 of them. Their leader is a 16 year old who is supposed to be actively involved with the RBG. It is known that he and his brother have been involved with local gangs since they were quite young. They have been shot, battered, intimidated and have received several death threats mainly from the Ogun gang.

Lastly, we have the Superman's Youts. This is a street gang consisting of young adults. They are separated from the rest of the Superman by the high road. In the past they used to be enemies. Their role is quite pivotal, as in their area there is an important youth and sports centre and there is a newly developed football pitch, which is used by the Superman and the Hulk are not allowed to utilise this. However, the sports centre is utilised by Ogun and Superman at different days and times, this has been arranged by the C&YP themselves.

7.1.4 The Bonds (scored 190)

The Bond area is at the heart of all the other council estates. This area is the commerce centre, the high road and point of bus transfers. It is known for its long history of drug dealing and it was considered to be one of the three main areas in London with the highest rate of drug dealers of crack cocaine back in the 1990s. None of the participants were familiar with this area; nevertheless, from the different interviews, five different gangs in the area were identified: Thugs Love Money (TLM), Bond and Bling (B&B), Bond Man Dem, Bond City Crew, the

general colours being red and purple.

TLM

This is a gang known for their ruthlessness and violent activities. They are considered to be one of the most dangerous gangs in the capital. During the late 80s and 90s they engaged in fierce shootings to gain control of the crack market in their area. It is believed that they still are engaged in the drug market, specialising in smuggling and wholesale. This is a drug dealing gang, where the territory is disputed but their network goes from South London through to Jamaica.

Bond City Crew is quite similar to TLM and has existed for over 20 years. This gang is formed mainly by elders (28-50 years old). They are well-established drug dealers and 'gun men'. They oscillate between Bond and Superman, as the Superman area is within the Bond ward. They have both business and blood links with the Superman area. Mainly, the so-called 'Yardies' formed part of this gang in the late 80s, but nowadays it is believed to be formed by British born Jamaicans and other Black British.

7.1.5 Starman (scored 89)

Starman area is an interesting area to research, as it has a combination of an affluent community with a high percentage of expensive (£1million+) home ownership next to a large complex of deprived council estates.

Starman

This is an up and coming gang, which could be classified in between the wannabes and the new street gang as described by Pitts (2008:26-27). Their colour is black. They are between 12-18 years old. It appears to be a flat structure with loose leadership. Some of their members do not consider themselves to be in a gang. Yet their peers, parents, their attitude and criminal activities will classify them as a gang. Some of the gang members are not living in the council estate but in relatively expensive family homes. It has been noticed that the gang member may perceive this as a handicap, as it clashes with the street based gang/hustler identity he is trying to embrace. They are known for buying and supplying small amounts of marijuana, buying guns (mainly pellet and modified) and for engaging in street violence and anti-social behaviour. The biggest danger of this type of gang is their need for reputation. They engage in threatening and challenging behaviour towards other gangs. Concerns within the gang, are the lack of elder members and therefore the lack of backup in case of battle and the low number of their gang membership (20-30) of who most will be bystanders and may not co-operate in case of war/battle.

Chapter 8 The Impact of gangs

8.1 Why join a gang

The evidence gathered in different scenarios identified protection. C&YP look at a gang as a protective factor for different reasons: by force, the reluctant gangsters are forced to join the gang; for financial reasons, gangs providing a micro-economic market where money can be earned and spent.

Wayne, an ex-Hulk gang member explained why he joined: *"I was asked five times to join a gang. When I was younger I had an incident were a boy tried to steal my phone and I thought I was becoming very powerless… I thought as I couldn't do anything … three days later I was asked and then I said yes…"*

Stevie, a Superman gang member stated that he joined mainly because it was the trend "hype".

"When I was younger because of the hype of the moment… [other children join]… because they are in the same area as the gangs and as they're friends…they feel they have to …most of them watch the gangs' videos anyway and then they get inspired to be something like that"

Montserrat, a mother of a reluctant gang member from the RBG and possible leader of the G's of Superman explains that:

"There is gangs in this area [Superman], but at the end of the day they got to walk the area and if you do not walk with certain people in this area, they would still like to fight you anyway; so sometimes is better to be in, with those maybe bad boys because if you are not, there is something you need ask."

<div align="right">Montserrat</div>

- To join or not to join that is the question-

There is evidence that for some C&YP, there is no choice to opt out. It appears, from the evidence gathered through interviews and observation, that the deeper your council estate or area is affected by gangs the more difficult that it would be for you to refuse to join the gang, especially if you are a young male (13-17 years old). Nevertheless, Stevie explained that not all the young residents in the council estate are gang members. He stated: *"I know people in Superman that is in no gang"*. The question then is what really are the elements that compel C&YP to become gang members?

