Closing the 'security gap'
Young people, 'street life' and knife crime

Peter Robert Traynor

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
School of Law

July, 2016

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Peter Robert Traynor to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Image used on posters © Banksy. Reproduced with kind permission of the estate of Banksy http://banksy.co.uk

Acknowledgements

This thesis has taken up a significant portion of my life. A task of such magnitude could not have been done alone, and I am indebted to many people who have supported me in different ways over this period, to which this list of acknowledgements cannot do justice.

I would like to thank my family and friends most sincerely for putting up with my protracted absences over this period, and my complaining presence. My mum Anne has been wonderful and a solid rock throughout. My brother Richard and sister-in-law Aurora have been hugely supportive, as have my friends, including Ade and Jenny, Ben, Col, Giovanni and Kim, Graham and Julia, Herabans, Irene, Liam, Mike B, Mike G, Phil, Shane and Sue, Sophie, and many more. Thanks guys. Also thanks to Colin and his crew at Sudden Movements, for helping me stay strong for the extra lap of this marathon.

Many thanks to colleagues, ex-colleagues and fellow students in the School of Law, too numerous to mention, who provided friendship, encouragement and understanding. First and foremost, I must thank my supervisors Adam Crawford and Stuart Lister, for their guidance, enthusiasm and superhuman levels of patience. Adam and Sam Lewis initially encouraged me to do this PhD, and I really appreciate the opportunity to have done so. I am also grateful to Stuart for his constant insistence that I need to 'write tight'. I should also offer a special thank you to Richard Peake, who has been a constant source of encouragement and calm strength throughout this process. Richard, as well as Nic Hunter, Emer McDonnell, Heather Sears, Josh Skoczylis, Andrea Tara Chand and Dave Thompson read drafts of my thesis, for which I am very grateful. I would also like to thank everyone in Staff and Student Development for their support and kindness.

I am deeply indebted to the young people who took part in the research and without whom the research would not have been possible, and to the many unnamed agencies and individuals who devoted time and effort to making the research happen. Many of the people who took part in, and supported this research, lived and worked in very difficult

circumstances and their humour, resilience and interest in this study was very humbling. I hope I have done some justice to your contributions.

Finally, I would like to thank Anh. You have shown unrelenting belief in me throughout this period, and have given love and patience every day. I could not have asked for more, but you have also pushed me to become better and to work harder and this thesis is much better for it. And, of course, our beautiful daughters, Linh and Violet, who have provided such joy along the way that any difficulties have seemed minor in comparison.

Abstract

This thesis explores the social meanings applied to the carrying and use of knives as a weapon, by young people living in areas with high rates of knife crime and violence. The thesis situates data, generated through interviews and focus groups, within a theoretical framework based around the concept of 'street life', as a place in which young people, often in groups, draw on street codes as a response to the extant violence and a 'security gap' in their neighbourhoods. This 'gap' was experienced to a greater or lesser extent by most of the young people who took part in the research, and was bound up in ongoing 'integrational difficulties' experienced in adolescence, and exacerbated by experiences of deprivation and marginality. Some participants responded to violence by adhering to a street code that exposed them to violence, and, reproduced the violence they sought to confront. Non-offending young people were able to draw on a 'civic code' as a means of sustaining collective resilience. Social integration is shown to provide a crucial form of resilience for participants. In the absence of sources of collective resilience, the knife represented for many participants a *proxy* form of resilience. Participants were sometimes able to cultivate more effective forms of integration and social resilience as they disengaged with 'street life' and, as a consequence, the knife as a source of protection became increasingly redundant. In this sense, the thesis is about how young people create and sustain identities, integration and resilience in difficult circumstances, and the sometimes-misguided ways in which they seek to do this. Thus, the thesis adds novel empirical and conceptual findings to normative and subcultural understandings, not just of knife carrying but of gangs, and other collective responses to violence.

Preface

The idea for this research came from the observation that there was a shortage of qualitative research on knife crime. Not only did this suggest a 'gap in the market', but it also seemed quite inexplicable and even outrageous, given the high profile that knife crime had enjoyed for over ten years. At the time, I had been working with young people on a project looking at the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, and this study seemed like a natural progression, given that I had an existing network of organisations who might assist in the research, and had demonstrated some ability to interview an occasionally difficult and unpredictable cohort.

I was mugged once, in 1998, by two young black men, in a dark alley in Sheffield. As I tried to resist them I realised that had either of them been carrying a knife I would have walked right onto it. I was lucky and survived with only a black eye and a bruised ego. Later that same evening I read on the news that a judicial review of the Stephen Lawrence case had determined that the initial suspects in the case would not be re-tried (this was subsequently overturned). I wondered then and now if there was some link between these two events, or if it was just a coincidence. I also wonder what happened to the two young men. Did they grow up into happy adults? I did come to understand at least some of the reasons for the limited amount of research on knife carrying. Doing the research necessitated spending many hours traipsing around sometimes menacing housing estates, and I interviewed several young men who confessed that in other circumstances I might be one of their victims. At the same time, I did not interview one person who seemed to fit the monstrous stereotype we read about in headlines on knife crime. In fact, over the course of the research I encountered a great deal of humour. Many participants expressed an optimism that was surprising, given the grimness of their surroundings and circumstances. This thesis and any subsequent work I do on this issue is dedicated to all of the young people who took part. It is also dedicated to all those who have been a victim of knife crime, and to those nameless boys who roughed me up in an alley in Sheffield.

Table of Contents

List of tables and figures

Table of acronyms

Full title	Acronym
Association of Chief Police Officers	ACPO
British Crime Survey	BCS
Crime Survey for England and Wales	CSEW
Data Protection Act	DPA
Edinburgh Youth Transitions Survey	EYTS
Hospital Episode Statistics	HSE
National Health Service	NHS
Office for National Statistics	ONS
Pupil Referral Unit	PRU
Tackling Knives Action Programme	TKAP
World Health Organisation	WHO
Youth Justice Board	YJB
Youth Offending Service	YOS
Youth Offending Team (s)	YOT (s)

Part 1: Context, concepts and methodology

Chapter One: Introduction

Thinking about knives

I had a chance to have a childhood, at least for a little bit, you know? I felt I had to become a man early to deal with my environment.
(Nasir 'Nas' bin Olu Dara Jones', quoted in the documentary 'Time is Illmatic' One9, 2014).

We can be inspirational and clever, but they [young people who carry knives] don't want to [be], because they think they're hard…they think they're big, hard, protective, all of that. (Focus group participant, Yorkshire).

The quotes presented on the previous page illustrate some of the central points in this thesis. Taken together they highlight an important tension in the research between those who engage in an offending lifestyle and 'street life' as it is conceived of below, and those who do not. The first quote is from a documentary about the seminal American hip hop artist 'Nas'. The film explores the rapper's early life in a tough suburb of Brooklyn, New York, and the 'street' environment in which he grew up. The second quote is from a participant who took part in one of the focus groups conducted for this research. It illustrates a frustration felt by many participants about the presence of violence in their neighbourhoods, and the negativity that this engenders. As shall be seen, both perspectives contribute to an understanding of why some young people sometimes carry a knife.

The phrase 'knife crime' suggests a series of notorious and tragic events, the memories of which sit deep in the collective psyche of the nation. Damilola Taylor, for instance, was a smiling ten-year-old boy from Nigeria, who died in November 2000 after being stabbed, in Peckham, London, by two boys from his school. Philip Lawrence, a London headmaster, was stabbed to death in 1995, whilst intervening in a gang attack on one of his pupils. Perhaps the most notorious incident in recent years was the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a young black man, at a bus stop in south east London on the evening of the 22nd of April 1993. This racially motivated attack set off a chain of events that still reverberate today: it generated multiple trials; changes to the law, and, with the publication in 1999 of the Macpherson report, an intense period of reflection about British society and the problems of youth violence and institutionalised racism. In 2014, the murder of school teacher Ann Maguire, in Leeds, by one of her pupils, prompted renewed outrage, political debate and a raft of responses. There have been more incidents since then.

Whilst the tragic incidents described above were all different, most of them nonetheless shared some common themes: the centrality of a knife in the incidents and in the narratives used to describe the incidents; the links, whether real or imagined, to 'gang' activity; a complex racial component; and, the fact that they were all explained as horrific

outbreaks of violence, with little exploration of the wider origins of the violence, or of the carrying of weapons by the young people involved. An excerpt is reproduced below of a recent report in the Sun newspaper which references many of these issues. It is a report on the trial in Derbyshire of a sixteen-year-old accused of murdering another young man with a knife (Cambridge, 2016):

> The court heard [the victim] had been buying food and drink from a Tesco with two friends. But after they left the store, one of his friends commented that a woman walking by was "fit"…a friend of the defendant overheard the comment and informed the teenager who decided to pursue [the victim's] group…[they] then became aware of "an angry mob" as the 16-year-old "set about provoking a fight". The court heard [the victim] "said expressly that he had no wish to fight 15-year-olds, asking what they were going to do". But...the youth replied: "What am I going to do? You don't know who I am?" The jury heard the teen then drew a "particularly sinister knife" from a bag hanging around his neck but [the victim] said: "You're not going to use that; you're not going to stab anyone"…the boy held the knife to [the victim]'s throat but he managed to push him back…But [the victim] was stabbed in the chest and taken to hospital before he died later that day. The 16-year-old denies murder.

Such incidents are not rare by any means, but they are less common than they might seem, and are magnified by the coverage given to them in the media. By contrast, as is discussed further below, the vast majority of knife carrying does not result in serious injury, and therefore goes largely unnoticed. Moreover, and despite the frequency with which such tragic events *seem* to occur, research on knife crime remains sparse, and the data are often incomplete, flawed and badly presented. A notable absence of high quality research can be linked to an apparent incoherence in existing governmental approaches to reducing knife carrying and crime. This research project was borne from a recognition of these problems and a desire to contribute in a small way to a better understanding of the issues involved. This chapter introduces the study. The first section below locates the study in the overall policy and academic context. The second section introduces the research questions and objectives. The third section describes the research design and methodology adopted in the study. The fourth section defines some key concepts that are used in the research. The final section outlines the overall structure of the thesis.

Policy and academic context

Concerns about knife crime are by no means new. As early as the 1860s, outrage over stiletto wielding Neapolitans 'rollicking about Whitechapel' (Pearson, 1983: 131) excited the public and politicians, and reflected wider fears of a dangerous underclass. Contemporary concerns about knife crime are not *just* 'moral panics' (Cohen, 1973) however, but reflect real changes in the behaviour of young people. For much of the 1990s and 2000s, incidents of violence perpetrated by young people rose, according to most indicators. Evidence suggests that this trend has recently started to reverse (Ministry of Justice, 2013), in line with wider declines in interpersonal violence throughout most of the western world (Ray, 2011). However, as is outlined in the next chapter, pockets of extreme violence remain, generally in the most deprived areas of the country (Golding *et al.,* 2008; Brennan, Shepherd and Moore, 2010; House of Commons, 2009).

Knife carrying is also subject to peaks and troughs and by various indicators appears to have been in decline since the start of this project. Significant problems remain though. Knives and other sharp instruments were used in a total of 25,972 offences recorded by the police between January 2013 and January 2014 in England and Wales. Roughly half (11,928) of these offences were robbery, and the other half (11,910) were for actual/grievous bodily harm (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Whilst this is significant, it nonetheless represents only six *per cent* of all crimes committed over the same period (Office for National Statistics, 2014a). Only one *per cent* of all knife offences involved homicide, which represents less than a fraction of all offences (Office for National Statistics, 2014b). Over the same year, there were 16,391 convictions for possession offences, which did not result in any injury. Indeed, conservative estimates from surveys suggest that *significantly* more young people carry a knife than are caught for carrying a knife (Anderson *et al.,* 2010; Hall and Innes, 2010; Philips and Chamberlain, 2006).

According to existing research, the majority of young people who have carried a knife, when asked, claim that they did so for the purpose of 'self-defence' (Flatley *et al.*, 2010;

Anderson *et al.,* 2010; Roe and Ashe, 2008). Other than this, little is known about those who carry knives, those who used knives, or their victims. In 2007 Eades *et al.*, (2007: 7) conducted a wide-ranging review of the literature, and concluded that there is 'relatively little detailed information on knife crime: who is committing it, who is suffering it, the reasons for it and the best ways of reducing it'. Little was known about those young people who carry knives, or why they carry knives, beyond a list of 'risk factors' and some fairly rudimentary survey data. Research interest has increased in the years since then (see for instance Bannister *et al.*, 2010; McVie; 2010; Firmin, *et al.*, 2007; Aldridge and Medina, 2007), but there remains a lack of understanding about the issues described above, especially in relation to knife *carrying*. For instance, little is known about the relationship between outbursts of the most extreme violence, and those times when a knife is present but not used to scare or injure. Little is known about those people who are injured with a knife but not fatally. Similarly, little is known about the experiences of the wider body of young people who negotiate violence, knives and knife carriers in their daily lives.

Despite the lack of a solid research base, the government in England and Wales has been busy in its efforts to tackle knife crime, and has pursued, over several administrations, an increasingly aggressive drive to both catch and convict young people who are caught carrying a knife, and, to send more of them to prison (Ministry of Justice, 2014a; Ministry of Justice, 2014b). Whilst this has been leavened to a small extent by some innovative approaches, involving social and developmental preventive measures, it is not always clear how effective these initiatives have been. Much of the rhetoric generated by knife crime must be viewed through the lens of political strategic agendas driven by the media and competition for votes, in the wider context of ongoing social and political anxieties about young people and 'street life' that are both contemporary and timeless (Cohen, 1973; Pearson, 1983). Some commentators have gone so far as to suggest that public and media concerns about knife crime have been used to push through a punitive agenda towards young people and to justify increasingly early intervention in their lives. Indeed, Squires (2009: 139) has argued that concerns about knife crime and youth violence have led to the 'gangsterisation' of approaches to youth

violence. This 'directly percolate[s]' (Squires, 2009: 140) into law enforcement which consequently becomes harsher and more punitive. 'At risk' young people are overwhelmingly presented as troublesome, dangerous, out of control, and in need of greater regulation (Valentine, 1996; Lee, 2001; Stephen and Squires 2004). As shall be explored in this thesis, regulation and intervention can exacerbate young people's offending.

The absence of good quality data and research has significant consequences for an understanding of knife crime: it generates 'unhelpful' reporting, and, sends mixed messages about the extent of knife crime and the best ways of tackling it (Eades *et al.,* 2007: 31). The carrying of knives by young people *is* a significant problem, but responses to the problem so far have tended to focus on some aspects of the problem, in particular young people's transgression, whilst ignoring other aspects, especially legitimate concerns about security and wellbeing. These narratives have less to do with justice and security and more to do with directing attention away from structural sources of crime (Wyn and White, 1997; Squires, 2009) and the increasingly uneven distribution of 'risk' (Beck, 1992). This contributes to an atmosphere which fuels punitive and retributive policies and undermines counter-currents of restorative justice and rehabilitation (Eades *et al.,* 2007; Squires, 2009). The high media profile that knife crime has enjoyed over the last twenty years or so has done little to raise awareness of young people's experiences of violence. This is not a new phenomenon, as Franklin (1995: 2) noted twenty years ago, 'instead of policies to protect children in the community, the government and the media have preferred to promote policies to protect the community from children'. In truth, the risk that a young person will be a victim of violent crime is significantly greater than the likelihood that they will be a perpetrator of violent crime, and the greater degree of violence is directed towards them not by peers, but by adults (Muncie, 2009).

In summary, there is a lack of good quality research; an absence of young people's voices; and, a lack of specific in depth knowledge related to why young people carry knives. This is in the context of the ongoing demonization of young people, and progressively more

punitive responses to youth misbehaviour. These considerations were central the inception of this study, and to the research design and methodology employed in the study. This is described below.

Research design and methodology

The considerations outlined above suggested three primary objectives for the study. First, to engage with young people who had carried knives, so as to explore their motivations for having done so, the processes that led to their carrying, and any related experiences they might have had. Second, to consider any influences in relation to why they had *stopped* carrying a knife and/or committing knife crime, including the role of regulatory orders and formal attempts to reduce and deter knife crime. Third, to explore wider attitudes towards knives and those who carry them, among a broader population of young people, especially among those who live or study along-side those young people who carried knives. Three initial research questions were formulated to achieve this end:

1. What experiences and processes lead young people to start carrying a knife and to stop carrying a knife?
2. How do young people who carry knives understand, justify and make sense of their knife carrying?
3. How do young people who do *not* carry knives understand and make sense of knife carrying?

The concept of 'street life' was central to the thesis. This provided a framework in which to explore knife crime, and the formal and informal regulatory orders that might impact on knife carrying. 'Street life', as described further in the thesis, was conceptualized as comprising subjective spatial and temporally structured behaviors, including offending and collective violence, influenced by a violent 'street code'. Whilst a street code might have a role in the generation of violence in deprived areas, there were other and conflicting normative imperatives that might also have an impact – not just from adult actors like parents, teachers and the police, but also from young people. This suggested

the value of engaging not just with those who had carried knives, but also young people more broadly who shared the street. How these themes were explored and turned into a series of specific questions, exercises and research schedules is considered in more depth below.

The selection of a qualitative methodology

The empirical research for this thesis employed a qualitative methodology to engage with young people. A qualitative methodology was chosen principally for two reasons. First, as discussed already, there is a dearth of qualitative research on knife carrying, and consequent gaps in knowledge on this issue. There is also an absence of young people's voices on this issue. Knife crime is something that everyone has an opinion on, as was apparent from the start of this project, but very few people have ever knowingly spoken to someone who has carried or has a knife to commit an offence. Even fewer have really tried to understand why they might engage in this behaviour. The same can be said of the research community. Whilst much of the criminological enterprise is concerned with the activities of young people, there has been relatively little attention paid to their perspectives, and there remains a pressing need to 'embed' young offenders' narratives into theories of offending (Bottrell *et al.*, 2010: 59). A greater commitment to the voices of young people would 'supplement other explanations of crime' and might provide 'important feedback to governance systems' (Bottrell *et al.*, 2010: 59; see also Marfleet, 2008; Squires, 2009). If the voices of young offenders are neglected in research, those of young people who do not offend but are at risk of offending are even more neglected, and might have something important to contribute to understandings of knife crime.

The second reason for choosing a qualitative methodology, and which was integral to the first reason, was that a qualitative methodology was sensitive and sympathetic to both the research problem, and the chosen research participants. Quantitative methods provide a powerful tool for exploring patterns of behaviour, but they often neglect those who are not easy to identify, locate or engage with, such as offenders and especially young people. Such groups do not fit into neatly structured sampling strategies, and are

often hidden in research and constructions of crime (Taylor and Kearney, 2005). Qualitative research provides, by contrast, the means and methods for effectively *engaging* with some of these groups. One of the strengths of qualitative research is an ability to explore how individuals understand, interpret and respond to their experiences (Becker, 1986; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Morrow, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). This can be especially useful when broaching difficult subjects and/or engaging with 'at risk' and 'hard to reach' groups including young offenders, victims of violence and young people more generally (Taylor and Kearney, 2005).

The choice of methodology had implications for the selection of the most appropriate research methods. This is described below.

Research methods
The empirical research for this thesis employed both narrative and realist traditions, and two principal methods: in-depth interviews and group interviews. The fieldwork for the research was conducted between March 2011 and September 2013. In total, 23 participants (aged between nine and nineteen: 21 males, 2 females) who had carried a knife were interviewed, and a further 64 participants (aged between twelve and eighteen: 34 males and 30 females) who had not carried a knife but who lived in or near areas of deprivation and/or high levels of violence took part in six group interviews. Over a period of nearly two years I travelled regularly to several locations in Yorkshire and London, and visited four separate Youth Offending Team offices; five youth groups, both statutory and charitable; several schools, a Youth Intervention Project (YIP) and engaged with a university-based initiative designed to encourage school leavers from 'non-academic' backgrounds to go to university.

The focus of the research was predominantly on urban communities, where a substantial proportion of illegal knife carrying and serious knife crime occurs (see Chapter Two) and where much 'street life' is located. This objective guided the selection of agencies to approach, based on previous research experience, stories in the media, various statistical

sources, and local knowledge. At the same time, the selection of the research sites, research sample and the recruitment of participants was determined as much by 'pragmatic' (Wincup, 2013: 100) imperatives as empirical or methodological considerations. In particular, the role of 'gatekeepers' was central to the conduct of the fieldwork. Gatekeepers provided access to participants, but they also directly influenced both the selection of the research *sites*, and the selection of research *participants*, as described further in Chapter Four. The thesis also used some innovative methods including vignettes and spatial mapping to stimulate debate and reflection among participants. In doing so the research adds to the methodological literature on working with 'hard to reach' groups, in addition to its empirical and conceptual contributions. The presentation of the findings is described below.

Presentation of the findings

The idea that offending could be explained through the concept of a 'pathway' initially had greater prominence in this thesis. As is discussed further in the thesis, there are aspects of knife carrying behaviour that seem to fit with the step by step progression implied by the notion of a pathway or a trajectory, not least that for most young people knife carrying has a clear beginning, middle and end. The idea subsequently became less important, as other conceptual frameworks became more salient, especially around street codes and 'street life'. Nonetheless, a pathways *motif* helped to shape the overall structure of the thesis and can be seen, in particular, in the structure of the first two findings chapters which focus respectively on pathways into, and out of, knife carrying.

There are different ways in which the data from the empirical research could have been presented and there is a lack of consistency in existing qualitative research, in terms of presentation of, for instance, verbatim data. The findings chapters (Five, Six and Seven), and the discussion and conclusion chapters (Eight and Nine) use a simple format. Each chapter starts with an exemplar quote which is used to illustrate key points made in the chapter. This quote and all subsequent quotes are presented in block text. Occasionally the researcher's voice is also present, this is differentiated from the main quote by being

presented in *italic*. Signifiers are not used ahead of quotes as is sometimes done, but rather, where the quote is from an interview, information relating to the participant is added in brackets after the quote. This includes the individual's name (a pseudonym either chosen by the participant during the interview or assigned by the researcher afterwards), general location, their age at time of interview and their ethnicity (either self-assigned or suggested by documentation), when this data was provided/collected. Because the majority of participants in the interviews were male, gender is not specified except for those occasions where a female spoke, and their gender was pertinent to what they said, in which case this is specified in the preliminary text. When presenting data from the group interviews, the various contributors' voices are not differentiated. Information on each interview is presented in brackets under the quote.

In both the one-to-one and group interviews there are times when it was necessary to remove a piece of information, to guard anonymity. Where this was done, for example where a location had to be changed/removed, square brackets are used, and the most appropriate signifier, usually a descriptive noun or phrase, is put in its place. This might be [city] or [local area] instead of the name of the city or area. Where names occur in the text they are always pseudonyms. The next section clarifies some key concepts that are used throughout this thesis.

Clarifying some general concepts

This section defines some of the general concepts used in the thesis. Some specific concepts are defined later in the document - 'street life', for instance, is defined substantively in Chapter Three.

Defining 'youth'

The concept of 'youth' is used exhaustively in academic studies, policy documents, media reporting and indeed public discussion, yet remains ill-defined (Barry, 2006). Youth is generally regarded as the period between childhood and adulthood, and is broadly

coterminous with *adolescence*. It is frequently used pejoratively though, and in ways that link youth with misbehaviour and crime. When offending is introduced into the discussion, things become more complicated. In the United Kingdom, the legal age of criminal responsibility is ten, but a *child* is defined as someone under the age of 17. At the same time, a *young adult* is defined as someone aged between 18 and 25, after that, legally at least, they are subject to exactly the same rights and responsibilities as an adult (Gov.co.uk, 2016). 'Youth' then, can be seen as much as a social and political construct as it refers to an actual observable reality (James and Prout, 1997). Indeed, much of the literature on youth offending cited in this thesis refers to 'youth' as both a developmental *period*, and a specific *age* at which a person is subject to specific culturally determined challenges. The participants in this research were aged between nine and nineteen – several could then be classed as *children*. They had though carried a knife, and, were capable of discussing this behaviour. For the purposes of this thesis then, youth and 'young person' or 'young people' are used interchangeably as general terms to describe someone who has not yet fully attained adulthood but who is cogent and able to engage in offending, and, able to participate in research. Offending as a concept is defined below.

Defining 'offending'

A 'crime' can be defined among other things as the commission of an act proscribed by *law* (Emsley, 1994), or as behaviour that transgresses *moral* rules (Blackburn, 1993). Legal definitions focus on liability for the commission of a crime (*actus reus*) and the intention behind the crime (*men's rea*), but the definition of a crime itself is contextual. Punching somebody on the street might be defined as an offence, but punching somebody in an organised boxing contest would not (Ray, 2011).

An important distinction is made in this and subsequent chapters between 'offending knife carriers' and 'non-offending knife carriers'. The latter might technically have committed an *illegal act* – that of carrying a knife, whilst the former might offend significantly, according to their own accounts, but had not necessarily been convicted of an offence. The difference is one of *lifestyle* rather than legal definition, and a more precise distinction

might have been made between those knife carriers who were or had been engaged in what is defined further below as 'street life', and those knife carriers who were not and had not been. This is a somewhat complicated phraseology however, and for purposes of brevity and simplicity, and unless specified otherwise, 'offender' is used as shorthand for someone engaged in an offending/street oriented lifestyle, which may have involved the commission of offences according to their own accounts, even if they have not been caught or convicted for these offences. Conversely, 'non-offender' is used to refer to someone who is demonstrably *not* street oriented or engaged in an offending lifestyle, according to their own accounts, even where they had been convicted for a single offence related to the carrying of a knife. Whilst not technically precise, this usage is more representative of the data, where the similarities are most evident between those engaged in 'street life', regardless of whether or not they have a conviction, and between those who may have carried a knife but are not engaged in 'street life'. 'Knife crime' is considered in more depth below.

Defining 'knife crime'

Defining what constitutes 'knife crime' is a difficult task, and given that it is a container concept, there is continued debate as to how best to conceptualise what comprises a complex set of behaviours. One problem relates to the distinction between *carrying* a knife, and *using* a knife. A knife must first be carried to commit a crime. Whether carrying a knife is legally classified as an offence is dependent on the type of knife being carried and the circumstances of the carrying. The carriage of certain knives, such as a pen-knife or a knife under a certain length, is not necessarily classed as a crime, nor is carrying a knife for occupational purposes. Conversely, carrying a knife in specific locations, such as near to or on school premises, is regarded as a more serious offence than carrying a knife generally, and is subject to more stringent sanctions. A knife can be 'used' beyond carrying in two principal ways: to threaten, or to injure. This covers a range of further sub-offences such as mugging, wounding and homicide (Berman, 2012) which are currently classified as 'knife enabled offences' (ACPO/Home Office, 2007). Using a knife to threaten or injure is generally regarded as a crime, except when used in self-defence (in some circumstances). To add to this confusion, some crimes may be committed without

the use of a knife, but may still constitute or be recorded as a knife crime. Eades *et al.,* (2007) cite as an example a burglar caught breaking into a house who happens to have a knife in his bag. If caught in the act of committing the burglary, he could potentially be prosecuted for carrying a knife, or for carrying a knife with intent to harm. If he is apprehended in the street, he could be prosecuted for aggravated possession. The crucial issue here is *intent.* A knife can be legally carried if it is under a certain length, but if it is carried with demonstrable intent to harm, this would still constitute an offence. Conversely, a tradesman might carry a knife that is classified as illegal, but which is justified or necessitated by his trade (Berman, 2012).

For the purposes of this study then, 'knife carrying' is used in reference to the carrying of knives which are either illegal, such as a specialist knife manufactured for the sole purpose of being used as a weapon, or, where a knife is carried that is technically legal, but where it was carried with demonstrably malicious intent, or has been found by a court to be as such. 'Knife use' is used to describe all other forms of illegitimate activities involving a knife, beyond carriage – this might involve activities that cause physical harm and those that do not physically harm – such as using a knife to threaten or coerce (Brennan and Moore, 2009). Three further terms are used frequently throughout the thesis: 'knife crime' is used as a generic and interchangeable term for all illegal knife related criminal behaviour, including carrying a knife and using a knife to harm, whilst 'knife offence' relates to an offence that has been formally recorded as such. A third term refers to knives and 'other sharp instruments'. This must be done because some data, especially police data, does not always distinguish between, for instance, a knife and a glass bottle, even though the circumstances in which these different weapons are used are likely to be different. In fact, relatively few such incidents actually involve a sharp instrument, and the majority of these are actually knife related incidents. As is discussed further in this thesis, much knife carrying is associated with 'gang' activities and membership. This is considered below.

Defining 'gangs'

The concept of a gang is frequently associated with the other terms defined in this section: youth; offending; and, knife crime. Despite its popularity, the term 'gang' remains ill-defined. The concept of a gang emerged from early studies in America. Frederick Thrasher (1927) studied some 1300 gangs in Chicago. For him, a gang was defined by both its behaviour and structure:

> 'The gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict.' (Thrasher, 1927: 46).

Whether or not definitions that emerged in an American context can be applied to the British context remains a moot point (Bannister and Fraser, 2008; Tierney, 1996). For a long time, British gangs were regarded as lacking both the 'coherent structure and the deep engagement in criminal activities' of their American counterparts, although there is increasing evidence that British gangs are becoming more organised and more orientated towards significant criminal activities (Tierney, 1996: 190).

Definitions of a gang must also address the discrepancy between what a gang actually is or does, and what a gang is *perceived* as being or doing. Many young people gather together in groups, and some engage in anti-social behaviour, but the majority reject popular stereotypes of a gang and allusions to criminal activities (Bannister *et al.*, 2010; Aldridge and Medina, 2007). Indeed, referring to young people's groupings as gangs can stigmatise young people and risks labelling otherwise unproblematic behaviour as criminal (Smithson and Ralphs, 2016; Bannister, *et al.*, 2010; Hallsworth and Young, 2004). At its most extreme, there is evidence that referring to a group of young people as a gang can cement a previously fluid identity and even generate increased offending (Bannister and Fraser, 2008; Aldridge and Medina, 2007). Gang membership can provide continuity, support and protection, and a sense of belonging to local territory (Kintrea *et al.*, 2008). What has been called the 'gang complex' (Fraser, 2011:4) is the idea that prevailing stereotypes of gangs as overwhelmingly violent and threatening can prejudice

both public and official perceptions of young people, whether in a 'gang' or not, which can have a damaging effect on young people, and, harden formal responses to young people. In fact, government rhetoric in England and Wales has, since the 2011 riots, focused on the 'eradication' of gangs with little objective consideration of what a gang really is or does (Bannister and Fraser, 2008: 96).

Because of the complexities described above, a number of terms and definitions have evolved to describe gangs. The Eurogang Network differentiates between three different forms of gang: an organised *criminal gang* composed mainly of adults is different to a *street gang*. The latter is defined as 'any durable, street-orientated youth group whose own self-identity includes involvement in illegal activity' (Klein *et al.*, 2006: 418). A further distinction is made between a street gang and a *delinquent youth group*, the latter being defined as a group of young people which is relatively new and engages in 'delinquency or criminal behaviour' (Pitts, 2007:10). The Home Office have adopted the latter term (Sharp *et al.*, 2006) and as noted already tends to frame gangs in wholly negative terms. This can neglect some of the positive aspects of gang membership however, not to mention the often long standing and historic origins of gangs in areas of deprivation and marginality (Bannister *et al.*, 2010; Aldridge and Medina, 2007). As a response to these concerns, the term 'troublesome youth group' is sometimes adopted by scholars when referring to groups of young people (Bannister, *et al.*, 2010). The concept is attractive because it is sensitive to the complexities of young people's collective behaviour, and the positive as well as negative connotations of gang membership. This thesis nonetheless explores young people's perceptions of 'gangs' and this is the term most frequently used by participants, even if at times they challenge its usage. Therefore for the purposes of this thesis, 'gang' is generally used to describe young people's groups, whether or not their group was involved in criminal activity, anti-social behaviour, or activities that would not be defined as neither of these.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is in two parts. Part One introduces the thesis and sets out the context of the research. It comprises four chapters. Chapter Two sets out the context of the research and outlines the nature and extent of knife carrying and knife crime in England and Wales. This includes a critical discussion of existing data and research, and an examination of political and legislative responses to knife crime. The concept of 'street life' is central to the thesis and Chapter Three develops this concept, and other concepts including street codes, masculine hegemonies, youth transitions and formal and informal regulatory orders. In reflecting on these, the chapter also introduces the concept of a 'security gap', which is developed further in Part Two. Chapter Four describes the research methodology employed in study, and explains how the themes and concepts introduced in Chapter Three were turned into specific questions, exercises and research schedules. This chapter also considers ethical and procedural matters and describes the analysis of the empirical data that were generated.

Part Two of the thesis comprises the main study findings, discussion and conclusions, and in particular develops the concept of a 'security gap' as a means of approaching knife carrying. Chapter Five explores pathways *into* knife carrying, with a focus on 'street life' and participants' experiences of violence and offending. Chapter Six explores pathways *out* of knife carrying and the impact of the criminal justice system on knife carrying in the context of youth transitions and disengagement with 'street life'. Chapter Seven examines knife carrying from the perspective of young people who have ostensibly *not* carried knives, and explores the normative orders sometimes deployed by young people in response to the presence of 'street life' and knife crime. Chapter Eight draws together the findings and develops the main concepts to emerge from the data, and with reference to the conceptual framework. Chapter Nine reflects on the thesis and highlights the novel empirical and theoretical contributions of the research. Based on these, the chapter also makes recommendations for policy responses to, and future research on, knife carrying, and any related matters foregrounded by this research.

Chapter Two: Context

Knife carrying in context: data, research and policy

Introduction

The previous chapter set the overall context of this thesis. The aim of this chapter is to refine the focus on the central empirical issues that the research is concerned with. It does this in three sections. The first section highlights some of the key trends in knife crime in England and Wales and then examines these trends with relation to age, ethnicity and gender to better understand who engages in knife crime. The second section critically interrogates the main explanations put forward for high rates of knife carrying, crime and victimisation among young people and links these experiences to material and social deprivation, violence in the local ecology and gang membership. The final section explores and evaluates the strategies adopted to tackle knife crime in England and Wales and some lessons that can be learnt from these. A conclusion draws these strands together and sets the context for the chapter to follow. The first section below explores trends in knife carrying and crime and locates these in the wider crime context.

As noted in the introduction to the thesis, there has historically been a dearth of good quality data on knife crime and this was one of the inspirations for conducting this thesis. Providing an accurate description of the nature and extent of 'knife crime' is therefore difficult. Official statistics on knife crime tend to under-estimate the problem. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW - formerly the British Crime Survey), for instance, is frequently cited in studies of knife crime, yet there are significant inaccuracies in the way in which knife carrying is reported by the CSEW, suggesting that this has probably led to a significant under-estimation of the problem (Eades *et al.*, 2007). Likewise, the Home Office Homicide Index publishes all recorded homicides in England and Wales annually, including those caused by 'fatal stabbings' (Maxwell *et al.*, 2007; Hall and Innes, 2010). This is regarded as a reliable indicator of the use of knives in fatal incidents, but relates to only a fraction of knife related incidents. A further problem is that some groups

are neglected in the data, especially 'hard to reach' groups (Talyor and Kearney, 2005). The CSEW has well documented problems reaching those who live in the most deprived areas, and until 2009 those under the age of 16 were omitted from the survey altogether (Flatley *et al.*, 2010). This is problematic because young people and those living in the most deprived areas are subject to significant levels of knife crime and related violence, and yet their voices remain unheard. It is nonetheless possible to say something about knife crime, this is done below.

Key trends in knife crime, and key characteristics of those who carry knives

This section describes and contextualises key trends in knife crime in England and Wales over the last twenty or so years. Whilst crime overall has been in decline over this period, trends in knife crime have proven more erratic, and this can be linked specifically to knife offences committed by young people.

Trends in crime, violent crime and knife crime

General crime trends are, overall, on a downward trajectory: recorded crime in England and Wales rose rapidly from the late 1950s and peaked at around 1995, after which levels of offending overall have declined. There have been occasional increases, often because of improvements in recording practices as much as real increases in crime (Kershaw *et al.*, 2008). Police data show that there were some three million officially recorded 'victim based' crimes in 2014, most which were theft offences (Office for National Statistics, 2015). By comparison, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) captures many crimes that do not come to the attention of the police. The CSEW for 2014 showed that there were nearly seven million incidents of crime against households and resident adults (aged 16 and over) in England and Wales over this period. This represented a seven *per cent* decrease compared with the previous year's survey, and was also the lowest estimate since the survey began in 1981 (Office for National Statistics, 2015). Both sets of data are presented in Figure 2.1., below, and describe a similar decline in offences.

Figure 2.1. Trends in recorded crime, 1981 to 2013
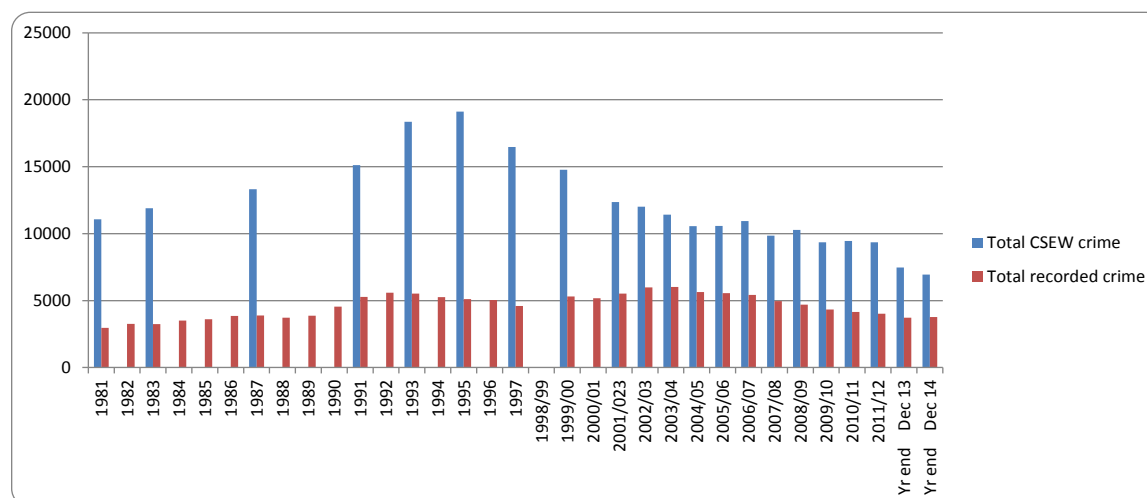
Violent crime has declined especially swiftly over the last 20 years. According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, between the 1995 and the 2013/14 surveys, the number of violent incidents fell from 3.8 million in 1995 to 1.3 million in 2013/14, as illustrated in the chart in Figure 2.2., below (Office for National Statistics, 2015). Despite this decline there were still significantly more than a million violent offences in 2014. This represented around a fifth of all crimes committed in England and Wales in 2014.

Figure 2.2. CSEW number of violent incidents (thousands) for adults over 16
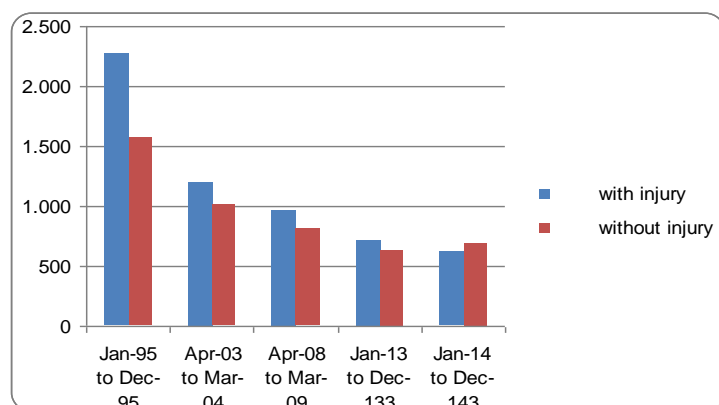
If offences are, on the whole, on a downward trajectory in England and Wales, trends in *knife offences* are more erratic. The use of a knife in the commission of a crime has remained 'remarkably stable' (Hall and Innes, 2010: 55) at between five *per cent* and eight

per cent of all offences between 1996 and 2013 (Hall and Innes 2010; Office for National Statistics, 2014a). This apparent stability masks some important variations. *Possession offences* constitute just over a third of all offences. There were 16,391 convictions for possession offences for the year March 2013 to March 2014 (Ministry of Justice, 2015). The majority of these were for possession only, whilst three *per cent* of possession offences in the same period were for the new offence of 'aggravated' possession where a knife has been used to threaten but not actually injure (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Trends in possession represent a significant and ongoing decline as shown in Figure 2.3., below. The data suggests a recent plateauing and possibly even a slight increase, although this as yet remains statistically insignificant.