Some of the gang members interviewed or observed have both parents' input and some of them live with both parents. So the argument of the single parent would be questioned, as in two of the cases there is a father figure, although they do not live together. In another case, the gang member lives in an affluent nuclear family; this

breaks the stereotype of relating gang-membership with deprivation.

8.2 In and Out of gangs

Evidence from this research showed that there are no clear rules of initiation to enter the gangs discussed above. This will depend on the level of involvement of the young person before entrance. For instance, Stevie explained how he did not need to do any initiation, as he was known to be a good fighter and brave soldier. However, he described how there is a "ranking" and depending on your "ranking" (low or high) you would be requested to do some form of initiation; but not in his case as he was "special". As he stated:

> *"Not for me, because I'm special…but for certain amount of people there is. If you have a high ranking when you coming into the gang you don't have any kind of initiation but if you are a lower ranking, you have to gain your stripes…you gain stripes by having fights or robbing to a person".*

On the same lines, we find that your chances of leaving a gang will depend on different circumstances, which will include: your previous involvement with the gang, the area where you live and the reason for you leaving the gang. Wayne explains how he was able to leave the gang due to his chances to go to further education and due to the fact that he does not live right on the council estate while his friend was unable to leave due to his need for protection as:

> "When I wanted to leave the gang [3 years later] I did but there was

another boy that I was friend within the gang that he didn't, because he live right on 'Hulk' if he was to leave… you can't no really leave… you can only rely on the people you grow up with. Once you are in …is key to gangs to keep as many members as possible especially when you got areas such as Superman where there are lots and lots of council estates lots and lots of people there and if you look at gang violence they look to keep as many people as possible so if you leaving the gang it got to be a really serious reasons like you leaving the area or you going to prison."

Wayne

Stevie nevertheless, saw it from a different perspective. He explained that C&YP who want to leave the gang are more than free to do it and that this does not have any repercussions for their safety. He stated, though, that they need to have a good reason to leave and be willing to leave. In his own words he said that: *"if they don't have any real reason they would not leave…but if they want leave it they should"*

Stevie

8.3 The impact of gangs

Participants were asked to think of some of the possible positive elements, if any, that the LZ12's gangs have on C&YP who join them, to understand the reasons why some C&YP will decide to join a gang or will refuse to leave it even when the negative consequences appear so palpable for other people.

8.3.1 Positive impact

Marcus stated that:

> *"…Gangs do form a function, a very important function in terms of social development and emotional development, especially for boys and especially that need for affirmation from older men when the father isn't around. They're growing up in a predominant female environment. Gangs tend to be, if not exclusively, largely led by male, strong male, dominant male, very powerful figures, where there is display of masculinity and materialism and external gratitude they are very attractive to boys growing up that also meet a very important point in terms of their masculine identity…"*

Monica, a mother that used to live in Superman estate explains how in her experience the C&YP join gangs for "protection" stating that *" they feel protected bearing that gang is like a family if they walking by themselves anything can happen"*. This appeared again on different occasions. Chanikua, stated: *"is like a family, they got like their own family innit"*. Stevie was of the same opinion explaining that gangs are *"a family that looks after each other…"* meanwhile Roxy explains that C&YP engage in gangs because: *"if anything happens they got back up"* Other positives from the survey responses is that C&YP join gangs for respect, protection, emotional support, financial freedom and to socialise.

8.3.2 Negative Impact

Monika explained the negative impact that it is having on her and her son's life. She stated:

"I know there are places that my son can't go, even though he is not involved in gangs. I would take him there, or he will find another route to get there"

Roxy summarised her feelings by saying that: *"is really frighten as a parent you do worry so much"*. Chanikua explains how people move out of the area for the safety of their children. This reflects quite similar experiences of other participants such as Mr and Mrs Smith who are planning to leave Starman and go to the countryside or Roger the father interviewed at the nursery that wants to be out of the Borough before his daughter is a teenager. Montserrat explains: *"he goes down there [local youth club] then we got Ogun estate that uses it as well then you got to be careful when to go and when not to go. Put it this way, I live day to day. I know that he is in school, now he is safe there. This is basically I live on a knife-edge every day."*

From what we see, it appears that the participants living in gang-affected areas have to organise their life around the daily inconvenience of the gangs' activity. Their impact goes even further than expected, as it appears that even relatives living in different areas can find it difficult to gather. Stevie explains how *"some family members will not attend family functions to avoid certain areas"*.