Figure 2.3. Police recorded crime: knife possession offences resulting in a caution or sentence 2008 to 2015
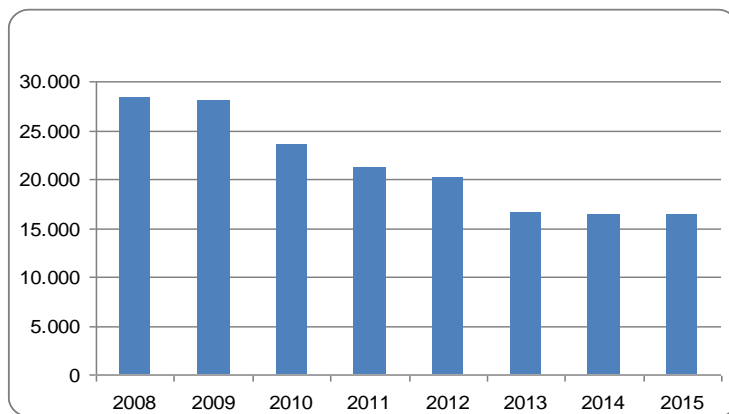
Source: Ministry of Justice, 2015.

Aside from possession offences, knives and other sharp instruments were used in a total of 25,972 offences recorded by the police in 2013 to 2014. The majority of offences were for *robbery* (11,928 offences) and actual/grievous bodily harm i.e. minor and very serious wounds (11,910 offences) (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Figure 2.4., below illustrates these trends between 2010 and 2014. These declines are significantly less pronounced than those for possession highlighted above.

Figure 2.4. Offences recorded by police in which a knife or sharp instrument was used, 2013/14
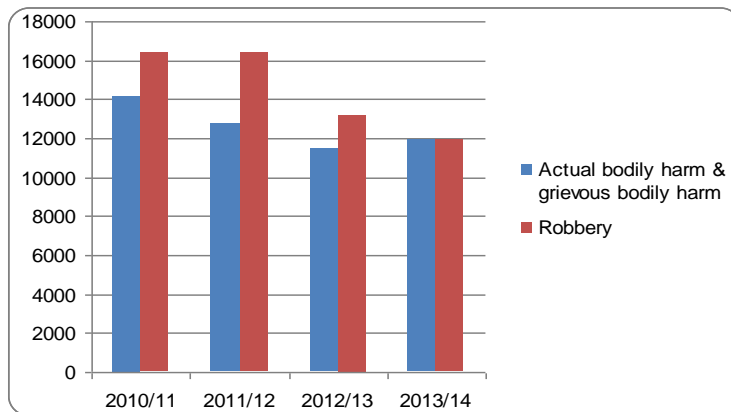
Source: Ministry of Justice, 2015.

The trend highlighted directly above is important. Robbery is defined as an incident in which 'force' (i.e. violence), or the 'threat of force' is used (Office for National Statistics, 2015: 30). As can be seen in the graph above, the number of incidences of actual and grievous bodily harm is only marginally lower than that of robbery. However, whilst violent crime represented around a fifth of all crimes committed in England and Wales in 2014, robbery accounted for less than two *per cent* of all police recorded crime in 2014, a reduction of 13 *per cent* on the previous year (Office for National Statistics, 2015). Except for a notable rise in the number of robberies in 2005/06 and 2006/07, there has been a general downward trend since 2002/03 in England and Wales. Robbery then represents only a small proportion of crime overall, but it nonetheless constitutes just under a third of all offences committed with a knife (Ministry of Justice, 2015). This is returned to in the next sub-section below.

If the data on offending are erratic, the data that exist on the *injuries* that arise from knives are emphatic, and injuries from knife crime have been increasing in severity until relatively recently. Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data shows that the number of admissions to National Health Service (NHS) hospitals for 'assault by sharp object' in England and Wales increased by 30 *per cent* between 1st April 1997 and 31st March 2005 (Maxwell *et al.,* 2007; Office for National Statistics, 2014b). Whilst some of this increase is because of improvements in recoding practices, because only those injuries requiring a hospital

bed are counted, probably only half of all assaults presenting to hospital are reported (Maxwell *et al.,* 2007). Moreover, the authors also note (Maxwell *et al.,* 2007: 188) that these findings are 'consistent' with findings from a range of studies that show that injuries from stabbings increased substantially between 1999 and 2007 (see also Sivarajasingam *et al.*, 2009; 2014) after which they began to decrease. Similarly, whilst homicide represents only one *per cent* of the total number of knives or sharp instrument offences in England and Wales, this nonetheless represents a significant increase on previous decades, and the use of a knife in fatal incidents has more than doubled in the last thirty years, increasing from 418 in 1977 to 953 in 2002/03, before falling to 723 in 2005/06 (Office for National Statistics, 2014b). Moreover, whilst murder rates represent only a fraction of all knife offences, about a third of all murders each year were committed with a knife between 1996 and 2008 (Coleman, 2008).

This sub-section has outlined general trends in crime and knife crime. These trends have not been evenly distributed across the population however, and there are distinct differences in terms of both knife carrying and being a victim of knife crime across different cohorts. To gain a better understanding of these patterns, the next three sections below examine trends in knife crime as determined by age, ethnicity and gender respectively.

Knife crime: a youth problem?

A great deal of the commentary on knife crime suggests that it is a problem of *youth*. As Berman (2013: 2) has noted 'Knife crime is a persistent and worrying concern, especially as it impacts particularly upon young people and the disadvantaged'. Findings from self-report surveys support the assertion that knife crime is a 'problem of youth' and suggest that the knife carrying reflects wider offending trajectories and the 'crime-age curve' (Farrington, 1986: 189; Moffit, 1993; see also Glueck and Glueck, 1937). Data from self-report surveys suggest that the vast majority of people who admit to carrying a knife are under-eighteen (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). The peak age for knife carrying is between 14 and 17, and according to the Offending Crime and Justice Survey six *per cent* of this age group claim to have carried a knife (Roe and Ashe, 2008). The Edinburgh Youth

Transitions Survey (EYTS) found that some 30 *per cent* of the sample had carried a knife between the age of 12 and 17, the peak age being 14, after which age knife carrying decreased substantially, except for a small cohort whose knife use increased (McVie, 2010). However, the vast majority of those convicted of carrying a knife would appear to be adults, however. The graph in Figure 2.5., below shows the total number of cautions for possession of a knife in England and Wales between the 2009 and 2015. The data suggest that around one in four people convicted for possession every year are under-eighteen.

Figure 2.5. Offences involving the possession of a knife or offensive weapon resulting in a caution or sentence by age group, in England and Wales[1], annually from year ending March 2009 and quarterly from Q4 2007
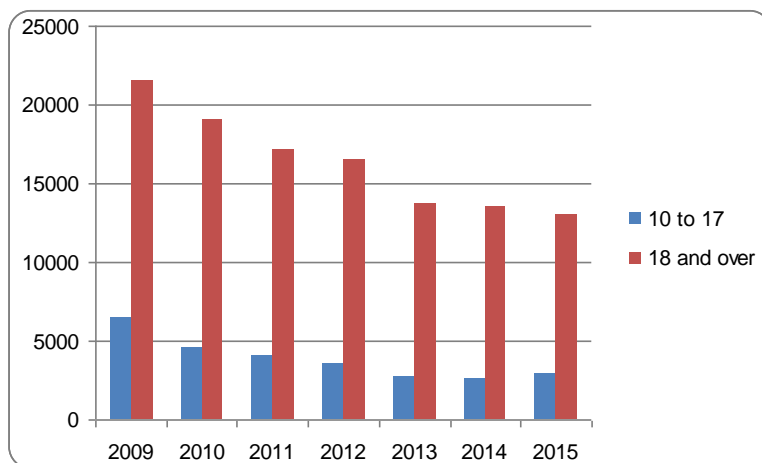
Source: Office for National Statistics, 2015.

Whilst still relatively high, if only one in four offences using a knife car committed by young people, this suggests that the problem may be less pronounced than it appears. As it is presented above, however, the data is crudely divided into two groups: those who are under-eighteen and those who are over-eighteen. This fails to differentiate between, for instance, someone who is twenty-one years old and someone who is fifty. An informal definition of 'young people' might include eighteen and nineteen year olds at least (Barry, 2006), and, given the significant drop off in offending found after the age of 20, it is quite likely that a significant proportion of those classed as adults are young adults (Farrington, 2005). Moreover, it is highly likely that a significant proportion of young people who carry a knife do not caught doing so. Indeed, possession offences for knife carrying have

declined in recent years, but the decline is much more marked for those aged over-eighteen than for those who are under-eighteen. This suggests that despite a decline in numbers for all age groups, knife carrying among under eighteens if is more durable – that is, 'young people' continue to carry knives even as those who reach adulthood are likely to stop carrying a knife, and adults overall are increasingly unlikely to carry a knife.

Data on injuries support the hypothesis above, and show that the greatest proportion of both offenders and victims of knife crime are those in their late teens and early twenties (House of Commons, 2009). The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Knife Crime report cites longitudinal analysis of the Crime Survey for England and Wales that shows that the average age of knife victims has declined steadily since 2004/05. More recent figures released by the Metropolitan Police to the Guardian Newspaper in 2011 (Hill, 2011) show a 30 *per cent* increase in the number of victims of knife crime aged between 13 and 24 in London between 2008 and 2011: around 60 *per cent* of these victims were teenagers.

Several studies have sought to *explain* the relation between age and knife crime but these have proved inconclusive. Indeed, the relationship between age and offending more generally was considered by Moffit (1993: 675) to be one of 'the most robust and the least understood observations' in criminology. This remains broadly the case today (Maruna, 2007). On the one hand, age as a variable does seem to have a direct influence on knife carrying and this runs along at least two dimensions. Bondy *et al.,* for instance (2005) found that increased aggressiveness and 'violence prone beliefs' (2005: 29) in their mid to late teens, in part prompted by increases in testosterone, made young men in Australia more likely to carry a knife. Similarly, a number of researchers have argued that young people's ability to make appropriate decisions are sometimes compromised by their immaturity (Marfleet, 2008; Barlas and Egan, 2006; Brennan and Moore, 2009, Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998).

Marfleet (2008) conducted focus groups with school pupils (n=72), and interviews with young men (n=4) who had been convicted of a knife offence. Whilst the author found that knife carrying was the result of complex problems, she highlights the importance of maturity and its influence on decision making, and argues that children are 'by definition immature' and those most likely to commit crimes are 'arguably the most immature of all' (2008: 14). Lemos (2004) draws attention to the 'fashion' aspect of knife carrying. He suggests that at least some young people carry knives because of peer pressure, and that knives for some are regarded as cool, or a fashion accessory. Moreover, as Lemos (2004. vii) has noted (see also Brennan and Moore, 2009), 'knives hold a particular fascination for children', particularly boys, regardless of social background. On the other hand, knife carrying does not occur evenly across all populations of young people. Educational and social disadvantage, deprivation, victimization and membership of an offending peer group have been shown to be significant predictors of knife carrying (see for instance Young *et al.*, 2007; House of Commons, 2009). These are still also associated with chronological age, but indirectly, and the relationship between age and knife carrying reduces significantly once other factors are taken into account.

Examining wider trends in youth offending can provide some additional insight. Youth offending increased significantly in the 1960s, but, like most other forms of offending steadily declined after 1995 (Philips and Chamberlain, 2006). It rose again during the early 2000s however and peaked around 2007/8 (Ministry of Justice, 2013). Between 2002/03 and 2012/13 the number of 'proven' offences committed by young people had fallen by 63 *per cent*: the largest reductions were in non-violent crimes however, whilst the smallest reduction was in robbery (Ministry of Justice (2013; 2014). *Robbery* is significant as it was also one of the crimes which saw a peak in 2006/2007 as was shown earlier in the chapter, and which drove the increase in overall figures for youth offending for that period. According to figures from the Youth Justice Board (Ministry of Justice, 2013) violence against the person, 'theft and handling' and criminal damage accounted for the majority of offences committed by under eighteens in 2013/2014. Crucially, however, whilst robbery appears to represent only a relatively small proportion

of the crimes committed by young people, it remains the crime most *attributable* to young people. In 2009/2010 for instance, 51 *per cent* of all robberies recorded on the Police National Computer Database committed by young people aged between 10 and 17, as shown in Figure 2.6., below.

Figure 2.6. Percentage of proven offences committed by young people aged 10 to 17, 2009/10 as a proportion of all offences.
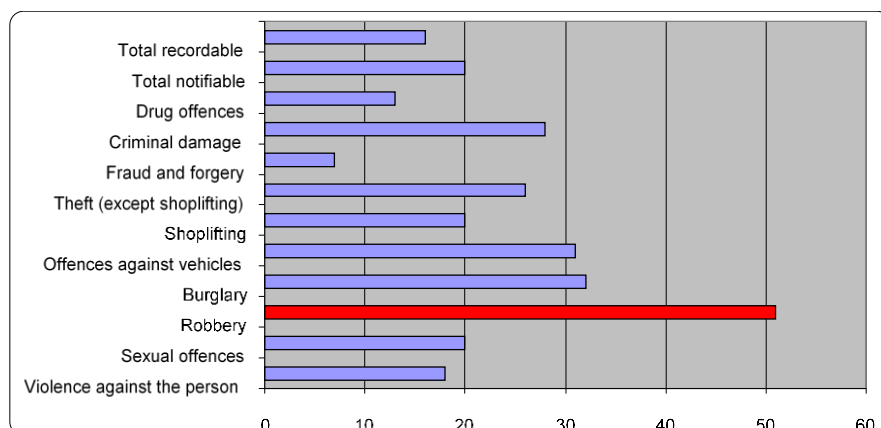
Source: Cooper and Roe, 2012

There is then a possible link between robberies committed by young people and the carrying of knives by young people. Violent crime as measured by CSEW is split into four groupings. The vast majority of robbery incidents were classified as 'muggings' and these have fluctuated considerably between 1995 and 2010/11(Berman, 2012). Incidents of robbery declined gradually from 1995 until 2004/05. There were significant spikes however in 2006/07 and again in 2010/11, when the proportion of mugging incidents in which a knife was used rose to 19 *per cent*, the highest level since 1995. These peaks coincided with a sharp *spike in youth violence*. By contrast, the proportion of domestic, stranger and acquaintance violent incidents involving a knife has remained relatively stable over the same period (Ministry of Justice, 2014; Office for National Statistics, 2015). This suggests then that robbery has driven some of the key trends in knife crime and that some of the injuries described above are the result of robbery. At the same time, it is not just the 'usual suspects' who are involved in knife carrying, as it appears behaviour engaged in by substantial numbers of young people.

If knife crime is in part a 'problem of youth', the section immediately below considers the relationship between ethnicity and knife crime. Young black males have long been linked to incidences of street crime and 'muggings' (Hall *et al.*, 1978). Moreover, much contemporary commentary draws direct links between ethnicity and knife crime that are not always well evidenced. These issues require further interrogation. This is done below.

Knife crime: a problem of race?

Issues of race and ethnicity present different problems for researchers to that of age. Ethnic minorities are under-represented in research, and the gap between their actual experiences of violence and public understanding of this is considerable (Wood, 2010). With regards to knife crime and youth violence, this knowledge gap has generated media reporting that has racial connotations (Eades *et al.,* 2007; Squires, 2009), and which frequently emphasises the ethnicity of *perpetrators* of violence whilst playing down the ethnicity of *victims* (Wood, 2010; House of Commons, 2009). Causal links are often drawn between elements of 'black culture' for instance 'gangsta rap' and engagement in knife crime (Squires, 2009). These associations should be placed in the context of, on the one hand, current drivers of youth offending, and, on the other, the policing of 'race' and particularly the difficult relationship between the police and those from Britain's black community.

Despite popular perceptions, young white males are in fact more likely to commit a crime than any other group, relative to the size of their population (Anderson, *et al.,* 2010; House of Commons, 2009). Figure 2.7., below illustrates the percentage of young people in the criminal justice system in 2013/14 by their ethnicity.

Figure 2.7. The percentage of young people in the criminal justice system in 2013/14 by ethnicity
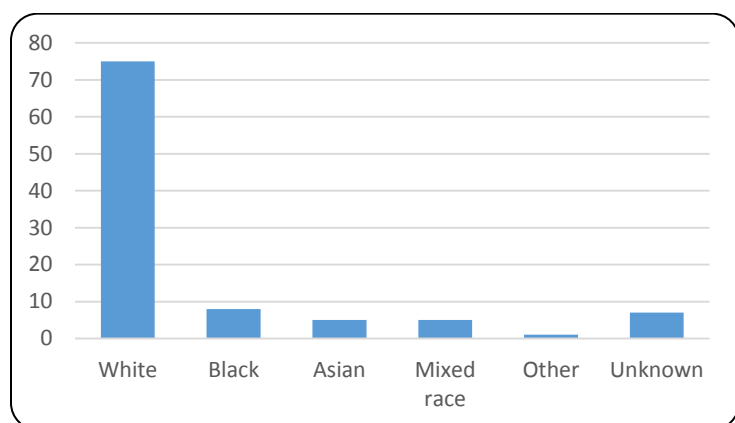
Source: Ministry of Justice, 2015.

Whilst there are overall lower levels of offending for young black males, they are significantly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Indeed, black people represent just under three *per cent* of the population aged 10 to 17, but nearly nine *per cent* of that age group arrested in England and Wales annually, and six *per cent* of those in the criminal justice system as a whole (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee report on Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System, 2007). Whilst young black people commit less crime than young white people overall, they *are* more likely to get caught and sometimes receive harsher sentences than their white counterparts for the same crimes (House of Commons, 2007; Anderson, *et al.,* 2010).

Survey data relating to knife carrying and ethnicity are extremely limited but suggest that there are variations in knife carrying and use across ethnic groups. Analysis of the 2009 Youth Justice Board survey (Anderson, *et al.,* 2010) presents some data but the authors advise readers to be cautious when interpreting the figures, because of small sample sizes for ethnic minorities. The report presents the findings for the Youth Survey 2009, conducted among young people in mainstream education (n=4,855) and those attending pupil referral units (n=1,230) aged 11 to 16 in the United Kingdom. The analysis found variations in knife and gun carrying by age, gender and ethnicity. Mixed race young people in mainstream education were more likely than white, black and Asian young people to report carrying a knife (34 *per cent*, compared with 23 *per cent*, 15 *per cent* and

17 *per cent* respectively). Some high-profile stabbings in recent years *have* involved young black men, however, as research conducted by the Institute of Race Relations (Wood, 2010) has noted, taken overall these are in the minority, and the report suggests that racial bias lies behind this exaggeration. Nonetheless, whilst statistics show that black people are no more likely than white people to fall victim to crime, they *are* however more likely to be the victim of violent and weapon-enabled crime. Young black men are more likely to be involved in firearms and knife offences, including robbery and drug offences, and with youth groups which commit crime and weapon related offences. Overall, black people are 5.5 times more likely than white people to be a victim of homicide; they are also more likely to be victims of homicide involving guns (Anderson *et al.,* (2010).

As with age, the impact of ethnicity reduces significantly once other factors have been accounted for, including experiences of poverty and deprivation. The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee report on Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System (2007) argues that social exclusion is central to this overrepresentation and showed that 80 *per cent* of Black African and Black Caribbean communities were in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, that is, areas identified as being among the most deprived in the country. The report also argues that the Criminal Justice System plays a role in the over-representation of young black males and cites direct/indirect discrimination in policing and the youth justice system – including the fact that young black people are more likely to be subjected to stop and search, less likely to be granted unconditional bail and more likely to be remanded in custody. Studies on knife crime have similarly suggested that ethnicity *per se* is not the issue, and that once deprivation, education, housing, location and other forms of disadvantage are accounted for, ethnicity has a negligible impact on behaviours related to knife carrying (Aldridge and Medina, 2007; Firmin *et al.*, 2007; Silvestri *et al.,* 2009).