8.4 Crime and gang violence

Most of the crimes committed by the gangs have been described before. This includes: street robbery, intimidation, drug dealing, kidnapping, knife and gun crime, gang rape and violent attacks. One of the participants on the parents' focus group explained how a neighbour's house was burnt down because her son 'snitched' (informed police). It appears that gang violence can be very random rather than organised. Stevie explain his involvement in an incident were a stabbing occurred: *"We were on the bus and we were passing it [rival council estate] then one got a phone call and we end up getting off... three got stabbed"* Stevie

8.5 Gun Crime

> *"Tony Blair can go and kill people and it's alright, we got people that want to kill us but if we're caught with a gun we're getting ten years in prison"* (young shottas, Capo-Power 2006)

Ama, a nursery manager showed some bullet marks on the wall of her neighbour. She further explains how a father was noticed carrying a gun while picking up his daughter. When asked why, he responded that he needed it to be protected.

Goodhope has one of London's highest recorded levels of violent gun crime offences, as discussed before. It had high profile shootings during the late 1990s and is part the Trident programme (Hales, 2005).

In general, firearms crime decreased by 13% between 2006 and 2007, although it is stated that some communities in England and Wales have a different view. It

appears that the street-level offences are progressively more chaotic and the number of grave injuries caused by firearms to C&YP (10-19 years old) has amplified (Home Office, 2007:8).

In Goodhope and in other gang-affected areas, the police are targeting gun crime by using Operation Trident (Home Office, 2004:3). Participants explained the availability of guns through gang-membership. This varies from handguns to machineguns (i.e. Mak Ten). Montserrat explained how the RBG are known to sell guns and also how one of her children *"was run down with a gun… he started to run because he knew …they were all covered up and they shot three shots… it happens quite a lot"*. During a parents' workshop, a father explained how during the weekend, in broad daylight, a shooting occurred in the park within the Superman estate, while his niece and nephew (aged 6-10) were playing in the park. At the same time, while the research was taking place, one of the participants was caught buying a pellet gun at school for £10.00. Thus, evidence appears to show that guns (and imitation guns) are quite accessible and that incidents involving guns, although minimal, are still a normal occurrence for certain sectors of the community.

8.6 Education and gangs

The House of Commons (2007: 5) explains that deprivation has an important impact on achievement and exclusions. It further states that educational underachievement and exclusion are "directly" related to involvement in the CJS.

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On another thought, Pitts (2008) explains how gangs appear to control some schools within the borough he researched. This research intended to find out the experiences of, and relationship between education and gangs in the LZ12 area.

Most of the participants had stated that gang members do not attend school. Nevertheless, Wayne was of the opinion that gang members do attend school because they want to keep a low profile from the police and therefore school is the best way to avoid police "harassment". He stated that there is a local school where there are a lot of Hulk Soldiers who are affiliated to Bond and Bling gang. However, evidence suggest, that most of the gang members are either at risk of exclusion, attending Pupil Referral Units (P.R.U.) or are permanently excluded from both (mainstream school and P.R.U.).

The level of gang involvement should be once again considered, as it seems that some wannabes, true bangers and reluctant gangsters may still engage successfully with education, while the hardcore and up and coming hardcore members end up or choose to be excluded. Schools appear to be one of the safe places for C&YP. It was said that schools' rules and surveillance are a protective factor for most of the C&YP. Nevertheless, Wayne explained how some fights are organised within the school and executed in the streets and vice versa. He explains the scenario where:

"Superman went to Hulk and was organised in XXX school and they
went down to the boys in Hulk and then the Hulk boys then got boys
from Ogun and they went down to Superman and stabbed a couple

of people."

This event made the headlines of the local newspapers as around 40 youth from Hulk and Ogun terrorised the Superman residents for more than one hour. It appears then that schools are a safe place; although gang fights can break out, it is usually outside of the school.

With regards to the P.R.U., these are melting points where young people from all over the Borough, who have been excluded, generally for challenging behaviour, get together on what is supposed to be their last opportunity to engage in education. In these institutions, gang fights are a normal occurrence. Montserrat explains how parents had to *"squash it because this is their last chance to get educated".*

8.7 living in gangland but out of the gang

It was discussed in chapter 2 that six percent of 10-19 years old (boys and girls) living in the UK self-reported to be gang members (Sharp et al, 2004:39). Due to the small sample, it is difficult to calculate the exact number of members, as we earlier discussed the different levels of engagement and the fact that there is yet a more thorough study to be carried out, to map the gangs in the Borough or in LZ12. Nevertheless, based on the evidence gathered and by adding and estimating the numbers of members, I believe that the number of C&YP that are gang members

will oscillate between 1200 and 1500. This will imply an estimated 7.3% of the total 18,515 C&YP population between 5-24 years old, living in the LZ12 area (Goodhope, 2001). This has its limitations and should be put within the context that the number of children is calculated by wards and some of those wards will fall within LZ12 and other postcode areas. Furthermore, we included 5 year olds due to the range of ages provided by the census. It is understood that not many 5-8 year olds are involved in gangs. But taking into account that Goodhope and in particular Superman and Bond areas are considered to be one of the most gang-affected areas in the UK, I believe that the estimate could be considered to be realistic.

From the information gathered, 93% of children living in the LZ12 are not engaging in gangs. I was able to meet with children living within the area that are not involved in gangs at all. I interviewed Lara, who was unable to name a single gang within the area. She further said that she had no knowledge of what they do or what happens around, from personal experience. When asked about her safety she explained that she does not normally go out around the area. On asking the father, he explained how a group of parents decided to nurture and mentor their children from nursery to secondary by steering the education that their children received through actively governing the school and by ensuring that the children had a positive and nurturing network. It was noticed, that both girls interviewed, *Lara* and *Chanikua*, were not directly affected by gangs, and they suggested that this was the norm for girls.

8.8 Girls - victims or perpetrators? -

Chanikua said that she was aware of three female gangs within the whole of Goodhope. These appeared to be not geographically defined; rather their members appear to be blood-related and close friends. It is estimated that the majority of gangs in London and elsewhere in the UK are mainly male gangs and that the girls and young women play a secondary or supporting role (Pitts, 2008, Alexander, 2008, MPS, 2006).

Gang rape experiences or knowledge of it were not clearly transmitted from participants. While the majority of the participants appear to agree that it is uncommon in Goodhope and that it is individuals doing it within the context of house parties and drunkenness, we had few participants claiming that they know people to whom it has happened, while a practitioner and a YP explained that it is part of an initiation process. They further claimed that in most of the cases this is organised by female gang members. Finally, it appears to be used by young girls between 13-17 to pay for protection and to belong to the gang. In the last three month, I have come across five gang rape cases.

However, Young (2009: 1) explains that girls are no longer spectators or the elder's trophy; they are *true bangers* and *hardcore* gang members perpetrating crimes exactly as often and as violently as their male counterparts. We further find that this has taken, somehow, senior officers by surprise, as they admitted that they do not understand the phenomenon of female violence as much as they do male

violence (Ashcroft, 2004); and that British girls are actually among the most violent in world (Honigsbaum, 2006). Unfortunately no primary data can be given on this subject, which will imply that more research needs to be done. (See Young, 2009 for more details on this subject).

Chapter 9 Legal framework

9.1 Duty to Safeguard C&YP that are gang affected

Local Authorities and their partners, have the duty to safeguard C&YP. Various policies, legislations, guidelines and papers establish this. A guideline that outlines the Local Authority duty of care and safeguarding is Every Child Matters. Every Child Matters (2003) focuses on promoting five outcomes for C&YP. These include: '*being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being'* (*Crown Copyright, 2003*). Pitts (2008) and Esimi (2010) highlighted the impact that gangs have on C&YP in achieving these five outcomes.

Other items of legislation that Goodhope has the duty to follow are the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The Children Act 1989 section 17 underlines the duty of provision of services for children in need and their families. It specifies, in Section 17.1(a) that the LA, in this case Goodhope, has the duty *"to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need".* It further stresses in Section 47.1(b) that if a local child or young person is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the Local Authority has the duty to investigate and take action to safeguard and promote the C&YP's welfare. On the same line, the Children Act 2004 Section 11.2 explains that the LA has the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child within their LA (Opsi, 1989; Opsi, 2004).

We see then, that various legislations is available for the local authority to lie on a legal framework to design strategies to tackle C&YP gang involvement, as it could be argued that the evidence showing an estimated 7% of C&YP in Goodhope could mean the need of being safeguarded from the dangers of gang involvement.

Another paper to guide these objectives for young people is the Youth Matters Green Paper (Crown Copyright, 2005). The main principles of this paper are to:

> *Make services more approachable to what young people and their parents want;*

> *Balancing greater opportunities and support with promoting young people's responsibilities;*

> *Making services for young people more integrated, efficient and effective;*

> *Improving outcomes for all young people, while narrowing the gap between those who do well and those who do not;*

> *Involving a wide range of organisations from the voluntary, community and private sectors in order to increase choice and secure the best outcomes*

> *Building on the best of what is currently provided*

Following these principles, Goodhope and other LAs should be looking at developing services wanted by the C&YP and their parents/carers. For instance, in a gang-affected borough, such as Goodhope, it would be expected to see a wide range of services offering preventative measures, interventions and exit programmes for the gang-members and their peers. It is further expected, following those principles that the LA will be looking to promote improving the outcomes for young people and improving services that are currently provided. In the case of Goodhope, services available need to improve, to ensure that interventions are suitable to the needs of the YP and their families. It also calls for a mapping and a designed strategy to tackle the local gangs.