Like ethnicity, matters of gender tend to be neglected in research into knife crime. This means that much of the research and commentary is one-sided, with implications for understanding the phenomenon. This is explored below.

Young women and knife crime

There is a historic absence of research on women's experiences of violence, and their participation in crime (Newburn and Stanko, 1994; Stanko and Lee, 2003). Gender is a significant predictor of violent offending and victimisation (Farrington; 1996; Wilson, 2009; Ray, 2011; 2013). Males are more likely to offend than females, are more likely to commit violent offences, are more likely to be incarcerated (Hall and Innes, 2010) and are more likely to be a victim of most forms of violence (Ray, 2011; Silvestri *et al.,* 2009). As a result, there is a lack of research on women's experiences of violence generally (Newburn and Stanko, 1994; Stanko and Lee, 2003), and this is reflected in the data relating to knife carrying. Quantitative data on the relationship between gender and knife carrying are largely confined to secondary analyses of large scale survey data, much of which are becoming dated. None of the relevant publicly available data provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) from the Crime Survey for England and Wales feature breakdowns by gender, and the most recent secondary analysis of this data (in 2010) did not include an analysis by gender. The data that do exist uncontrovertibly shows that males are significantly more likely than females to carry knives. Table 2.8., below, summarises the most recent data relating to gender and knife carrying in the United Kingdom. It is (admittedly) crude, and presents the findings from three different surveys, over different time periods, and with vastly different samples and findings. Nonetheless, all three demonstrate the same trend and a ratio of roughly 3:1 for young men and young women.

Table 2.8. Self-report surveys: the proportion of respondents who claimed to have carried a knife in the previous year, by gender.

Self-report surveys and knife carrying	Sample	Year of survey	Total % of sample	Males	Females
2009 Youth Justice Board survey	4,855 primary and secondary school pupils aged 11 to 16 in England and Wales	2009	23%	32%	13%
2006 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey	5,353 10 to 25-year-olds across England and Wales	2006	3%	5%	2%
Glasgow Youth Survey	1551 primary and secondary school pupils aged 11-18 year olds across Glasgow	2003	20%	31%	8%

Sources: Anderson *et al.,* 2010; Roe and Ashe, 2008; MORI Scotland, 2003

Qualitative studies of knife use focus almost exclusively on young men's experiences. Silvestri *et al.,* (2009: 12) note the limited evidence available about the involvement of girls and young women in weapon related violence and suggest that a number of important areas would benefit from further research, including the role of young women as 'weapon minders', their role in peer group dynamics (e.g. as mediators or initiators of violence), and the connection between sexual violence against females and weapons. Because of this, discourses linking gender and knife crime tend to emphasize the masculine aspects of behavior such as fighting and competition over status. Whilst this suggests a limited frame of reference in which women are principally victims or accessories to knife violence, it nonetheless anticipates the findings of subsequent research. Bannister *et al.*, (2010) explored gangs and violence in Scotland and with a specific focus on knives. The study interviewed young people including gang members, knife carriers and their associates, including 18 young women. The young women in the sample were usually on the periphery of long-running territorial conflicts between groups of males. There was no expectation that young women would participate in violence but women were sometimes portrayed by male associates as a catalyst of conflict between rival gangs. Firmin (2012) explored directly young women's experiences of gangs and

came to similar conclusions. Women and girls took part in focus groups (n=187) and were interviewed (n=30) across Liverpool, Manchester and Trafford, and Birmingham. Men and boys took part in focus groups (n=127) and were interviewed (n=5) across Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and London. Many of the female participants described sustained physical, verbal and mental abuse from male partners, who often exercised complete control over their lives. Some of the young women also described being coerced into activities including carrying or storing weapons for their partners. The issue of gangs is concerned in more depth further below.

In overview, this section has examined trends in knife crime, and some of the characteristics of those who carry knives. It is clear that knife carrying and crime are more erratic than other forms of crime, and this would appear to be related to the activities of 'young people'. The data suggest high levels of knife carrying and also wounding and assault. Robbery appears be related to knife carrying, but the data on this matter are sparse and little is known about the contexts in which knife carrying, assault or robbery occur. This section has also suggested that knife carrying is linked to disadvantage and deprivation. The next section continues this discussion and develops this with reference to key issues identified by research relating to self-defence, victimisation and gangs.

Why carry a knife? Deprivation, insecurity and gangs

This section explores and critically interrogates the literature on knife crime and on weapons more broadly through the question of 'why' young people carry a knife. This includes an exploration of some of the contexts in which a knife is carried. The section focuses on three critical factors and their influence on knife carrying and crime. The relationship between deprivation and knife crime is considered first. Next, the concept of 'self-defence', is explored. This is the most common explanation advanced by both those who carry knives and those who seek to understand this phenomenon, but it requires further unpacking. Finally, there is a consideration of 'gangs' and explores the complex literature on gangs and knife carrying, linking these to disadvantage and insecurity.

Deprivation and knife crime

Much of the commentary on knife crime links knife carrying with deprivation. Silvestri, *et al.,* (2009) conducted a comprehensive systematic review of the international studies relating to young people and use of knives and guns published between 1998 and 2008. The authors cite research linking high rates of crime, violence and victimisation to social and economic deprivation and the consequent disadvantage, low social capital and limited social mobility (see for instance Hayden, *et al.,* 2007). However, because it is based on largely quantitative data, as Silvestri *et al.,* (2009: 25) note, these links are often 'described without being adequately explained'. What is clear is that social and material deprivation are increasingly spatially concentrated and that this uneven distribution has significant implications for experiences of violence. A substantial body of research links deprived neighbourhoods with high levels of violent offending and violent victimisation (Silverstri *et al.*, 2009; Patchin *et al.*, 2006; Padley and Hirsch, 2013). Research has also shown a positive correlation between offending and being a victim of violence across a range of different behaviours including violent crime, theft, vandalism and alcohol use (Anderson *el al.*, 2010; Hartless *et al.*, 1995; Sampson and Lauritsen, 1990; Hindelang, *et al.*, 1978) engaging in high risk activities (Brennan, Moore & Shepherd, 2010); and being part of an offending peer group (Smith, 2004; McAra and McVie, 2012; Witterbrood and Nieuwbeerta, 1999).

Despite possibly widespread knife carrying, the uneven distribution of both deprivation and violence has clear consequences for trends in knife carrying and crime. As Booth *et al.,* (2008: 35) have noted, the important issue is not that knife crime is increasing or decreasing *per se*, but that it is increasing in certain pockets of deprivation, whilst decreasing elsewhere. Indeed, knife crime is concentrated largely in urban areas in England and Wales, most frequently and with greatest intensity in areas of multiple deprivation (Silvestri *et al.,* 2009; Squires, 2009; Hallsworth, 2005). Police recorded crime figures demonstrate the geographic distribution of knife carrying and crime. The Metropolitan Police recorded 43 *per cent* (11,375 offences) of all knife or sharp instrument offences that occurred in England and Wales between January 2013 and January 2014

(Ministry of Justice, 2015). This was three times the average for England and Wales as a whole and more than double the number of knife offences in Greater Manchester, the force with the second highest rate of offences, as shown in Figure 2.9., below.

Figure 2.9. Distribution of knife possession offences by police force area in England and Wales in 2013/14, per 100, 000 of the population
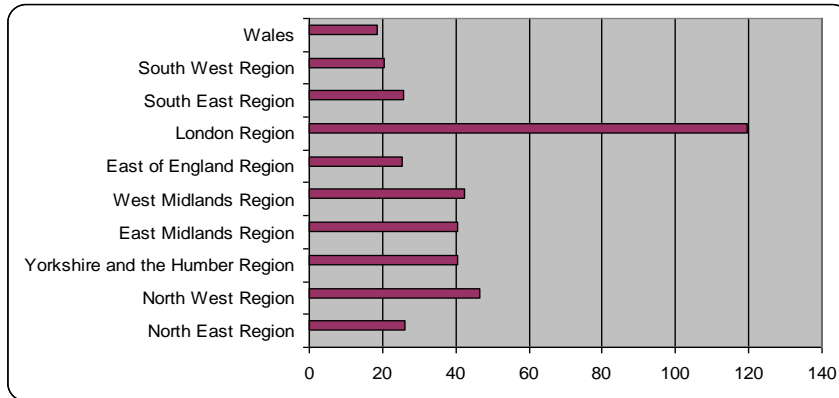
Source: Ministry of Justice, 2015.

The other areas with the highest concentrations of knife crime are all urban areas that have historically high levels of deprivation. Figure 2.10., below shows the rate of knife offences per size of population, with Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, Nottingham and West Yorkshire having the highest rates of knife offences after London.

Figure 2.10. Areas with the highest rate of knife offences per 100, 000 of the population, 2014, England and Wales
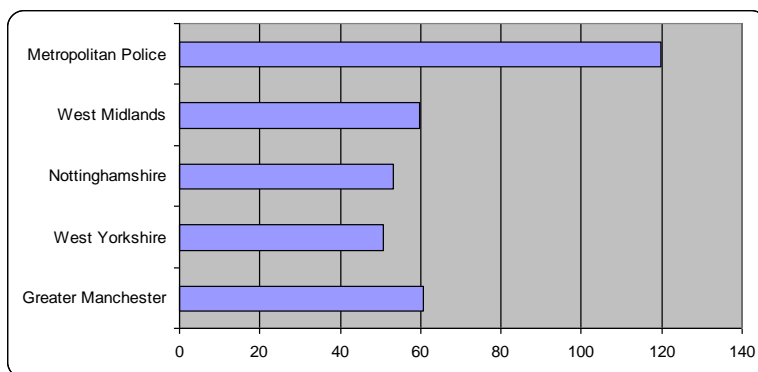
Source: Ministry of Justice, 2015.

The trends described above impact disproportionately on young people, especially ethnic minorities, who are concentrated in areas of deprivation, as already described in previous

sections. It is not surprising them that 'self-defence' is the most common justification for carrying a knife, cited by young people in surveys (Anderson *et al.*, 2010; Flatley *et al.*, 2010; McVie, 2010; Squires, 2009; Roe and Ashe, 2008; ComRes, 2008; Philips and Chamberlain, 2006). This is discussed below.

Self-defence and victimisation

This chapter has so far presented data that demonstrated high levels of victimisation among young people and linked this with entrenched deprivation. Indeed, children and young people living in deprived areas endure 'disproportionate levels of poverty, disempowerment, vulnerability and victimization (Rose, 1989: 121; Millard and Flatley, 2010). Squires (2009) and Marfleet (2008) have both argued that fear and insecurity are increasing within the most deprived areas as poverty and marginalisation become more entrenched. As noted in the previous section, the data show that young people, in particular young black men, are more vulnerable to victimisation. Research has consistently demonstrated significant links between experiences of victimisation, fear of victimisation and knife carrying (Flatley *et al.,* 2010; Silvestri, *et al.,* 2009; Marfleet, 2008; Lemos, 2004). Barlas and Egan, (2006: 69) have argued that adolescent weapon carrying was a 'genuine problem in the UK and a considerable proportion of teenagers are frequently motivated to arm themselves'. A third of respondents to the Youth Justice Board survey who said that they had taken a knife into school, said they had done so 'to protect myself'; and a fifth said that they carried a knife 'in case I got into a fight' (Anderson *et al.*, 2010: 36). Similarly, the majority (85 *per cent*) of those who took part in the 2006 Offending Crime and Justice survey (Roe and Ashe, 2008: 22) who had carried a knife said that they did so for protection, followed by eight *per cent* who did so in case they got into a fight.

Knife carrying appears to be done in response to both prior victimisation, and the threat of victimisation, real or perceived, and appears to be particularly extreme among excluded young people and those living in deprived areas. Marfleet conducted focus groups inside Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) for young people excluded from mainstream education and

found that they perceived their neighbourhood as 'unsafe' and anticipated being attacked (2008: 81). Those who had been a victim previously were more fearful than those who had not. Conversely, those who reported having offended themselves (any offence) were less likely to be fearful, as were those who reported carrying a knife or other weapon in the last year. As Silvestri *et al.,* note 'where neighbourhoods are threatening, weapon carrying may make young people feel safer' (2009: 7).

That fear of crime is influenced by exposure to both actual crime and environmental cues such as drug use and anti-social behaviour has been established (Young, 2004). But as with youth offending research more generally, it has also been found that cultural adaptations to inequality and structural violence have significant implications for the management of risk. Brennan and Moore (2009) have explored knife carrying through research on weapons more widely. They identify two theoretical approaches to weapon use - the first sees weapons use as an integral element of 'the violent act' and therefore best understood using theories of violence and aggression (Brennan and Moore, 2009: 216). The second posits a more complex approach involving the interaction of at least two potentially unrelated factors: the decision to carry or possess a weapon; and, aggression in the use of the weapon. They go on to make a distinction between the instrumental and expressive functions of a weapon, and describe three instrumental motivations for carrying a weapon: protection, coercion, and harm (Brennan and Moore, 2009: 218). Indeed, they are critical of explanations that link weapons *entirely* to offending and the desire to harm. They argue that (2008: 217):

> The view that weapons are simply an instrument of harm within the violent act is undermined by evidence indicating weapon carrying can be regarded as instrumental, the weapon as a tool to attain non-violent goals, and evidence suggesting weapons are carried for defensive reasons under the risk of violent victimisation rather than as an expression of the weapon carrier's aggression.

Marfleet (2008) echoes the sentiments described above. She suggests a more useful distinction is between *offensive* and *defensive* knife carrying. Whilst there is a link

between knife carrying and offending, actual injuries that arise are relatively rare (see also Eades *et al.*, 2007). Marfleet suggests that much knife carrying is defensive, a response to feelings of fear and concerned with self-defence and prior levels of victimisation. Marfleet (2008: 35) explores this with her 'fear and victimisation hypothesis': Drawing largely on research from the United States, she suggests that much knife carrying is defensive, a response to feelings of fear and concerned with self-defence and prior levels of victimisation. In this context a knife could be seen as having real value, of course, it would also bring with it its own anxieties – not least potentially, fear of being caught by the police, but also fear of being hurt, and fear of hurting. Some of the literature does explore this and indeed finds that, for some young people, the risks far outweigh the gains and that an immediate fear of violence and the need to retaliate may override 'distant' concerns with legal procedure (Marfleet, 2008).

However, Marfleet (2008: 16) acknowledges that there are 'opportunity related benefits' attached to defensive knife carrying, including the possibility of using the weapon in violence, such as in robbery or participation in a drug deal. These are more likely to be, realised, however in the context of a normative environment that encourages or at least does not discourage, such behaviour. Indeed, Silvestri, *et al.,* (2009: 24) link fear of victimisation to notions of 'street credibility' and 'respect' which are especially significant to young people, who may lack legitimate access to other forms of status achievement.

Looked at from a different angle, various authors including Eades and colleagues (2006; 2007) Marfleet (2008) and Comres (2008) found that many young people lacked faith in the ability of either the police or their parents to protect them, and Marfleet argues that this is responsible for at least some young people seeking illegitimate ways of protecting themselves. Eades *et al.*, (2007) link this to higher rates of excluded young people carrying weapons, suggesting that it is these groups that have the least trust in either police or parents. Lemos (2004: 10) noted that over half of young victims of crime did not report having been a victim of crime to either the police or parents. He argued that this occurred for a range of reasons, including peer pressure, fear of being labelled a 'grass',

fear of retaliation and a lack of understanding as to how to report a crime. The author also found mistrust of the police among many young people, and a sense that they are viewed as offenders rather than victims.

Some commentators have warned that 'self-defence' as an explanation for carrying a knife should be viewed with caution. Barlas and Egan (2008) for instance found that neither prior victimisation nor concerns about personal safety could entirely account for knife carrying, although there were links with offending. They concluded that weapon carrying is driven by several motivations. Likewise, the House of Commons Select Committee Report on Knife Crime (2009) cites criticism of the 'self-defence' explanation, reporting that some contributors regarded 'self-defence' as an excuse: in particular some practitioners who contributed to the committee felt that some young people who carried knives did so in the context of gang conflict and so could not necessarily claim self-defence. At the same time, a range of other motivations have been advanced to explain why young people might carry a knife, including: that knife carrying has become fashionable among young people; is regarded as 'cool' (Lemos, 2004); and that a knife can facilitate robbery; and/or other crimes. Indeed, the data suggest that a significant amount of knives are carried in order to commit robbery. This is explored below, with reference to gangs and knife carrying. It is developed further in the next chapter in relation to a violent street code which forms a central element of the theoretical framework for this thesis.

Gangs and knives
The issue of street gangs has implications for understanding these various issues, and indeed can help to tie together the various strands already introduced, including an understanding of the relationships between knife crime and age, gender and ethnicity. An absence of research on gangs in a British context has resulted in 'inadequate theoretical understanding and policy treatment' (Aldridge and Medina 2007:14). It is clear that there is some relationship between youth groups and knife carrying, although like the concept of gangs more generally, the exact nature of the relationship between gangs and knife

carrying is contested and remains ill-understood. Some have argued that there definitely *is* a relationship between knife crime and gangs. The House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee on Knife Crime (2009: 17), for instance, asserts that the dramatic rise in knife homicides in the last couple of years was related to the emergence of a 'new demographic': increasingly both perpetrators and victims are young men engaged in a 'new trend' in street based violence connected with large groups and gangs, concentrated in deprived areas of large cities (2009: 17). By contrast, some research argues that there definitely is *not* a relationship between knife crime and gangs. Marfleet (2008: 31) for instance found 'no convincing evidence of a causal link between gang membership and knife carrying' among the young men she interviewed in London.

The most plausible position that emerges from the literature is that there *is* a relationship between knife crime and gangs, but that it is complex and variable (Bannister *et al.,* 2010; Aldridge and Medina, 2007) and related to both collective violence between gangs and engagement in a variety of offences. These variations occur within and between gangs and within different localities. The Committee on Knife Crime (2009: 19), for instance, found that the nature and composition of gangs varied across the United Kingdom (UK) and that this had implications for engagement in knife crime as there appeared 'to be a strong link between knives and gangs in London and Glasgow, whilst guns were more prevalent in Birmingham and Manchester'.

Bannister *et al.,* (2010) and McVie (2010) have explored the relationship between gangs and weapon use in Scotland in some depth. Bannister *et al.*, (2010) provided an overview of the nature and extent of youth gang activity (or 'troublesome youth groups' as they are referred to in the research) and knife carrying in five areas of Scotland: Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire. Engagement in violence varied both *within* and *between* localities, with more premeditated and territorial fighting occurring in the cities of the west coast, whilst fighting on the east coast appeared to be less entrenched and more spontaneous. Collective violence was rarely spontaneous, however, and was governed by complex 'rules of engagement' (Bannister *et al.*, 2010: 45). The

research found that knife carrying was associated not with gangs *per se* but with 'core' activities like drug selling and theft, and that older members of gangs were more likely to be engaged in these kinds of activities and, therefore, were more likely to carry knives. At the same time, however, some participants in the research claimed to carry knives in anticipation of collective fighting between gangs and some claimed to have used knives to stab members of other gangs when they came into conflict.

McVie (2010) supports some of the assertions made above. She presents findings from the Edinburgh Youth Transitions Survey conducted between 1998 and 2003 with a cohort of some 4, 300 young people (aged 12 to 17). The data included information on some 210, 200 incidents of weapon carrying and suggest that knife carrying was not associated with gang membership *per se*, although some gang members did carry knives. Knife carrying was associated with low self-esteem, social isolation and a lack of parental guidance, whilst gang membership was associated with social deprivation and a problematic home life. These factors sometimes converged, but on the whole McVie suggests that non-gang members and gang members carried knives for *different* reasons – the former for self-defence, the latter in relation to collective violence.

Research has also explored the normative aspects of knife carrying rooted in subcultural explanations. Firmin *et al.,* (2007) have argued that knife use and gang membership are both associated with a subculture or subcultures in which violence is normalised, especially in the most deprived areas of the country. At the same time, Bannister *et al.*, (2012) found some implicit and explicit rules that governed knife carrying and use among Scottish gangs. This varied within and between gangs, and some gangs, and some gang members, were opposed to the use of knives and other weapons. Overall, the research found that (Bannister *et al.,* 2010: 57):

> '…attitudes towards weapon carrying and use varied enormously, with no clear trend or pattern being evident. Many carried weapons, but many others were opposed to the idea'.