The Home Office (2008:7) guideline *Tackling Gangs a Practical Guide for Local Authorities, CDRPS, and other Partners*, outlines a step by step strategy of how to get to grips with the gang issue. It recommends that a LA and its partners should

- *Understand your partnership's gang problem*

- *Plan your partnership's response*

- *Preventing gang membership*

- *Devising exit strategies*

- > *Targeting gang members*

- > *Reassuring your community*

Pitts (2008) and Rashidi (2009) are of similar views with regards to design strategies. Based on the Home Office's guideline, Goodhope should had followed or at least attempted to implement some of these recommendations to tackle gangs, especially as is seen as one of the most gang-affected boroughs within London. The C&YP plans for Goodhope aim to reduce the crime in their community (Goodhope, 2009). Although it has been highlighted in this report that gang related crime has been of concern for Goodhope since at least the 1990s, and that MPS in 2006 identified between 16 and 22 gangs in the Borough, there is no indication of mapping of gangs or a designed strategy on how to tackle the gangs. A *Goodhope Gang Forum* has been formed and is looking at commissioning this.

Finally, the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), in section 5, says that the council in partnership with the police, probation, health and other partners, is the authority responsible for designing such strategies to reduce crime. Goodhope Crime Prevention Strategy Group (CPSG, 2004:1) is responsible for developing, agreeing, delivering and monitoring the Partnership's Crime and Disorder Reduction and Misuse of Drugs Strategy under the section 5 just mentioned. It further implies in section 6.1 that these partnerships are responsible for the implementation of those strategies to ensure reduction of crime and disorder in the area.

More importantly, section 6.2, clarifies that before formulating a strategy, the LA

and its partners should:

> *Carry out a review of the levels and patterns of crime and disorder in the area*

> *Prepare an analysis of the results of that review*

> *Publish in the area a report of that analysis; and*

> *Obtain the view on that report of persons or bodies in the area*

(Opsi, 1998c)

9.2 Strategies in Goodhope - Are we safeguarding our children? –

Goodhope has a wide range of services for C&YP. On its *"Your guide to services for children and young people in Goodhope 0-19",* it says that services range from: *early years, youth, health and well being, sports, bullying, youth offending services (YOS) and community safety*. All the above services are necessary to reduce crime within the community. There are also other organisations and projects that are attempting to reduce the involvement of C&YP in local gangs and the crime and disorder that they are involved in.

These programmes include a number of youth clubs. Unfortunately, some of those

services are not accessible to all C&YP, as some of the venues are located in gang-affected areas, which some C&YP (and parents) are afraid to access due to gang violence. The Community Safety Team has a bus that goes into the heart of the community attempting to engage with the hard to reach, but as Montserrat explained, this is only a few days for a couple of hours and this does not meet the children's needs. There are private and community organisations depending on grants and public funding to provide services. The problem of these organisations, as well as with the LA, is that tackling gangs should be about working with the gang member as part of a unit and not as an individual. The other problem is that these organisations run out of funding and therefore are unable to provide a continuous service, as shown by Pitts (2008). The community highlighted the relevance of those organisations, as some of them are very successful but when funding runs out "they disappear". This discourages the community from engaging with other programmes, as they feel (and actually know) that programmes come and go. Furthermore, the regeneration programmes have eliminated several youth clubs (at least two).

Goodhope is one of the six London boroughs targeted by Trident. Trident is a specific unit set up by the MPS to tackle the so-called 'Black-on-Black crime' (Casciani, 2002). They work in partnership with a Goodhope organisation called Ski Is the Limit (SIL). This organisation was established in response to the high number of shootings taking place in Bond in which 12 people were wounded and 8 were killed (SLI, 2008). It mainly concentrates on reducing gun crime. On interviewing the head of SIL, who is also the head of Community Safety for

Goodhope, it was highlighted that Goodhope does not yet have an agreed definition of gang, a possible first step to designing a strategy to tackle gangs.

On a subsequent meeting, it was explained that there was no exit programme to support a member wanting to leave a gang in Goodhope, unlike other gang-affected boroughs where there are strategies. My experience also includes cases where girls have been gang raped, but without clear guidelines and strategies how does one support such victims to the fullest? There is a starting process being designed towards mapping the whereabouts of the gangs. Nevertheless, during a presentation to the staff forum, it was apparent that almost all practitioners did not know about the impact, whereabouts or activities of the local gangs. The Borough appears to lack specific 'exit' programmes to encourage young people to leave the gangs. This leaves professional ability to safeguard children in need of protection questionable. The other mystery is how professionals do a risk assessment when going on visits related to such issues.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

The research of gangs proved to be difficult and controversial from the moment of its conception. Definition and the fear of stigmatising YP or communities were embedded throughout the process of the research. To address this, a definition was designed based on the YP and participants' voices.