It was suggested in the previous section that there might be a link between young people's offending and street robbery with a knife, though little research has covered this topic. Hallsworth (2005) has provided some insight into the issue. He argues that the increase in street robbery in the first decade of 2000s was the result of the increased availability of consumer goods, like mobile phones, in a social context in which wearing the right clothes and being able to display material success was a central strategy for self-defence. He further argues that knives were frequently used as an extension of bullying to humiliate and intimidate members of other gangs. Similarly, whilst they only touched very lightly on weapons, Aldridge and Medina (2007) conducted ethnographic research on street gangs in six different areas of an English city. As with the research by Bannister *et al.*, (2010) the study found that gang violence was often related to interpersonal disputes and long standing or new vendettas/revenge between and within gangs. Firmin *et al.,* (2007) note however that there is currently little research on the culture of gun and knife crime amongst young people, and argue that a chasm exists in linking academic arguments about culture, ideology and societal attitudes with the cultures and subcultures of young people. They suggest that more research in this area would provide the depth required to make recommendations from a 'cultural perspective' (Firmin *et al.*, 2007: 46).

Cultural perspectives are considered in more depth in the next chapter, which develops a theoretical framework for approaching knife carrying. This section overall has explored some of the key risk factors for engagement in knife crime and knife carrying, and has found that deprivation, experiences of victimisation and gang membership have all been shown to be linked with knife crime. It is argued that self-defence as a rationale needs to be critically linked to a nuanced understanding of the effects of deprivation and marginalisation in the context of collective responses *to* violence and the collective reproduction *of* violence, among young people living with violence and marginality. This sets the scene for the next section, which examines responses to knife crime, and for the chapter to follow, which develops the concept of 'street life' as a means of framing some of these complexities theoretically.

Responding to knife crime

This section provides an overview of policies and strategies designed to reduce knife related crime in England and Wales, and the theories of change that underpin them. It starts by examined punitive approaches to knife crime, then contrasts these with more preventative approaches. Finally, there is a discussion of how successful, or otherwise, these varied approaches have been. The discussion is largely confined to and policies and legislation in England and Wales over the last thirty years (between 1988 and 2015). This period coincides with the start of legislative efforts to tackle knife crime in the modern era and covers four administrations: 1988 – 1997 Conservative Government, 1997 – 2010 Labour Government, 2010 – 2015 Conservative led coalition and 2015 onwards, the Conservative administration (Berman, 2012; Ward, 2009). Where appropriate, reference to other countries is also made.

Several literature reviews have explored international efforts to tackle violent offending (Farrington, 1996; Prior and Paris, 2005; Rubin *et al.*, 2008). A central finding from these studies is that a public health approach to violence that focuses on 'upstream' or primary prevention (WHO, 2002: 64), which targets deprivation and other social factors that generate violence, can significantly reduce violent offending among young people. Several recent literature reviews have also examined efforts to tackle knife and weapon crime (Golding *et al.,* 2008; Silvestri *et al.,* 2009; Sethi *et al.*, 2010) and again have found that a public health approach, where adopted, can be an effective response. Governmental responses to knife crime might then aim to reduce poverty and disadvantage, and to tackle some of the normative roots of violence and knife crime. Domestic responses to knife crime have nonetheless evolved into a complex mix of different approaches based principally but not exclusively on a punitive/deterrent model of prevention. These are discussed below.

Punishment and deterrence

Much of the political rhetoric around knife crime has emphasised the importance of detecting and punishing offenders (Squires, 2009; Crawford and Traynor, 2012). Despite

the absence of a solid research base, the government has pursued, over several administrations, an increasingly aggressive drive to catch and convict young people who carry knives, and to send more of them to prison (Ministry of Justice, 2014a; Ministry of Justice, 2014b). Legislative responses to knife crime illustrate this trend. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 was the first piece of legislation to address knife carrying and use since the Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1959. The Act delivered marginal increases to sentences and fines for those convicted of carrying a knife. Further restrictions on the type and length of knife a person could legitimately carry were introduced. Subsequent acts were more stringent. The Offensive Weapons Act 1996 and the Knives Act 1997 significantly increased the punishments for carrying a knife and substantially widened the scope of the legislation. The 1996 Act proscribed the possession of knives on school premises except where a 'good reason or lawful authority for having the article or weapon' could be given, and placed, for the first time, restrictions on the sale of knives to those under the age of sixteen (Ward, 2010: 4). Alongside these legislative measures the Labour government also strongly encouraged the judiciary and other statutory bodies to respond severely to incidences of knife carrying (Ward, 2010).

The major policing operations aimed at reducing knife crime were also heavily enforcement focused. Operation Blunt for instance were Metropolitan Police Service initiatives aimed to reduce knife-related violence (Ward and Diamond, 2009). It was launched initially across 12 London boroughs in 2004 and, but was subsequently rolled out across all 32 London boroughs in December 2005, as part of Operation Blunt 2. The Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) was launched in 2008 on the back of the perceived success of Operation Blunt (Ward *et al.,* 2011). TKAP took a three-pronged approach, combining enforcement and prevention initiatives with measures designed to reassure the public (and arguably the media) that something was being done. The scheme was initially aimed at young people aged between 13 and 19 in ten police force areas. There was a deliberate focus on those areas and neighbourhoods that were known to have the greatest problems of knife-carrying and crime. This was later extended in a second phase to cover other areas and young people up to 24, and was renamed the

Tackling Knives and Serious Youth Violence Action Plan (Ward *et al.,* 2011). Enforcement measures included proactive stop and search police activities and the controversial use of metal detectors in schools and other public places.

It was not enough to respond to a problem however, the government had to be *seen to be doing something* about a problem, and a significant proportion of New Labour's legislation on knives focused on providing what Crawford (2008: 755) has called the 'symbolic' reassurance of public anxieties. The *control* of young people's behaviour was central to this. Both the Offensive Weapons Act 1996, for instance, and the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006, were introduced in response to public concerns about knife crime, the latter in direct response to the murder of the school Headmaster Phillip Lawrence by a pupil at his school (Berman, 2012). The 2006 act increased the penalty for possession of a knife in a public place and raised the minimum age for buying knives from 16 to 18 years of age. The act also introduced new powers for teachers and police officers to search young people if they suspected that they were carrying knives or other weapons (HM Government, 2008).

The Conservative government that came to power in 2010, first as part of a coalition with the Liberal democrats and then in 2015 as a minority Conservative government has, like Labour, relied heavily on a combination of punitive measures and reassurance policing. The Criminal Justice Act 2003 Order 2010, for instance, increased the minimum prison term for those who commit murder using a knife from 15 to 25 years, whilst the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 created a new offence of 'aggravated' knife possession and a mandatory custodial sentence for anyone over sixteen who uses a knife or offensive weapon to threaten and endanger others. This was accompanied by guidance issued by the Crown Prosecution Service in favour of custody with respect to knife carrying by under-eighteens.

The punitive approach described above can be understood to have emerged from the confluence of a number of related factors. The 1990s saw growing concern about knife crime, prompted by several high profile murders of both young people and adults. This combined however with a general turn towards 'punitiveness' in British politics (Squires, 2009); the advance of the 'law and order' agenda under both the Conservative Government and the Labour Party (Tierney, 1996; Hale, *et al.,* 2009) and a return to an emphasis on 'incapacitation, punishment, retribution…and rehabilitation' (Grimwood and Berman, 2012: 1). This involved the reassertion of the rational, economic model of action derived from classical socio-legal theory (Lilly *et al.,* 2002; Walklate, 2003; Nagin, and Pogarsky, 2001). According to this model, crime was the result of rational people acting out of self-interest, and the judicious application of the 'pleasure-pain principle' should act as sufficient deterrent to offending (Tierney, 1996: 48; see also Garland, 1994). These were also fused with 'situational crime prevention' theories (Eades et al., 2007; Silvestri *et al.*, 2009). According to these theories, the role of government and the police was to deter criminals by using situational barriers to prevent or inhibit the convergence of a reasoning criminal with a suitable victim (Clarke, 1983). In line with these principles, Operation Blunt provided search arches for use outside pubs, clubs and schools, shopping centres and transport hubs, and funded hi-visibility patrols and test-purchase operations (Metropolitan Police Service Bulletin, 2006).

The 'punitive turn' was not just a domestic change but was significantly influenced by developments emanating from North America (Cohen and Felson, 1979; Clarke, 1980). This included a raft of initiatives targeted at gang crime and weapon use which influenced (Farrington, 1996; World Health Organisation, 2002; Golding *et al.,* 2008; Silvestri *et al.,* 2009). The United States Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Gang Model, for instance, developed a 'problem oriented policing' approach which was shown to dramatically reduced violence in a range of North American cities (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008 and 2010; WHO, 2002; Golding *et al.*, 2008) through enforcement, community development and proactive policing. Operation Ceasefire applied a similar model to reducing gun crime. This combined data analysis to identify and target crime

hotspots for enforcement action with a zero-tolerance approach to violence (Brennan and Moore, 2009, Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl, 2001; WHO, 2002; Kohn, 2004). The Tackling Knives Action Programme in the United Kingdom broadly replicated the structure and focus of these initiatives (Golding *et al.,* 2008), whilst Operation Chrome, a project funded by the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme, directly adapted the model used in Operation Ceasefire to gun crime in Manchester (Bullock and Tilley, 2002) and later influenced the evolution of Operation Blunt.

Whilst it might appear from the discussion so far that efforts to tackle knife carrying have focused entirely on enforcement, there have also been some efforts at preventing knife carrying and crime more broadly, with attendance to social and developmental crime prevention models, these are explored below.

Prevention and innovation

Several international literature reviews have suggested that a public health approach that aims to reduce and mitigate the effects of deprivation can significantly reduce violence and weapon carrying (Farrington, 1996; Prior and Paris, 2005; Rubin *et al*., 2008; World Health Organisation (WHO), 2002; Golding *et al.,* 2008; Silvestri *et al.,* 2009; Sethi *et al*., 2010). At the same time, interventions in a number of countries that address normative orientations to violence among young people have been shown to reduce both violence and weapon carrying (Homel *et al*., 2006; Prior and Paris, 2005; WHO, 2002; Sethi *et al*., 2010).

Some significant New Labour initiatives aimed at tackling violence were based on a public health approach. These included the innovative use of Sure Start centres and the development of Youth Inclusion Programmes. These national programmes aimed to reduce offending through intervening in the lives of young people to reduce exposure to criminogenic risk factors (Crawford and Traynor, 2012). There were also initiatives aimed at reducing knife crime, local community projects targeting 'at risk' young people funded through the Home Office Community Fund (Ward and Diamond, 2009). Further social

marketing campaigns were deployed to raise awareness of the risks of carrying a knife (Ward *et al.,* 2011). A significant rehabilitation programme set out to address knife crime through a range of schemes. Most notable of these is the Knife Crime Prevention Programme, a partnership between central government and local Youth Offending Teams, which continues to work with young people convicted of knife offences (Ward *et al.,* 2011).

Some innovative schemes also emerged from outside of central government. The Cardiff prevention model, for instance, set out to apply a public health approach to the collection and sharing of alcohol related assault data, in so doing they instigated a significant role for Accident and Emergency departments in reducing knife crime cross England and Wales (Shepherd, 2007; Violence and Society Research Group). At the same time, some innovative programmes have been developed in Scotland. Scotland has had historically high rates of knife crime relative to the rest of the United Kingdom (McCallum, 2011). Because of this, it has employed since the 1960s a particularly tough sentencing regime as a means of deterring criminals from using knives (Scottish Government, 2011; McCallum, 2011). Nonetheless, Scotland has also developed and adopted preventative strategies and interventions, to the extent that Scotland was praised by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002) as the only country in the United Kingdom to have adopted a 'public health' approach to knife crime. Many of these initiatives have been driven by the Violence Reduction Unit, based in Glasgow, which was established in 2005 as a unit of Strathclyde Police. In 2006 the Unit took on a national role and is responsible for analysis of trends in violent crime around Scotland as well as specific initiatives aimed at tackling problem areas (Violence Reduction Unit, undated) including the *No Knives Better Lives* campaign. This campaign involved an educational programme of workshops with contributions from victims, ex-offenders, medical professionals and sports personalities (Scottish Government, 2011).

Despite some innovative schemes, the preventative programs implemented by New Labour tended to focus on a narrow interventionist agenda, based largely on a 'developmental' rather than a social or public health model. Indeed Squires (2009: 127) has suggested that the 'moral panic' around knives knife crime served as both a catalyst

and a justification for a new era of 'tough reassurance policing' and an 'ambitious interventionist approach' based on what has been called a developmental logic (Crawford and Traynor, 2012). Developmental research has generated a wealth of data on the role of 'risk' and 'protective' factors in generating offending (Farrington, 2005). Whilst this approach has attracted criticism for lacking theoretical depth (Farrington, 2005), it has nonetheless proved attractive to policy makers. Indeed, research that identifies risk factors for young people's involvement in crime can be shown to have directly influenced the development of policies and interventions in the lives of children and their families designed to reduce offending (Prior and Paris, 2005). A significant example of this approach has been the Anti-Social Behaviour agenda, which many commentators feel has been a missed opportunity: instead of using systems of government to improve the welfare of some of society's most vulnerable people, they have instead pursued a policy of control which has had limited long term impact (Burney, 2005; Crawford and Traynor, 2012; Crawford, Lewis and Traynor, 2016).

The Conservatives have also made some efforts at social crime prevention, albeit in the context of austerity measures and stringent budget cuts. In 2011 the Home Office announced its plans to tackle youth violence, stating that 'Knife, gun and gang crime is wholly unacceptable and reducing it is a key priority for the government' (Home Office, 2011: 16). This included the commitment of £18 million towards 'preventative and interventionist' initiative, which were in line with recommendations made by the 'Kinsella Review' (Home Office, 2011: 12). This review came about when the Home Secretary commissioned Brooke Kinsella, whose brother Ben was fatally stabbed in 2008, to examine local community initiatives around violence and weapons (The Kinsella Review, 2011). The review made recommendations, including: the provision of anti-knife crime presentations for school children; better data sharing between police, schools and other agencies; and, more work with young children to stop them getting involved in knife crime. Whilst laudable, this initiative had an obscure methodology and it did not add significantly to existing knowledge on knife crime. Rather, it suggested that the present government shares some of New Labour's attendance to what Crawford, (2008: 755) has called the

'symbolic' aspects of crime prevention, and a concern to be *seen* to be doing something about a problem, rather than *actually* doing something. The next section below examines the effectiveness or otherwise of these schemes with reference to data and existing evaluations.

How effective have efforts to combat knife crime been?

Whilst the period considered above has generated significant policy activity (Squires, 2009), there has been a lack of robust assessment of the various initiatives that were described (WHO 2002; Silvestri *et al.,* 2009). Indeed, Silvestri *et al.,* (2009) conducted a substantial review of UK strategies over the period 1998 to 2008, and concluded that, 'what is striking is that the vast majority of these initiatives have not been independently evaluated, and most have not been evaluated at all' (Silvestri *et al.,* 2009: 45). Even where evaluations had been conducted, these were not always robust. The Home Office assessments of TKAP Phase 1 and TKAP Phase 2 provide examples of this. The findings from the Phase 1 assessment (Ward and Diamond, 2009) suggested an overall decline in recorded knife crime and hospital admissions in the target age group (13-19 years). The Phase 2 assessment (Ward, *et al.*, 2011) found that there were reductions across the country in serious violence involving children and young people for the period the initiative ran. However, the authors of both reports warn that the data is not statistically significant and that there were also reductions in recorded knife crime outside of the target age groups and areas. Because of this, Ward and Diamond (2009: 4) warn that 'caution must be applied when interpreting the figures and attributing change directly to TKAP', whilst Ward, *et al.*, (2011:14) conclude that reductions in violence cannot be 'directly attributed' to TKAP.

Whilst the effectiveness of enforcement measures in reducing knife crime is difficult to assess in the long term. It is clear from the data that substantially more young people are being caught and convicted for carrying a knife, and that this can, in part, be attributed to a range of measures, including extra police scrutiny, expanded stop and search and the introduction of metal detectors in schools (Anderson *et al.,* 2010). The

number of annual convictions for carrying a knife increased significantly after 2006 (Ministry of Justice, 2010), whilst the average length of a custodial sentence continues to increase (Ministry of Justice 2014). The proportion of offenders cautioned for possession of knife offences is falling whilst the proportion of offenders sentenced to custody has continued to increase, as has the number of young people (aged 10-17) given custodial sentences (Ministry of Justice 2014).

Multiple authors (Squires, 2009; Eades *et. al*, 2007; Bannister *et al.,* 2012; Golding *et al.,* 2007) have questioned the use of enforcement strategies, and have suggested that they may even be counter-productive. Some 250,000 stop and searches were conducted under TKAP, for instance, which resulted in the seizure of 5000 weapons. However, Sehti *et al.,* (2010) estimate that this would have constituted only two *per cent* of all possible weapons, whilst the use of stop and search is highly antagonistic and generates considerable tensions among communities. Moreover, as with violent offending more generally, research evidence (see *inter alia* Lipsey and Wilson, 1998) suggests that a 'zero tolerance' or punitive approach to weapon possession is ineffective in reducing crime or changing attitudes. The applicability of imported models from the United States is also questionable. Whilst there has been increasing convergence on a range of crime indicators, there remain significant differences between America and the United Kingdom, in terms of the scale and nature of gang activities (Muncie, 2009). Moreover, whilst some initiatives have delivered quick, and indeed measurable results, their long-term effectiveness has not been proven (Golding *et al.,* 2008), and indeed, the United States has some of the highest rates of violence in the developed world.

The value of punitive deterrents more generally is also contested. Research has found that the public consistently underestimate the severity of sanctions (Von Hirsch *et al*., 1999) and it can be reasonably assumed that members of the public will have only a limited grasp of any changes and amendments to policies and legislation (Wright, 2010). This critique is even more pertinent when considering young people, as various

authors have argued that young people demonstrate short-sightedness when it comes to attendance to the law (Nagin, and Pogarsky, 2001; Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998). This is especially the case in the context of pervasive victimisation. As Hallsworth (2005) notes, young people are often *not* deterred from committing crime because they see the Criminal Justice System as distant, and negative relations with police in particular are alienating. Moreover, given the correlation between knife carrying, deprivation and insecurity highlighted above, sending young people to prison for carrying knives raises important questions about welfare and ignores 'fundamental' questions about the security and safety of young people in modern urban Britain (Squires, 2009: 127).

In 2011 concerns about knives were overshadowed by what have been called 'the worst civil disturbances for a generation' (Lewis *et al.*, 2011: 36) as young people rioted in London, Manchester and other parts of the United Kingdom. The reporting of the riots shared similar racial connotations to reporting on knife crime, and many of the claims that were made were subsequently shown to be unfounded (Cooper, 2012). These events nonetheless had implications for efforts specifically directed towards reducing knife crime. According to several (informal) conversations with practitioners who assisted in the empirical research for this thesis, the riots led to a direct shift in government priorities and funds, from one problematic aspect of 'youth' behaviour (knives), to another (gangs). Indeed, there is at present no formal strategy on knife crime: The Ending Gang and Youth Violence Programme has set out a range of ambitious targets for reducing youth violence but makes limited reference to knife crime (HM Government, 2011 and 2015). It is not clear whether this means that the government has embraced 'upstream' prevention at the expense of 'downstream' prevention. The Programme's annual report (HM Government, 2015) does signal a move towards a public health approach to youth violence and an increasing role of health and mental health service providers. The 2015 strategy also emphasises the importance of measuring the effectiveness or otherwise of these initiatives, a problem that has affected many interventions aimed at reducing knife carrying.

This section has considered legislative and policy based approaches to violence and knife/weapons crime. It has argued that attempts to tackle knife carrying and crime in England and Wales have been based extensively on a punitive approach. The previous section highlighted the relationship between poverty, victimization and knife crime, but present approaches tend to ignore these links in favour of simple enforcement and suppressive responses. These have not been particularly well coordinated and there is a lack of evaluation. Overall, they do not appear to have had any significant impact on reducing knife crime.