This small-scale research was looking at what is a big concern for a community and for the nation in general. Findings are limited to its participants' numbers and may not represent the wider issue. Access to data from other organisations and to participants was difficult to obtain due to the sensitivity of the subject. Even schools, which agreed to allow access to their pupils through focus groups, withdrew their permission at later stages. Community participation was achieved through key members that the community trusted. This research, it seems to me, would have been unmanageable in an environment where I had to build rapport with everyone.

It was essential for me that everybody remained anonymous, as most of the experiences collected were quite personal and detailed. As a practitioner-researcher, I learnt the importance of organisation, preparation and professionalism. This research took most of my nights and weekends, as I had to combine it with my full time job and family life. I applied for funding, which I got through the Children Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and what seemed great at the beginning became another additional challenge, as I had to manage two researches with

different outcomes (impact on social work practice, and this one focusing mainly on youth offending, crime and community). I learnt the challenges of researching the organisation where one works. This brought some interesting power dynamics. Some of the information was denied and other information was facilitated, in what I saw as an attempt to influence my research. Creativity had to be swiftly incorporated on my research plan. Emails were avoided, while back doors and late appointments were preferred by some of the practitioners' participants. Some practitioners, including managers, encouraged me to find the truth and guided me towards the information sources. The general feeling was of guilt and willingness to support me to achieve change within some structures. Participants from the community (young people and parents) had to be visited in their homes, which gave me an opportunity to understand even further the in and outs of their daily lives. Some of the young people withdrew from interviews, as they did not want to be seen, understandably, by other residents or gang members as being interviewed. Focus groups appeared to be a good technique as it brought a lot of rich information utilising only one session. Nevertheless, the transcript of this and the other interviews appeared to be more challenging than expected, especially due to the fact that English is my third language and most of the participant were young people who used slang words. Their language appeared understandable while interviewing but was difficult to decode when transcribing.

All evidence gathered was rich and informative. One would have liked to finish the research with a solid conclusion. However, the only conclusion is that there are C&YP and families who are suffering the negative impact of gangs. The theories behind their existence can be debated, and as all theories, have their strong and

weak points. The negative impact of gangs might not necessarily affect all in a community, nevertheless, this does not reduce the extent of suffering of those who experience and endure the fatalities.

Based on this research, it is not possible to give one reason for the existence of gangs. It appears that several, if not all, conceptual elements will be accountable for the existence of gangs. Media and society interest may glamorise the term gang itself, may demonise certain groups of C&YP, but unfortunately we live and work in a bureaucratic world where procedures and strategies are needed and so are definitions. As the research was progressing, the different levels of engagement had to be assessed and so the definition to use.

The definition created through the participants' experiences covered all gangs known within the area. These gangs appear to be engaging in various criminal activities, they had structure and are linked at one level or another with more structured gangs. It was learnt that they could have 'positive' impact on the C&YP. I have learnt, as well, that gangs have a detrimental effect on communities and C&YP. It was not possible to categorically ascertain that gangs are a product of deprivation, but this appears to be the case. The 'ethnic' issue was dealt with accordingly as it appears that the characteristic of the gang member will reflect the characteristic of their community.

We finally explored how the legal framework guides LAs to design strategies to tackle gangs. This legal framework puts a general duty to safeguard and protect

children from harm that needs to be followed by LAs and their partners.

If I had the opportunity to do this research again, there are a few things that I would have changed. Firstly, I would have prepared everything more thoroughly, especially sessions and focus groups. This appeared to need too much follow up, to the point that some of them did not occur due to the lack of physical time to undertake them. Police, YOT and other organisations were avoided at managerial levels to avoid conflict of interest. Nevertheless, this may mean that key informants and data were not accessed for this research. It may have been a good idea, but it would have been of much academic interest to contrast the two approaches. Interviews within the community were difficult, especially as gang violence occurred during the research and people may have identified me as a sensationalist or reactionary. Nevertheless, one thing that this research has done is make me more aware of the normality of a high level of violence that no human being should get used to, let alone C&YP. And thus I believe that we all should understand that:

> *"...Images shake your reality, what you see reflects what you feel, what you feel reflects what you think, how you think dictates how you act, and how you act, will dictate how people react to you; that reaction is called your status in society"*

> Amon Rashidi (2009)

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Appendix 1 **Metropolitan Police 2006 Harm Assessment Scale**

Crime Type	Score / Sentence
Possession / use of drugs	7
Supply of drugs	25
Disorder (affray)	3
Low level assault (ABH)	5
Serious Assault	25
Kidnap	25
Murder / manslaughter	25
Possession / use of knife	4
Possession use of firearms	25
Vehicle crime (TWOC)	.5
Burglary / theft (no violence)	14
Robbery / street crime	25
Fraud (includes money laundry)	14
Criminal Damage (£500-£5000)	.25
Graffiti / Tagging (criminal damage)	.25
Anti social	0

Appendix 2   **INFORMATION SHEET**

Some information about the research:

This research is being conducted by Cristià Esimi-Cruz. He is a qualified Social Worker currently working at the Crisis Intervention and Support Team and at the xxxxx Locality Team in the London Borough of Goodhope. The research is funded by the Children Workforce Council Development (CWDC) and approved by the London Borough of Goodhope and the Middlesex University. The researcher is CRB checked and is qualified to work with children / young people.