Conclusion: Implications for the empirical research

This chapter has covered a lot of ground. It has described some of the key trends in knife crime in England and Wales and located these in the wider context of a general decline in offending. Knives appear to be carried in significant numbers, often without causing physical harm. The chapter has critically unpacked the concept of 'self-defence' and the role of gangs in this. Many young people who carry knives say they do so for defensive purposes, but knives are clearly also carried to wound and to commit robbery, in the context of collective fighting and gang membership, principally by young men. This occurs in complex environments rooted in deprivation and social exclusion. It was argued above that knife carrying and crime among young people are significant problems. Whilst a significant number of young people say that they carry knives for purposes of self-defence, and certainly high numbers appear to only carry a knife without ever using it to harm, a significant minority of young people do use a knife to cause injury, and/or to commit street robbery and street based violence.

It was argued that much knife crime can be linked to experiences of deprivation and entrenched marginalisation and high levels of fear and insecurity among young people, in the context of gangs and violent 'subcultures'. McVie (2010) has suggested that there are several cohorts of young people who carry knives. Some young people carry knives because they are engaged in an offending lifestyle, but they appear to carry for multiple reasons, including offensive and defensive purposes. A second cohort of young people who are not offenders sometimes carry a knife largely for defensive purposes. This group

may be less visible and subject to less scrutiny by the police. This seems to make sense in the light of the data considered in this chapter. At the same time, several studies were cited above that have suggested a complex normative/subcultural element to knife carrying (Bannister et al., 2010; Aldridge and Medina, 2007; Firmin *et al.*, 2007). Firmin *et al.,* (2007). There is at present an absence of research on these matters (Firmin *et al.*, 2007). An important consequence of this is that political and public debates about knife crime can become skewed towards simplistic stereotypes that are neither helpful nor constructive in terms of proposing adequate solutions.

The chapter has also explored the strategies adopted to tackle knife crime in England and Wales. The government has been very active in its efforts to tackle knife crime but these have generally neglected a full appreciation of young people's experiences of violence, and the complex issues that generate knife crime and other forms of violence, or the ways in which regulation and intervention can exacerbate young people's offending (Stephen and Squires 2004). The dominant policy approach is based on the idea that punishment and the threat of punishment should be enough to deter most young people from carrying a knife, and to keep those who remain undeterred 'off the streets'. Whilst there does appear to be some deterrent value to the current approach, it is not clear how effective this in the longer term. Putting more young people in prison, whilst ignoring the social contexts in which knives are carried, ultimately serves neither society nor the young people involved. Likewise, narrow interventionist approaches that fail to fully embrace a public health approach to violence can be ineffective and short term – a criticism that has been applied to the wider governmental approach to 'troubled youth' which utilises coercive and conditional welfare as a means of trying to control young people (Herlitz and Hough, 2016; Crawford, 2009; Burney, 2005). In part the failure of policy might arise from the lack of attendance to the voices of young people, and this rationale provided some of the inspiration for the methodological approach taken in this research, which is described in depth in Chapter Four. The next chapter takes forward some learning points that have emerged from this review, particularly: 1) the relatively short-term nature of much knife carrying; 2) the possibility of several distinct cohorts who carry knives; 3) the

concentration of knife carrying in deprived areas; 4) the possible normative and subcultural sources of this behavior; 5) the impact of violent victimization on the decision to carry a knife. This chapter has set the scene for the next chapter, which outlines the theoretical framework used in the thesis, and addresses these issues in more depth through the lens of 'street life'.

Chapter Three: Concepts

'Street life': offending, identity and change

Introduction

The previous chapter suggested that a grasp of contemporary manifestations of street violence, gangs and 'subcultures' was necessary to any framework which aimed to explore knife crime. It was also suggested that policy responses to knife crime were part of a wider configuration of young people that had an impact on their behaviour and wider perceptions of youth 'transgressions'. This chapter explores these issues and develops a conceptual framework for the conduct of the empirical research. The first section explores the development of a particular focus on the 'street' in sociological and criminological research. This provides the backdrop from which to explore some overlapping and related concepts that are taken forward into the analysis, these are: the role of street codes in the production of street violence; the concept of masculine violence that underpins street codes; young men's collectives as a central way in which street codes are played out, and masculine hierarchies are enforced; the importance of space and place to a consideration of youth identity; and, the role of regulatory orders in shaping the use of space and young people's identities in the context of deprivation and marginalisation. This study aims to explore knife carrying from multiple perspectives, not just of those who carry knives. The second section seeks to mitigate against some of the weaknesses of a subcultural approach, whilst providing a more rounded view of young people that can incorporate those living with deprivation who do not offend and who may not carry knives. It does this by developing an understanding of 'resilience' and the related concepts of youth transitions and negotiated orders. These provide a more complete framework by which to approach the research topic. This section concludes by introducing the concept of 'security gap' as a means of framing both young people who offend and those who do not offend. The first section below starts by outlining some of the key elements of contemporary approaches to 'street life'.

Street life: key concepts

The concept of 'the street' is widely associated with inner-city strife in a predominantly African-American context (Wright and Decker, 1997). It nonetheless occupies a place in the popular consciousness as an almost mythic space which is at once localised and at the same time a global phenomenon. The 'street' also encapsulates concerns about a 'feral' underclass (Pearson, 1983; Newburn, 1996) that resonate in commentary on youth generally, and on knife crime specifically. The focus on 'gangsta rap' in commentary on knife crime makes a causal link between listening to certain kinds of music and engaging in certain kinds of behaviour (Squires, 2009; see also Kubrin, 2005; Ferrell, 1995). Under scrutiny such assertions are based on a misunderstanding of cause and effect, and as Squires (2009) has argued, neglect the social contexts within which both phenomena occur. This nonetheless has significant implications for policies designed to tackle knife crime and for young people subject to these policies, as explored in the previous chapter. Likewise, the concept of a 'knife culture' is regarded by many as unhelpful and risks stigmatising individuals and communities (see for instance Bannister *et al.*, 2012; Firmin, 2007).

The idea of a 'subculture' as alluded to above is tied to broader understandings of 'street life' as they are configured and reconfigured in popular debate. In fact the concept of the 'street', as with the broader concept of subculture, relates to a specific and fairly narrow set of concepts, some of which are useful for approaching the issue of knife crime. In particular, this section develops an understanding of four related concepts – first, that group behaviour can be viewed as normative behaviour that creates and cultivates different forms of inclusion and exclusion. Second, that social and material deprivation play a central role in shaping individual responses to local environments and wider socio-structural processes. Third, that normative behaviours and responses are not fixed but rather fluid, and that young people can 'drift' between different behavioural and value systems depending on the wider social context. Fourth, that, an 'offending lifestyle, shaped by street values and orientations can provide a resource and a compelling

behavioural imperative for young people living in deprived areas. These themes are drawn out in the first sub-section below.

Historical origins of the concept of 'street life'

Subcultural research has its roots in the socio-criminological theories of Durkheim (1858-1917). Durkheim developed a vision of society in which social order emerged from a consensus of norms and values. He argued that human action was moral in character and responses to crime were both expressive and symbolic of the moral order (Hughes *et al.*, 1995; Tierney, 1996). Durkheim saw a certain amount of deviance as functional, in the sense that it provided boundaries to social behaviour, which in turn helped foster a collective sense of identity within social groups and societies at large by delineating at any given time who was 'inside' and 'outside' of these boundaries (Gouldner, 1971). Laws represent the formal framework or codification of these unwritten rules and law breaking was therefore a natural consequence of these. The moral order was internalised through a process of socialisation by which 'new members of a society came to learn and identify with the rules of the group…the shared ways of doing things' (Hughes *et al.*, 1995: 165/6). These were not fixed but rather emerged through the processes of social interaction, experienced by individuals in time and space (Hughes *et al.*, 1995). The fluidity yet durability of such processes is a key theme in this thesis and is developed further below.

The period between the first and second world wars (1918-1939) saw the emergence of a specific criminological focus and a shift from a concern with social order to problems of urban crime. The concept of a 'subculture' arose from different ways of explaining patterns of offending in the expanding American cities of the early twentieth century (Park and Burgess, 1925). These provided fertile ground for the fusion of Durkheim's work with innovative methodological approaches (Hale *et al.*, 2013). *Social ecology* theorists referred to localised normative conditions: offending occurred either as the result of *a breakdown of* community controls (Shaw and Mckay, 1942), or as the result of an organised social structure which encouraged offending through participation in the illicit economy (Whyte, 1943; Sutherland, 1947). *Subcultural - strain theorists* (Tierney, 1996:

109) argued that offending subcultures were caused not by local conditions but by a clash of cultures at the societal level (Cohen, 1955; Merton, 1957; 1964). Merton (1957; 1964) for instance, drawing on Durkheim, argued that there was an inherent contradiction (strain) between the dominant [American] goals of visible success and the availability of legitimate means to achieve these goals. This resulted in alienation ('anomie') and the formation of localised subcultures with their own rules and values, some of which were favourable to criminal and violent behaviour.

Despite their differences, strain and social ecology theories both prefaced the importance of material and social deprivation in shaping conduct. Criticism of these theories laid the ground for other emerging theories at this time that problematised this relationship. Matza (1964) for instance claimed that Cohen and other strain theorists were overly-rigid in their categorisation of delinquent values and behaviour and as a result had 'over-predicted' delinquency. Rather than a strict way of life, delinquency was something that young people tended to 'drift' in and out of. Moreover, through rationalisation and the deployment of various 'techniques of neutralisation' (Sykes and Matza, 1957; Matza, 1964;) young people were able to hold delinquent and non-delinquent values at the same time. That is, conduct wasn't fixed but was, rather, adaptable to circumstance.

The 'street' in the theories described above formed a central locus for the formation and evolution of these public and sometimes violent subcultures (Whyte 1943; Miller, 1958). Wolfgang and Feracutti (1967) subsequently defined and measured the concept of a *violent* subculture and its role in the production of violence. Their research was based primarily on analysis of crime statistics in the city of Philadelphia in the United States and they linked high rates of violent offending with deprivation, gender and race. Their findings suggested the existence of a subculture that favoured the use of 'overt' violence and that stood 'apart from' and in opposition to the 'dominant, the central or parent culture' (Wolfgang and Feracutti, 1967: 158). This subculture was supported by individual attitudes and values that were in turn enforced by collective norms. These norms obliged individuals to respond to threats of violence with excessive violence and punished those

who failed to do so. Within such a normative context failure to conform could have serious repercussions for individuals in terms of increased victimisation and reduced safety.

Wolfgang and Feracutti's 'thesis of violence' had a number of components which integrated the concerns of social ecological and subcultural strain theorists: on the one hand they argued that violence was the result of an individual holding values that were 'pro violence' - i.e. they committed violence because they believed it was the *right thing to do*. This was explained as a function of socialisation or internalisation of attitudes and values. On the other hand, they argued that individuals responded and conformed to a normative system which encouraged violent responses – that is, they committed violence because they were aware that they *should*, independent of their own feelings about the morality of such behaviour. In other words, individuals responded with violence because of *social pressure* to do so. Subsequent researchers examining these findings found little evidence to support socialisation as an explanation (Ball-Rokeach, 1973; Erlanger, 1974). There was significant support however for the existence of pro-violent norms and '*social pressure*' to use violence (Erlanger, 1974; Felson *et al.*, 1994) and this concept is returned to further below.

At around the same time as Wolfgang and Feracutti developed their thesis, British research on subcultures was emerging. This movement did much to explore the origins of working class culture and emphasised violence as a 'normal' element of these cultures rather than the result of pathologies emerging from deeply entrenched racism and poverty (Cohen and Robins, 1978; Hobbs, 1988). Rather youth violence asserted, built on and subverted aspects of the parent culture reflecting wider social dynamics in an increasingly post-industrial Britain (Willis, 1977; Hebdidge; 1979; Hall et al., 1978; Walklate, 2003). This was of a markedly different flavour to that in the US however and tended to focus on youth subcultures and style as opposed to organised criminal gangs as a unit of analysis (Tierney, 1996: 190). The work of both Matza (1964) and Becker (1967; 1973) had a significant influence on British subcultural scholarship (Walklate, 2003; Chriss, 2000). This offered a theory of deviance which combined structure *and* agency in accounts of

crime, on the one hand showing how crime was socially constructed through the operation of state power (including through the co-option of criminologists), and on the other, exploring the ways in which individuals made sense of the world and gave meaning to their actions. Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) for instance highlighted the ways in which regulatory orders shaped perceptions of and responses to, youth culture, and the processes by which acts of deviance came to be labelled as criminal. Similarly, Hall *et al.,* (1978) highlighted the collusion of the media and police in the construction of a spate of street robberies as 'muggings' to generate public outrage at a time of civil unrest.

This brief overview has considered the origins of subcultural understandings of crime and some of the subsequent developments in this body of work. This provides a useful backdrop from which to explore a wider body of research that seeks to understanding the intersection of a range of influences on contemporary youth behaviour with reference to some of the same concepts introduced above: group behaviour and inclusion; the centrality of social and material deprivation to understanding crime; the notion of 'drift' between different behaviours and values; and, the idea that an 'offending lifestyle shaped by street values and orientations. Subcultural explanations of crime fell out of favour in the 1980s as approaches rooted in a 'what works' philosophy (Young, 1994) became more popular. 'Right realists' for instance shifted the emphasis away from understanding crime and (back) towards the management and containment of crime, whilst 'left realists' moved away from a focus on class and youth subcultures towards a concern for victims (Young, 1994; Hale *et al.,* 2013). At the same time, Developmental Life-Course Criminology (Farrington, 1996; see also Young, 1994; Hale *et al.,* 2013) identified 'risk' and 'protective' factors that could lead to or protect against offending. In the 1990s and 2000s the work of Anderson (1999) as well as Katz (1988) and Bourgois (1995) generated 'renewed interest' in 'street culture' (Brookman *et al*., 2011: 17) and in the role of the 'street' in shaping young people's experiences of violence. The idea of a 'street code', in particular, provides a valuable framework through which the themes described above can be approached. The rest of this section expands on this concept, by exploring the influence of 'hegemonic masculinities', the role of gangs and the effect of regulatory

frameworks in producing specific contemporary youth identities. First, however, these phenomena require some further grounding in the concepts of 'space' and 'place'. This is done below.

Defining space and place

The concepts of 'space' and 'place' are subject to ongoing debate as to their exact meaning, and it is not necessary here to enter into this debate (see Agnew and Livingstone, 2011 for a full discussion). The aim, rather, is to arrive at some broadly agreed definitions. Space can be seen as largely undifferentiated and is relatively unproblematic – space is dimensional, a container for that which exists, a location which has no meaning or social connection for human beings (Tuan, 1977). Place, by contrast, is subjective, distinct and unique, a 'distinctive coming together in space', a location where things 'just happen' (Agnew and Livingstone, 2011: 2/3). In other words, place is a means of organising space through meaning. That place is subjective does not limit its real-world impact, as has been shown, ecological, or 'place based' risks can have a greater impact over the life course than individual 'risk factors' (Silvestri *et al.*, 2009; Diez Rouz *et al.*, 2001: cited in Agnew and Livingstone, 2011). Moreover, there is overlap between the two concepts. 'Placelessness' as a phenomenon can be seen as the unstripping of distinctiveness and meaning from place (Relph, 1976). At the same time, subjectivity requires some level of agreement, albeit often tacit, about the differentiation of space. A street code for instance would not function if only a single person adhered to it in any given place, rather, enough people must perceive or tacitly agree to the existence and legitimacy of a street code for it to have an effect. In this sense, place also embeds, and is embedded in, notions of community and distinctly local and traditional collectivities (Agnew and Livingstone, 2011). The next section explored the role of violent street codes in shaping perceptions of space and place.

Street codes and violence

This section outlines contemporary understandings of street codes and the ways in which they generate, sustain and shape violence in deprived areas. If Wolfgang and Feracutti (1967) refined the concept of *social pressure*, Anderson (1999) and his contemporaries

used ethnographic research and observation to better link social pressure to specific and observable manifestations of street violence and the wider social context in it occurs. Anderson described and contrasted the prevailing social milieus he observed along a single street - 'Germanstown Avenue' in Philadelphia in the United States, and the significant differences in the subjective meanings applied to these places and specific sub-places within them. He characterised the street as a 'continuum' with two poles. At the affluent (mainly white) end of the street he observed a 'code of civility' (1999: 13), whilst at the poorer, (predominantly black) end of the street, populated by 'street oriented' individuals who prioritised aggression and violence as a way of resolving conflict (1999: 14) he observed 'the code of the street'. This visible minority aggressively assured the compliance of the more ambivalent majority. This social pressure existed *a priori* of any individual but nonetheless impacted on all those who lived in the area, to a greater or lesser extent, and had significant implications for experiences of victimisation.

Anderson (1999) located the origins of the street code in the damage to individuals wrought by extreme deprivation and marginalisation. Racism, poor housing and exclusion from the labour market generated a 'pervasive' despair (Anderson, 1999: 32) that found relief in an 'oppositional culture' which led to the emergence of the code. Similarly, Bourgois (1995: 8) describes the 'anguish' of growing up impoverished in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in one of the richest cities in the world. The day to day pressures of poverty and unemployment were exacerbated by their proximity to the vast wealth of the business district and Manhattan beyond and have 'spawned…an 'inner city street culture': a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society' (Bourgois, 1995: 8).

The 'code of the street' for Anderson is a series of *unwritten rules* that have significant implications for public conduct and perceptions of place and space. The code 'regulates and justifies violence' (Brookman *et al.*, 2011: 18) and defines when it is and is not necessary. Critical to understanding this is the notion of 'respect'. Respect is bound up in

a capacity for violence, a determination and preparedness to do violence, and a low tolerance for any slight or challenge that could be classed as disrespect. It also, critically, creates several inclusive/exclusive divisions – on the one hand, between peers to do, or can, adhere to the notion of respect, and those who cannot or do not, and on the other hand, between groups and individuals who may adhere to the notion and in doing so find themselves in competition. A capacity for violence has particular 'strategic importance' for inner city youths for 'staying out of harm's way...' (Anderson, 1990: 42). 'With the right amount of respect, individuals can avoid being bothered in public. Respect then is inextricably linked with an individual's capacity for violence and augments an ability to 'deter future assaults' (Sandberg, (2008: 161). Respect is not a tangible thing though and therefore it must be 'campaigned for' and 'constantly be guarded' Anderson (1999: 33). This campaigning is done through individual and collective forms of violence – young men challenge other young men to fights, either individually or collectively as a means of competing for respect and reputation and what Cohen (1973: 53) has called 'character contests'.

This has significant implications for a young person's identity, and for many young people living in an area where behaviour is influenced by a street code, and forms the 'core' of their self-esteem (Kubrin, 2005: 363; Anderson, 1999; Katz, 1988). Violence provides both an outlet for frustration and a means of attaining respect and status that is otherwise denied them through other means. At the same time, the presence of illegal opportunity structures provide multiple opportunities for advancement - lucrative drug markets provide not just one such means for advancement, but highly visible role models who are able to display both physical prowess and material wealth (Hallsworth, 2005; Anderson, 1999). In this context it is easy to see how violent conduct and knife carrying can seem attractive in areas of deprivation, and can be linked to collective violence in complex ways. 'Doing' violence becomes a form of self-defence, even if it appears ostensibly offensive behaviour.

There are weaknesses in this body of research however. The concept of a 'subculture' provides a useful frame in which to examine and explains different forms of behaviour.

There remain questions as to the relative weight that should be ascribed to normative influences at either the societal or the local level however. Moreover, the limitations of a subcultural approach become apparent when the behaviour that is being explained (such as knife carrying) appears to be done by more than one kind of person. This is returned to later in this chapter. There are also methodological problems. Research such as Anderson's provides in-depth description of specific locales and circumstances that are highly compelling. The value of these descriptions in trying to generalise to other areas has and can be questioned. This matter is returned to in the next chapter where the argument is made that concepts derived from qualitative research can be generalizable. Indeed, subsequent research empirically tested some of Anderson's concepts in America, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. These studies supported the existence of a code and its correlation with high levels of violence (Brezina *et al.*, 2004; Rich and Grey, 2005; Brunson and Stewart, 2006). Despite very different historical and demographic contexts, research has also confirmed the existence of a similar form of social pressure in the UK (Brookman *et al.*, 2011; Gunter, 2008). Brookman *et al.*, (2011) conducted interviews with offenders incarcerated in the UK for street violence. Their findings support the importance of 'respect' and the punishment of disrespect, and the maintenance of a 'fearful' reputation as a means of discouraging victimisation (see also Bannister et al., 2012).