The aims of the research are as follows:

1. To produce and list the impact, if any, those gangs have on the neighbourhood.
   The research hopes to explore any gang related difficulties that young people and other LZ12 residents are encountering to access services, such as school, youth clubs, libraries and other facilities due to the proximity or actual gang activity on those premises or areas.

2. To identify the impact (positive and negative) for children and young people who are members of a gang.
   It will contribute to the theoretical understanding of why children and young people join gangs in the context of LZ12. It will explore the issues regarding gender and the hypothesis behind this. It will set a framework of the effects that this membership has and has had (ex-members) for young people.

3. To study the impact that gangs have for young people living on LZ12 that do not joint them.
   It will highlight the positive and negative impact that children have when taking the decision of not joining a gang. It will explore safety issues, perception and factual. It will explore the structures that permit them to feel safe to take this choice (i.e. family structure, education, network, etc…)

4. To explore the impact on families living in LZ12
   Contribute to understanding the positive and negative impact that gangs and gangland areas in LZ12 has on families living on these areas. It will highlight coping mechanisms and other resources used within the context of LZ12 for both families affected and families who are not affected, living within the LZ12 area.

By doing so, we hope to be able to reduce any negative impact and to develop tailored services that will be able to tackle those issues.

Cristià Esimi-Cruz
Main researcher
The Resource Centre
Tel: 0208xxxxxx / Fax: 0208XXXXXX
Email: cristia.esimi@Goodhope.gov.uk

Appendix 3   **Confidentiality**

Dear Potential Research Participant,

You have offered yourself as a potential participant in research about the impact of Goodhope gangs. We would like to ask you about your experience and views with regards to those gangs. The interview will last about an hour or so.

Some information about the research:

This research is being conducted by Cristià Esimi Cruz on behalf of London Borough of Goodhope.

The aims are:

- To know the gangs operating in Goodhope
- To produce and list the impact, if any, that gangs have on their neighbourhood
- To identify the impact (positive and negative) for children and young people who are gang members
- To study the impact that gangs have on young people that do not join gangs in Goodhope
- To explore the impact on families living in Goodhope

By doing so, we hope to be able to reduce any negative impact and to develop tailored services that will be able to tackle those issues.

_ We are recording the interview for the purposes of research only. This will not be shared with anyone else*

_ Your answers will be treated in **strictest confidence** (your identity will not be revealed to anyone at any stage)*

_ The research will be published. Your identity will not be revealed

_ You should only answer those questions that you are comfortable with

Please note that under the government guidance Every Child Matters any disclosure by you of any of the following must be reported to the Social Care Services. In such instances, the confidentiality promise will not apply:

- Risk to yourself or another person
- Discloser of a crime for which you or others have no been convicted

We would be grateful if you could indicate whether or not you are willing to participate using the attached consent form.

Thank you for giving this request your consideration,

Appendix 4   **Analysing interviews -colour code -**

Interview number	Definition	Crime activity	Impact positive	Impact negative	Experiences
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
Focus group					
Focus group					

Appendix 5   **Parent's Consent Form**

Research: 'Gangs' and youth groups in Goodhope their impact and whereabouts –
Moving towards strategy.

Dear Parent,

We would appreciate if you could indicate your consent to proceed with the
recorded interview of your son / daughter by ticking the appropriate box. If you are
not happy to proceed then please leave the box blank and no further action would
be taken. This consent form will be held apart from any research material to ensure
your confidentiality.

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for
    the above research and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my son/daughter's participation is voluntary and
    that s/he is free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☐

3. I agree for my son/daughter to participate in the above
    research. ☐

Please tick box

	Yes	**No**
4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded	☐	☐
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	☐	☐

_____   _____   _____
Name of Parent / carer   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

Many thanks,
During your interview your name will not be recorded –an interview number will
be assigned instead.

Appendix 6

Pilot Questionnaire

Research Questions: - 'Gangs' and youth groups in Goodhope their impact and whereabouts – Moving towards strategy.

Name:

Role:

Date completed

Are you aware of the existence of 'gangs' in Goodhope? (Y / N)

If yes how many 'gangs' around Goodhope are you aware of?

Do you know their names? (Y / N) if yes, could you name them?

Do you hold any cases in which the child / young person is directly or indirectly affected by gangs? (Y / N)

If yes could you summarise in which way?

Do you hold any case where the young person is a member or knows some one who may be member of a gang? (Y / N) If yes, how many cases?

Do you know a young person who might be willing to participate in this research?

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*Definition of Gang as used by the Metropolitan Police Services, Youth Offending Team and other practitioners

" A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity" (Hallsworth and Young 2004)

Contact Details: Cristià Esimi-Cruz (Social Worker)

Appendix 7

Research question: 'Gangs' and youth groups in Goodhope their impact and whereabouts – Moving towards strategy.

Questionnaire

1. **What do you understand by the term 'gang'? (Tick as appropriate)**

b)   A group of organize people, who declare control over an area in the community, wear the same symbols, have a name for the gang and commit crime   ☐

c)   A group of friends that live on the same council state or area wear the same symbols, have a name for   the   gang   but   do   not necessarily commit crime   ☐

d)   Other (please explain)

| |
| |

2. From your knowledge, which of these 'gangs' operate around Goodhope and how
   long have they been in the area?

Name	Area	colour	Number of months / Years

3. What do they do? (Tick as many as it applies)

a) Nothing ☐   b) Sale drugs ☐   c) Intimidate ☐   d) Assault ☐
e) Rape ☐ f) Robbery ☐ g) Graffiti ☐ h) Music / Videos ☐
i) Gun crime ☐   j) Knife crime ☐   k) Sale guns ☐

4. Are you aware of any 'gangs' within Goodhope schools?   Yes ☐
No ☐
If yes, what 'gangs' and in which schools are they?

| |
| |

5. Have you ever been asked to join a gang? Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, how safe did you feel to answer either way and why? What do you have to do as a 'gang' member?

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6. Is there any area/s (within Goodhope) in which you do not feel safe to be or pass by?
Yes ☐   No ☐   **If yes, which area and why?**

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7. Are there any services (i.e. youth clubs, Gyms, library) that you are not able to use because 'gangs' are around? Yes ☐ No ☐   **if yes, name the service please**

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8. Have you ever experienced gang-related violence (either as a executor or as a victim)?
Yes ☐   No ☐ **If yes could you briefly explain an occasion where this occurred?**

**Contact details: Cristià Esimi-Cruz (Social Worker) 02089XXXX
email: cristia.esimi@goodhope.gov.uk**

**All information obtained in the course of the research would be considered privileged information and will under no circumstances be publicly disclosed in any way that would identify any individual or organisation (except if subpoenaed by a court).

Appendix 8

Synthesis of Farrington's Discussion of Conclusions and Controversies of Developmental Theories	
Widely Accepted Conclusions about Development of Offending	**Controversial Questions**
The prevalence of offending peaks between ages fifteen and nineteen. Prevalence refers to the overall proportion of the population who offends	Although the prevalence of offending peaks in the late teen years, little is known about the variation of the frequency of individual offending with age: Do most offenders peak in their late teens, or do they persist?
Onset peaks between ages eight and fourteen, and desistance peaks between ages twenty and twenty-nine	Does the seriousness of the crimes that offenders commit vary with age or stay relatively the same?
The earlier the age of onset, the longer the duration of the criminal career and the greater the overall number of crimes	Is an earlier age of onset associated with a greater frequency of individual offending or a higher overall average seriousness in offending? Are early-onset offenders different in some way from late-onset offenders?
Although antisocial behaviour in childhood is highly correlated with offending behaviour in adulthood, individuals can still change over time	Do the risk factors for early onset of offending also have a causal effect on offending itself, or are there a unique set of predictors?
A small proportion of the population commits a large proportion of crimes	Do chronic offenders commit more serious offences than non-chronic offenders, and are thy fundamentally different in some way?
It does not help much to focus on "specialized offenders", since most offenders are versatile.	
Most crimes through the teenage years are committed with others, and most crimes committed afterward are committed solo.	
Whereas during the teenage years nonutilitarian factors, such as excitement or boredom, can motivate offending in adulthood, utilitarian motives, such as pecuniary gain or revenge become more dominant.	
Different types of offences are associated with different age groups. For example, offenders usually shoplift before the turn to burglary, and they turn to robbery last. In their earlier years, they tend to diversify to different types of offences and in later years tend to specialize.	Are onset sequences, such as these, representation of a general construct (criminal potential) or more reflective of a gateway effect (one must learn to shoplift first, and this leads to burglary and so forth)

Table 15-1 (Bernard et al, 2010: 312)