Research has also added to understandings of street codes in a British context, such as that by Hallsworth (2005), Heale (2008) and Earle (2011). Earle (2011) explored the concept of 'on road' as a way of understanding street-cultures in Britain. The 'road' is a 'mythic' space in which damaged and marginalised young men seek to describe and express a sense of identity – as modern outlaws engaged in a relentless struggle for survival, both inside and outside of prison. This proscribes not just public conduct but also matters such as clothing, speech and manner of movement and is bound up in a particular conception of manhood and masculinity. Indeed, street codes more broadly have been shown to not be neutral but to represent and reproduce a heavily gendered form of behaviour. A street code is not neutral but is underscored by and at the same time

reproduces, wider societal class, gender and ethnic relationships. The usefulness of the concept then is determined not just by its illumination of the reproduction of violence but in its insights into the specific forms and manifestations this violence takes. Central to understanding this is the concept of 'masculine hegemony' (Connell, 2002) and its intersection with violent street cultures and codes to produce a form of exaggerated 'hyper-masculinity' among some young working class males. This is explored in the next section below.

Performing 'masculinity'

If the violent street codes described above represent a specific subcultural response to entrenched deprivation and disadvantage, these do not evolve apart from wider social structures but can in fact be seen to reproduce and even exaggerate those structures. The concept of *masculine hegemony* was developed as a means of describing how historic patterns of domination continue to suppress and oppress women through a system of stable 'social relations' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 833). Crucially, whilst concerned with relations *between* genders, the concept has also been used to highlight the ways in which a hegemonic masculinity is positioned and prioritised as an idealised form of manhood, to subordinate women but also to illustrate the complex systems of 'domination and subordination [that exist] between groups of men' (Connell, 1995: 78).

A capacity for violence is central to understanding how masculine hegemony functions in society. Violence, or more often the *implicit* threat of violence underpins gender relations in many social spheres. Bullying at school for instance, whether physical or verbal, is often tied to wider processes of socialisation and gender hierarchy formation (Phillips, 2003; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Similarly, domestic and sexual violence against women and children both enacts and enforces entrenched gender roles (Smart 1976; Stanko, 1990). Violence between males can also be seen as enforcement of a masculine hegemony (Stanko, 1994; Stanko, and Hobdell, 1993). As Stanko (1994: 44) has observed, men [of all classes] use violence as a mechanism for 'negotiating the hierarchies of power': to

'save face', resolve arguments, gain compliance, enhance status, defend territory, have fun, attract the attentions of a woman'. Whilst this competition and the need to escalate it becomes more intense the lower one moves down the social scale, violence is nonetheless present at all levels of society. As described later, this has particular implications for women and subordinate men's experiences of public space.

If violence is used to reaffirm gender roles throughout society, this takes on greater significance in the absence of other sources of security and self-esteem. Some young people growing up in deprived circumstances experience a 'loss of cohesion' (Ray, 2011; 78) which damages their ability to maintain and project self-esteem. For young men especially, this creates a sense of weakness and lack of control for which violence can provide both an outlet for frustration and a means of attaining respect and status that is otherwise denied them. This results in the adoption or internalisation of a dangerous and hyper-masculine identity and leads to risk taking and ordeals as modes of self-assertion and compensation.

The 'hyper-masculinity' described above shares many features with that of the concept of 'respect'. For the young people described by Anderson and others (Bourgois, 1999; Moore, 1991) 'respect', though compelling, is for many an unobtainable objective. The masculine 'ideal' is equally hard to live up to. Whilst the most dangerous individuals might be able to manage it, most men only aspire to what Connell (1995) calls 'complicit masculinity'. This means stopping short of a full commitment to a dominant masculine persona and finding a balance between, on the one hand, presenting a plausible threat to other males, whilst avoiding actually having to engage in violence. As with 'respect' described above, a reluctance to engage in violence can be interpreted as weakness which would invite abuse (Messerschmidt, 2000). A failure to attain respect can result in subordination and ongoing victimisation, and risks, as Anderson (1999:49) has gravely stated, a 'fate worse than death'. Both respect and hegemonic masculinity then are fundamentally *insecure*, and must be continually negotiated and renegotiated. Critically, youth gangs and groups function as a specific space in which the dynamics of street

codes, respect and masculine identities are played out for young people, especially among young men. The role of gangs and the links between gangs, street codes and masculine identities is considered below.

Conceptualising 'gangs'

The *concept* of a gang is ever evolving, even as gangs themselves continue to evolve and respond to ongoing attempts to restrict and curtail their activities. As discussed in the introduction, even a brief engagement with the literature on gangs shows just how complex and contested the terrain is. Early explanations of gangs tended to focus either on their origins in urban patterns of migration and subsequent responses to material and social deprivation, or through individual and collective responses to failure in the context of a society oriented towards success. According to the former, the gang was a principal vehicle by which criminal subcultural values were passed from one generation to the next (Shaw and Mckay, 1942; 1945) through a process of social learning (Whyte, 1943; Sutherland, 1947). According to the latter, young working class men experienced frustration because of exclusion from the means to achieve material success in a society driven by such aspirations. This generated anger and low self-esteem, which in turn led to the formation of 'delinquent peer groups' (Cohen, 1955: 18). Whatever the explanation, it was clear that gangs in America were and are the product of complex local and national patterns of immigration and deprivation that can generate collective violence. For Frederick Thrasher (1927) who studied some 1300 gangs in Chicago in the 1920s, a gang was defined by both its behaviour and structure as inherently violent:

> "The gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict." (Thrasher, 1927: 46).

Whether or not definitions that emerged in an American context can be applied to the British context remains a moot point. For a long time, British gangs were regarded as engaging overall in less serious criminal behaviour than American gangs, although there is increasing evidence that British gangs are indeed, becoming more organised becoming both more organised and more engaged in serious criminal activities (Tierney, 1996: 190).

Recent critical gang studies (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2003) have emphasised the biographical and historical emergence of gangs in local social contexts, suggesting that gangs in one country will be different to gangs in another country, and similarly, gangs in one part of a country will be different to gangs in another part of the country. Bannister *et al.*, (2010; 2012) for instance have explored the territorial origins of much gang fighting in the west of Scotland and argue that housing policy in post-war Glasgow contributed to the evolution of the many gangs in the city and the territorial nature of much of the gang related violence that followed. Different historical circumstances can lead to very different forms of behaviour – in the case of the research cited above (Bannister *et al.*, 2010): gangs on the west coast of Scotland engaged in more severe forms of collective violence than those on the east coast of Scotland, the latter having broadly different historical origins to the former.

Gangs provide an important forum in which male identities can be enacted and negotiated (Thornberry *et al.*, 2003). There is nonetheless increasing recognition of the role of young women in gangs (Batchelor, 2009; Miller, 2001; Miller and Brunson, 2000). Miller and Brunson (2000) examined young women's roles in gangs in the United States, and found they vary by according to the specific composition and nature of the gang. Gangs that were ethnically mixed, and had significant numbers of young women, tended to allow women to take on more prominent roles. This was the case if the gang was predominantly male but with some women, predominantly or all female, or of roughly equal numbers. In all cases, there was 'space for young women's involvement' (Miller and Brunson, 2000: 433). Conversely, gangs that lacked ethnic diversity and that had few women tended to relegate women to more marginal roles, and were more likely to focus on the exploitation of women gang members. Young women in gangs dominated by men tended to distinguish themselves from other women, and were more likely to emphasis their own masculine traits in an effort to carve out a 'niche' from themselves (Miller and Brunson, 2000: 434, see also Miller, 2001). This meant adopting male attitudes towards violence, and using violence as a resource, in the absence of a space for more 'feminine'

endeavours. It was in these gangs that young women were also most likely to engage in serious offending and criminal behaviour.

Administrative attempts to address some of the problems associated with gangs have been criticised as neglecting the complexity of gangs in favour of a 'commitment to typologising' (Hallsworth and Young, 2008: 187). This reduces gangs to racial, gender and class stereotypes, and reproduces negative public attitudes towards gangs, which can in turn reproduce some of the conditions which foster gangs. Indeed, referring to young people's groupings as gangs can stigmatise young people and risks labelling otherwise unproblematic behaviour as criminal (Hallsworth and Young, 2004). Aldridge and Medina (2007) explored English gangs and matters of culture, ethnicity and identity in the wider context of media driven reporting of youth violence. They found that media portrayals of specific youth gangs actually fed into gang member's own perception of their behaviour and could actually cement violent gang identities that would otherwise have remained fluid and fractured. Some contemporary research has however emphasised the positive or benign aspects of gang membership (Bannister *et al.*, 2010; Aldridge and Medina, 2007). These are often neglected, but are nonetheless important when considering why young people join gangs in the first place. What this body of research suggests is the importance of gangs to the formation of young people's individual and collective identities. Gang membership provides community, support and protection. It can also provide a source of identity, a way of expressing solidarity and belonging within a local territory (Kintrea *et al.*, 2008) and a means of resisting social, cultural and economic disenfranchisement (Hagedorn, 2008).

Gangs and gang activities have also been shown to have less benign consequences for conduct, and a range of 'negative outcomes' (Bannister *et al.*, 2010: 59). If street codes and masculine hegemony define appropriate forms of public conduct, this is often done within and between street gangs and youth groups through a normative environment which favours extreme violence and adherence to a violent street code, what Heale (2008: 3) calls a 'state of mind'. Being present in or passing through dangerous areas

necessitates a 'different way of moving, or acting, of getting up and down the street' (Anderson, 1999: 27). This is sometimes played out through episodes and incidents of collective conflict. These incidents are often pre-arranged and are visibly played out in public in 'staging areas' where people 'represent' and 'profile' and where fights occur, feuds are attended to, and dominant and subordinate relationships both within and between gangs are assigned (Anderson, 1999: 26). Indeed, reputation requires witnesses to both confirm and spread it through word of mouth (Gaskell, 2008). Gang members are also often targeted for robbery, ostensibly for their consumer goods, but often this is bound up in rituals of humiliation. According to Hallsworth (2005) humiliation by robbery is increasingly used by street gangs in London as an initiation ceremony for gang membership (see also Anderson, 1999). Street youths also target non-offending young people (Hallsworth, 2005; Anderson, 1999) for wearing the 'wrong' clothes and failing to conform to the ways in which street youths dress. Such experiences can lead to some non-street youths 'thugging up' (Hallsworth: 2005: 118) and disguising themselves by dressing like their street peers.

An understanding of the issues described above is developed further in the finding chapters. Street codes not only held to define appropriate public conduct but help to structure young people's perceptions of space and place and their subjective understandings of safety and threat, and generate territorial and spatial patterns of violence that have significant implications for young people's safety and wellbeing. This is considered below.

Space, place and youth subcultures

The previous sections have examined concepts of street codes and masculine identities, and the role of gangs in expressing and shaping these. Notions of 'belonging' are rooted in the conceptions of space and place as described above. Gangs and young people frequently express these dynamics through territoriality and attempts to assert dominance over public space. As research has consistently demonstrated, youth gangs have long standing historic identities embedded in local territories around specific places (Bannister

and Fraser, 2008; see also Spergel, 1990, Thornberry *et al.*, 2003; Bradshaw, 2005; Patrick, 1973). As research by Bannister and Fraser (2008: 101) has illustrated, gang and neighbourhood identities are intertwined and 'seemingly synonymous'. 'Attachment to place' (Kintrea *et al.*, 2008) can be seen to be strongest in areas of historical deprivation, where social and spatial mobility is restricted. This is especially the case for adolescents who may lack other forms of durable identity and social capital. It is where adolescence and deprivation combine that much problematic use of place and space is reported (Kintrea *et al.*, 2008). As noted above, conflict between territorialities provides a source of much gang violence. Such identities and ascribed characteristics can be found not just in stories told by adolescents however, but are passed down and/or pertinent for older adults living in the area, including parents and grandparents. Territorial identities and the boundaries that accompany them, as specific places in space, are therefore learned. This has implications for movement in space, and importantly, restrictions on movement that are considered further in the findings chapters.

Public space is also open to conflict *between* generations. The concept of public space is open to multiple definitions and is increasingly defined as much by who is excluded from these spaces as by who is included. Social and technological changes have had significant implications for use of public space in Britain. Among other things, the mass ownership of motorcars and their penetration of public space, the evolution of shopping malls as hybrid or pseudo public spaces (Matthews *et al.*, 2000), and the development of CCTV for the surveillance of public space have changed how space is used and perceived (Fyfe and Bannister, 1998). Chief among the victims of these changes have been children and young people, and this conflict can be read as an almost elemental 'struggle over personhood' by which adults who feel their authority is constantly being eroded by 'out of control youth' (Brown, 1995: 45). This denies not only young people's voices generally but their experiences of victimisation specifically (Brown, 1995). These changes have been accompanied by legislative and governmental shifts which have increasingly marginalised and demonised young people. The Anti-Social Behaviour agenda, for instance, was in-part an attempt to drive young people and other undesirables from

potentially more lucrative and attractive public spaces (Bannister and Kearns, 2012). The collective use of public space by young people then is increasingly precarious, and their attempts to impose their own definition of 'place' on public space increasingly bring them into conflict with others.

Patterns of space and place also have important consequences in terms of gendered meanings. The form of social learning described above does not happen simply *as is*, but rather is a response to wider social patterns of power and dominance inherent in both gender and class relations and those between different generations. The idea of 'gendered space' has been developed by feminists as a way of highlighting how social constructions of space serve male hegemony. Feminists have argued that modes of power and domination inside the home reflect those outside of the home (Duncan, 1996). Indeed, some have suggested that the very notion of the private sphere legitimises and creates the circumstances for the oppression of women and children in the home by men, who in turn are supported in this oppression by institutions and social and economic structures in the public sphere (Stanko, 1994). Viewed in this way, the distinction between inside and outside is a false distinction and both spheres are gendered spaces in which dominant forms of masculinity take precedence. Woman and children are oppressed in the home, whilst women, children and indeed subordinate men must be continually vigilant about the possibility of attack or violation in public space (Stanko, 1994).

Cultural criminology has highlighted the inherent symbolism in forms of 'subcultural' crime. It has also highlighted the political and cultural construction of crime and the consequences of this for young people. For Katz (1988), violence does not emerge from poverty *per se*, rather, it is an attempt to subvert long standing structural hierarchies by inverting modes of dominance and subordination that are rooted in experiences of space and place. According to Ferrell, (1995: 2) criminal subcultural styles emerge from 'class, age, gender and ethnic inequalities and by turns reproduce and resist these social fault lines'. Indeed, young people's own accounts of why they offend do not necessarily articulate marginalisation or awareness of structural problems but rather focus on the

intrinsically enjoyable and transient aspects of offending and violence (Hayward, 2002; Bannister *et al.*, 2010; 2012; France *et al.*, 2012). Katz (1988) Hayward (2002) and Lyng (1990) among others argued that the 'transgressive thrills' of violence are often overlooked in favour of a largely Marxist analysis of crime. Much crime, including street violence, can however provide a 'transformative magic' (Hayward, 2002: 3) which provides fleeting liberation from the mundanities of daily life. Crucially however, whilst there is a less of a focus on the structural sources of offending in this perspective, transgression is often a direct consequence of policing strategies, but also of young people's wider social construction. At the same time, what Ferrell (1995: 2) calls 'legal and political authorities' deploy their own 'symbolic and stylistic strategies' as a means of constructing and criminalising subcultures (see also Lyng, 1990). From this perspective, specific incidents of contemporary crime are inseparable from the dynamics of the media's role in the portrayal and construction of crime. This is not a new observation but rather builds on a long observed history of 'moral panics' (Cohen, 1973) in which emotive symbolism is used as a means of producing public responses to among other things drugs, mods and rockers and street gangs (Ferrell, 1995). This has direct implications for young people's conduct and subjective experience. Hall *et al.,* (1978), for instance, working in the 'Birmingham School' highlighted the collusion of the media and police in the construction of a spate of street robberies as 'muggings' to generate public outrage at a time of civil unrest. The subsequent moral panic was used to justify the introduction of new police powers including 'stop and search'.

Exclusion from public space is not experienced equally by all young people but impacts especially on young working class people, who are 'doubly excluded' on account of both their age and their class (Barry, 2006). Several scholars have highlighted how regulatory orders interact with young people's behaviour in ways that can increase offending and the role of 'mechanisms of social control embedded in local areas' (France *et al.,* 2012: 38) in shaping offending behaviour and decisions. France, *et al.*, (2012: 26) have drawn on Bourdieu as a means of showing how power operates to both shape and exclude young people from working class communities through formal social controls. They cite

research by Macdonald and Marsh (2005 cited in France, *et al*., 2012: 38) that linked increases in the use of heroin in Teeside in the 1990s to heavy handed and intrusive policing practices. France *et al.,* (2012: 39) have also highlighted how, among other things, the difficulties of 'managing boredom' on council estates can set off a chain reaction which brings young people into contact with the police and other agencies of control. Contemporary patterns of exclusion might be *novel* but they are not new, and governmental attempts to modify the built environment for social means have a long history. Likewise, Bannister *et al.*, (2012) have shown how council attempts to break up deprived communities after the second would war laid the roots for many of Glasgow's current gang problems. This suggests that attempts to regulate 'lower class' deviance through governance can produce new forms of deviance, in this case gang fighting and associated problems.

The chapter so far has developed a focus on street codes, masculine hegemony, and, gangs as these phenomena impact of space and place. It is suggested that a subcultural approach to knife crime might provide a conceptual space in which to explore the interaction of violent street identities, violence and knife crime. There are problems when viewing youth through a subcultural lens however. One the one hand, subcultural research can lack a coherent approach to the onset and desistence of offending, and can be overly static in its conceptualisation of how young people stop and start offending. There are also problems of scale and texture. This is especially the case when comparing American and British studies – Anderson's (1999) bleak descriptions of attempts to find employment by one of the participants are not necessarily entirely comparable to problems encountered in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, a lot of subcultural research tends to be both overly deterministic (Barry, 2006; Shoemaker, 2005) and to over-predict offending (Newburn, 2007). The theories say little about why *some* young people in a given situation go on to offend, whilst many others *do not*. Further, the more conventional and mundane aspects of many young people's lives tend to receive little attention in much subcultural research (Barry, 2006; Hobbs, 1988), whilst the more spectacular aspects are highlighted. As Matza (1964) demonstrated, subcultural theories

of youth offending over-play a commitment to crime and delinquency. In reality, many young people tend to 'drift' in and out of offending and between subcultural affiliation and more conventional lifestyles. Moreover, many young people do not offend, or do not offend to any significant degree, and as has already been suggested, some of these might still carry a knife.

If subcultural explanations of offending can be over-deterministic, as suggested above, they can also produce a particular form of fatalism that speak to a concern in the social sciences about the uses of social research (Bulmer, 1982). If the role of social science is merely to describe, then subcultural research provides useful and often place based descriptions of often very difficult social contexts. If the purpose of social research is to provide prescriptions for change however, then subcultural research does not always do this. This also speaks to problems when using concepts such as place and space, and the related issues of generalisability and replicability. If place is truly subjective, and rooted in place specific historical patterns, then each place will have unique characteristics. At the same time, if place is subjective patterning in space, then actually identifying and delineating the boundaries of place becomes problematic. This has a number of empirical implications. On the one hand, the process of identifying appropriate areas of study can become difficulty, and even 'opaque' (Bryman, 2004: 386). On the other hand, it can be hard to make legitimate claims as to the generalisability of any concepts or findings that emerge as a result of a study based on subjective tellings of place. These concerns are addressed more fully in the next chapter, where it is argued that such weaknesses can also be strengths in the context of qualitative research and alternative criteria of truth. It is necessary then to fashion a more rounded conceptual framework that can accommodate these issues. This is done in the section below.

Augmenting street life: resilience, transitions and negotiated order

This section presents three theoretical perspectives as a means of 'rounding out' the subcultural approach described above. It does this in three sections. It starts by outlining the concept of resilience which has emerged as a way of explaining the onset of, and desistence form offending, that occurs for many offenders. The second section develops a particular approach to 'youth transitions' developed by Monica Barry (2006) which can augment both subcultural explanations of offending and those rooted in 'resilience'. Finally, the theory of 'Negotiated Orders' is introduced (McAra and McVie, 2012). If 'youth transitions' theories can incorporate the full spectrum of young people better than subcultural theories, which tend to focus on offenders and youth transgressions, the theory of Negotiated Orders provides a possible means for conceptualising how non-offending young people build and sustain resilience in difficult circumstances – what is referred to further below as a 'security gap'.

Resilience and offending

The notion of explaining offending through the concept of a 'pathway' emerged from a critique of Developmental Life-Course Criminology (France and Homel, 2007). Developmental approaches draw on a range of 'paradigms' (Farrington, 2005: 181) including developmental psychology, sociology, and life-cycle research (France and Homel, 2007). A principal concern is with understanding the prevalence and frequency of offending and the specifics of the 'onset, persistence, escalation, de-escalation, and desistance of offending' (Farrington, 2000: 2) over the life course. The idea of a 'pathway' was originally chosen as a *motif* for this research principally because of the observation (outlined in the preceding chapter) that there are aspects of knife carrying behaviour that seem to fit with the step by step progression implied by the notion of a pathway or a trajectory, not least that for most young people knife carrying has a definite beginning, middle and end. As Lawrence (2006: 30) has noted, the concept of a pathway as a framing device can 'assist social scientists to organise information about individual lives into coherent and interpretable patterns'. However, the concept remains loosely defined in social theory. France and Homel (2007: 3) have observed that there remain 'widely divergent interpretations of what a pathway is' and differing perspectives on the kind of

'theoretical lens through which the concept should be viewed'. One approach to explaining this trajectory has been through the concept of resilience – this is outlined below.

Resilience as a concept emerged from studies of risk factors and the observable links between negative factors including personality traits, the family and the wider environment in delinquency. It was observed that some individuals did not become delinquent despite a clustering of risk factors. This led to the search for protective factors that can protect against a maladaptive outcome, which in turn was conceptualised as 'resilience'. Resilience is conceived of as 'individual variations in response to risk factors' (Born *et al.*, 1997:680) and are rooted in both personal and environmental 'protective factors'. As these accumulate, the likelihood that the individual will resist or transcend the impact of negative risk factors decreases. Born *et al.*, (1997:680) identify various 'realms' of social support: educational and residential climate; relationship with a reference person; personal resources including cognitive abilities, self-esteem and faith in oneself; and, an active rather than passive approach to problems.

Resilient and non-resilient young people are further distinguished by their *level* of engagement in offending, and resilience can facilitate both non-offending and desistence from offending. Three groups were identified by Born and colleagues (1997:680): resilients; desistents; and, delinquents. Resilients if they engaged in delinquency did so sporadically and only offended in minor ways. Desistents are those who had gone through a period of serious delinquency and been apprehended and subsequently decreased delinquent activity. Delinquents are those who had been apprehended and subsequently persisted of even increased their delinquency. Born *et al.*, (1997) found positive correlations between resilience and gender (females were more resilient than males) maturity, aggression, self-control, healthy relations with adults, and a steady temperament. This can be useful for explaining some aspects of knife carrying. What this model neglects however is an understanding of the process of identity change in the move away from offending.

Bottoms (2004: 381 article; 2002) has outlined four 'mechanisms…of legal conformity', these being: instrumental/prudential compliance; constraint based compliance; normative compliance; and, compliance based on habit or routine. These are not discrete but in a state of perpetual interaction. The third of these, 'normative compliance' is the most interesting in the context of this research, and looks at the role of changing identities as a means of understanding why young people offend. This also highlights the influence of a range of interrelated factors including the development of 'meaningful social attachments' and the impact of 'agency and cognitive re-orientation' in young people's lives (2004: 381). These can precede and enhance each other, pro – social attachments can lead to a reassessment of values and this re-orientation can strengthen existing attachments or generate further attachments, leading to a virtuous circle. Indeed, Born *et al.*, (1997) found that level of conformity to institutional norms could influence resilience, and that more conformist young people exhibited greater levels of resilience. This is explored in the next sub-section below.

There are various problems with the explanations given above. Maruna (1999) has argued that developmental theories neglect the 'person' in an explanation of change and that by exploring individual narratives of change it is possible to reach a better understanding of these processes. In this he argues for an interactionist approach to pathways that explores agency and identity as a reflexive process in which a person's goals and plans reflect the subjective narratives they employ to make sense of their lives. The value of deterrent models is also contested and contingent on a number of factors that are relevant to this study. Rational choice theory for instance has been subjected to criticism which questions its applicability outside of the laboratory (Williams, 2001). This critique is even more pertinent when considering young people, as various authors have argued that young people are more prone to close than distal effects however and myopic (Wilkinson and Fagan, 2000; Marfleet, 2008).

Maruna (1997) also critiques rational choice theories of desistence (and deviance more widely) as too narrow and argues that these models break down once the behaviour of

real individuals is examined in detail. Simply weighing up the *pros* and *cons* of behaviour in an economic model cannot incorporate the complexity of 'attitudes, emotion and self-concepts that drive much behaviour (Maruna, 1997: 5). Deterrent theory also assumes an understanding and awareness of specific laws. Research has for instance found that the general public consistently underestimate the severity of sanctions (Von Hirsch *et al.*, 1999) and it can be reasonably assumed that members of the public will have only a limited grasp of any changes and amendments to policies and legislation (Wright, 2010). There are also questions about legitimacy. As Hallsworth (2005) notes, young people are often *not* deterred from committing crime because they see the Criminal Justice System as distant, and repeated negative encounters with the police further alienate them. This makes it harder for some young people to 'absorb' messages around knife crime, especially those who most frequently encounter the police.

There are also problems with resilience, as it is conceived above, which is based largely on a 'deficit model' of offending (Hallsworth, 2005: 135), which links lack of resilience to inherent individual weakness and even an absence of a personal moral code, rather than locating it in the external and/or social environment. Given some of the contexts described in the previous chapter and elucidated further, below, it is absurd to suggest that young offenders lack 'resilience'. As an example, Earle (2011) has argued that some young offenders prefer to go to prison as a break from the daily demands of an offending lifestyle. Given the fear that the thought of prison would inspire in many people, it is hard to think of these young people as lacking resilience. It might be better to say that instead of resilience, these young people, many of whom experience significant violence and a stressful lifestyle, lack some of the touchpoints necessary to build an identity that is not founded on offending.

Youth transitions

If there are problems with 'resilience' as it is conceived above, there have been attempts to improve on this. Barry (2006) applies the work of Bourdieu (1986; 1990) to an understanding of the onset, maintenance and desistance of offending in adolescence. In

doing so Barry (2006: 23) addresses what she considers a significant gap in criminological research - the absence of a 'comprehensive approach to the mainly temporary nature of offending amongst a mainly transient section of a mainly youthful population'. In other words, Barry has fashioned what she thinks is a more comprehensive approach to offending pathways to those described earlier in this chapter. Whilst Bourdieu did not consider youth offending directly he did touch on the challenges of growing up in the modern era, a stage which he defined as being: 'on the uncertain border between adolescence and adulthood, particularly in association with the prolonging of education and changes in matrimonial customs, and which cannot readily be classified as adolescent or adult, student or wage earner, married or single, employed or unemployed' (Bourdieu, 2004: 91).

Both the approaches described above suggest normative and social reasons for offending and for not offending that go above and beyond 'getting a girlfriend' and relate instead to wider and deeper issues of identity formation. Barry in particular approaches youth offending through the lens of 'youth transitions'. Traditionally youth transitions research has presented a linear and simplistic account of what have been called the 'transitional pathways' (Barry, 2006: 29) from education to employment, from living with parents to living independently, and from family of origin to family of destination (Coles, 1995 cited in Barry, 2006: 29). More recent work has problematized this in the context of post industrialism and the erosion of stable employment structures and the consequent 'fragmentation of communities and working patterns' (Cohen and Ainley, 2000: 81).

The transitional period between childhood and youth is now recognised as being less linear, more cyclical and repetitive than for previous generations. This forces young people to draw on their own agency at a time of reduced agency and destabilisation. Agency in this context, especially for disadvantaged young people, means drawing upon 'entrepreneurial' skills and the adoption of 'alternative careers' which include offending, parenting and 'fiddly work' (Barry, 2006: 31). It is with respect to this that Barry develops

her own conceptualisation of Bourdieu's field theory, whereby some young people are seen as offending, not just or necessarily for financial gain, but in search of recognition and integration. Bourdieu focuses not just on structural factors but on 'sociability' and agency (Bourdieu 1986: 50, cited in Barry, 2006: 36). Social capital is defined as valued and reciprocal social relations which in turn generate further social networks and more capital. In this context, Barry argues that offending can be viewed as a *process* of change for an individual in the transition from childhood to adulthood in which both offending and non-offending actions are orientated towards achieving recognition among peers which in turn enhances integration and importantly, a sense of security. The cessation of offending itself represents an intentional act, the intended outcome of which is integration with the wider social structure through participation in adult activities like stable employment, relationships and friendships.

Barry develops two further concepts of Bourdieu's with reference to young people, those of *durability* and *legitimacy*. Capital, according to Bourdieu, takes effort and time to accumulate and to convey, and therefore has a certain durability. At the same time, legitimacy as Bourdieu defines it is 'an institution, action or usage which is dominant but not recognized as such, that is to say, which is tacitly accepted' (Bourdieu, 1984: 110). To use a sporting analogy – this could be applied to the rules of the game, which everyone accepts without generally thinking about it, and yet only a very few have the power to define or redefine. For Bourdieu, legitimacy is an intra-group phenomenon in that it is exercised or conferred by, in a mainstream sense, the state or representative of the state. Barry (2006) draws attention to the role of stable employment in desistance and the importance therefore of providing work for young people, less attention is paid to the problems that young people encounter in this respect and the roots of this not in individual adequacy or agency but in the operation of the labour market and the discriminatory nature of its orientation towards adults (Barry, 2006). She also notes that these changes run parallel with and are bound up in a shift in emphasis in society at large towards greater individualisation. This places greater responsibility on young people to negotiate

adolescence using their own resources, and justifies greater punishment for those who fail to do so, or who use resources that are illegal or anti-social.

For young people during a time of transition, the different forms of capital outlined above lack durability, principally because young people are denied legitimacy at a crucial time in their lives. Young people, and especially those from working class backgrounds are, according to Barry, denied full citizenship and marginalised economically and socially. They are also denied, by virtue of their 'liminal' status (Barry, 2006: 24), the responsibilities, expectations and sources of capital associated with full adulthood. Moreover, for those from a working-class background, the rules can effectively work against them twice, discriminating against them both as members of a subordinate class and as young people. However, Barry argues, young people are able to generate their own, inter-group, legitimacy, in that it is conferred by and on young people. Youth 'subcultures' with their inclusive/exclusive tropes and styles could be read as a means of generating legitimacy. Whilst neither durable or legitimate in a mainstream sense, the symbolic capital that can be accrued by various means including offending, can at this period provide a 'viable and vital source of identity, status, recognition, reputation and power within the friendship group' (Barry, 2006: 40) offering both 'continuity' and recognition at a time when these important elements are largely absent. This approach can account for offending in a way that does not rely on individual dysfunction or inadequate moral development but rather shows offending to be a logical, if at times misguided and counter-productive response, to the challenges of being a young person in contemporary Britain. Offending could also provide a source of *resilience* at a critical juncture in young people's lives.

Violence for young people can be a tool, like offending, for furthering integration at a time of transition. That is not to say that young people who use violence do not consider it wrong. As Barry notes, offending young people demonstrate a distinctly moral awareness of the rightness or otherwise of their activities. In line with Bourdieu's notion of 'socially

bounded' rationality (Weininger, 2005: 125) however, they make choices with only a limited grasp of the options available and shaped by their social position and levels of capital. Indeed, for Barry (2006), much youth offending is futile and mismanaged and rarely results in significant material gain. Rather, many young people offend as a means of gaining recognition among peers. Barry links this to a sense of safety and security, although she does not link it explicitly, as Sandberg (2008) does, to actual physical security. Some reference is made to violence, however, particularly with respect to the idea of 'solving problems with fists' (Barry, 2006: 33). At the same time, much of the work considered above focused on 'street' orientations as a means of understanding offending behaviour, relatively little attention has been paid to those whom Anderson (1999: 44) calls 'decent' youth. Indeed, many of the people living in areas influenced by a street code lack either the capacity or the will (or both) to fully commit to the code. It is therefore important to consider more closely the experiences of those who are not street oriented but who must confront, avoid or engage with the street in their daily lives (Gaskell, 2008) and the implications of this for offending and identity. This is construed below as a 'civic code' in the context of negotiated orders.

Negotiated orders

McAra and McVie (2012) have developed a means of exploring subjective experience through engagement with both the ways in which regulatory orders attribute identity to individuals and the ways in which individuals resist or subvert these attributions. They articulate a method of analysis called 'critical positivism' which conceptualises social identity as emerging from a 'taxonomic' processing of social experience, whereby individuals read and respond to the social world through a series of classifications and social connections/misconnections. At the intersection of these, according to McAra and McVie (2012), sits the concept of 'negotiated orders', which starts with the lived encounters of young people. Social experience for young people living with marginality is not fixed but rather occurs or emerges at this interface between on the one hand interaction with representatives of 'formal orders', principally but not exclusively the police, and on the other hand 'informal orders' represented by the concept of 'the street' with its own structuring rules including 'rules of engagement', 'territorial rules' and 'gender order

rules' each with their own discourses of inclusivity and exclusivity (McAra and McVie, 2012: 14).

McAra and McVie's (2012) research findings support many of the core findings of Developmental Life-Course Criminology, in particular Moffits' (1993) distinction between adolescent limited and life-course persistent offenders. However, where Moffit identified two 'pathways', one early onset persistent group and one late onset desisting group, the Edinburgh Youth Transitions Survey (EYTS) pointed to the existence of three significant pathways. These incorporate two early onset groups, one that is relatively brief in terms of span of offending and one that starts early and continues into the twenties and is most likely to involve serious offending. Three critical risk factors explained the difference between these two groups: early interaction with the police; formal exclusion from school, and informal exclusion by peers. Early interaction with the police often led to youngsters being labelled 'trouble makers' (McAra and McVie, 2012: 24) which generated a cyclical pattern of repeated interaction with the police. This was found to be a significant predictor of more serious offending, and an important obstacle to desistence from offending.

As already noted, a street code can be conceived of as 'social pressure' rather than as the internalisation of social attitudes. This generates by necessity a capacity to adopt or display different behaviours according to the situation, demonstrating adherence to the street code at some times but not at others. Matza (1964) has informed recent theoretical developments which posit more than one normative system operating among youth with reference to 'negotiated orders' (McAra and McVie, 2012). This highlights the salience of both the street and the school in young people's social landscapes and conceptually develops the latter.

Much of the research considered so far has paid only scant attention to the wider body of young people who live in deprived areas but are not street oriented. This is important because the previous chapter established that knife carrying goes beyond the relatively

small group of more serious offenders. Knife carrying may be most entrenched and have more serious consequences for these young people, but it is nonetheless more widespread. Importantly, it would appear that from this perspective, it is not those with a street orientation who set the rules but rather the majority of young people who may offend, may engage in violence, but who in a normative sense do so within strict boundaries of acceptability. McAra and McVie (2012) contrast the street and the school as contrasting normative domains, the former governed by street rules, the latter by a normative order that is similar to what Anderson (1999: 24) calls the 'code of civility'. According to Anderson (1999: 22), in areas governed by the street code individuals must suppress what in other areas would be a normal irritation at actions that show a flagrant disregard for civility – the author uses as an example a woman who parks her car across a street forcing traffic to go around her (Anderson, 1999: 22). To do otherwise would likely receive a highly aggressive response which those attuned to the unwritten rules are careful to avoid. In areas not governed by the street code, (and presumably governed by a civil code) such behaviour would attract vocal complaints from passers-by. This 'civic code' is according to Anderson based on politeness, mutual consideration and restraint.

Unlike street oriented youths, the 'civic code' is employed by young people with at least the tacit support of significant adults, especially in the more heavily supervised school environment. A civic code does not proscribe offending or violence – indeed many young people offend who are neither economically, nor socially, disadvantaged (Hayward, 2002), and many young people who do not otherwise offend engage in violence. Bullying for instance has been shown to be commonplace among young people (Gaskell, 2008; Olweus, 1993) to the extent that it is regarded as a 'normal' aspect of school life by many teachers and students in the UK (Phillips, 2003). Rather a civic code limits offending and violence and provides for the social exclusion of those who stray outside of these limits, potentially through the use of violence. As with the street code, failure to adapt can have significant social implications for young people. The ways in which young people were perceived and labelled by their peers had important implications for ongoing offending, as did their relations with the police. How these relations are managed has significant

implications – those young people labelled offenders are not necessarily those who offend the most but those who manage these relationships the least competently. The implications of this are that those young people who get caught, for instance carrying a knife, might simply be those who are most visible. This increases their physical vulnerability and therefore may place greater demands on their need for security. This is developed briefly below with reference to the idea of a 'security gap'.

Moving forward: approaching the 'security gap'

This chapter so far has set out a theoretical framework that combines attendance to subcultural theories of offending with a sensitivity to the complexity of young people's lived experience. The chapter has approached 'youth' from a number of positions, and contends that offenders and non-offenders alike face similar problems, albeit they respond to them differently. A significant concern for young people was highlighted in the previous chapter – that is the pervasive nature of both the threat of, and experience of, violent victimisation. This does not occur in isolation, but is bound up in, and in part generated by, experience of a complex and unsettling transitional period that all young people must go through on the path from childhood to adulthood. Crucially, those young people living in deprived circumstances must cope with boredom, unemployment, low self-esteem, and the presence of various illegal economies, in addition to violence from both peers and adults. The latter might come from adults in their immediate sphere – family members and others in the community, but it also comes externally, in the form of the police and other representatives of authority. This may not necessarily manifest as physical violence, but rather, young people experience life as the weaker party in ongoing conflict over space and place, which can have economic, social and emotional effects.

It is suggested then, that the various forces that young people must contend with, in the context of a transitional period, can be construed as a 'security gap'. This is similar to Marfleet's (2008: 35) 'fear and victimisation hypothesis' described in the previous chapter. However, this concept was not developed sufficiently by Marfleet, and lacked attendance to the complexities of young people's experiences of fear and victimisation. The concept

of a 'security gap' developed in this thesis can help to frame an understanding not just of young offenders' knife carrying, but also of those young people who are not offenders but who may carry a knife. The 'code of the street' operates in such a way that a demonstrable capacity for violence and importantly, a visible capacity for violence provide a means of attaining some level of self-esteem in the absence of other sources of support. As highlighted above, gang membership can be both a response to ongoing insecurity, but also reproductive of insecurity. Whilst being part of a gang might make a young person feel safer, it might make others feel less safe, and expose both members and non-members to violence and anxiety. Another response to insecurity was explored through the concept of 'negotiated orders', and it was suggested that an alternative 'civic code' might also operate among young people, especially in the context of the school. The civic code does not entirely restrict violence but rather might govern it, and allow non-offending young people to exclude those whose violence goes beyond established boundaries. Importantly however, in neither code is a distinction made between offending and non-offending, rather an individual is judged by their conduct as they go about their lives. How they are judged has significant implications for their integration with their peers. This in turn will have implications for their ongoing security and experience of a 'security gap'. It is suggested here that both codes embody some aspects of resilience whilst at the same time exposing young people to experiences that could impede resilience. In this sense, the 'security gap' is not fixed but is rather, fluid, and, as explored further in the findings chapters, has both spatial and temporal characteristics. Moreover, it is, or for some young people, at least appears to be, subject to, and amendable to, efforts to close it. This may have implications for knife carrying and use.

Conclusion: connecting 'street life' with knife carrying

A conceptual framework can be defined as a 'synthesis of literature on how to explain a phenomenon' (Regoniel, 2015: 2). This provides a map for the researcher to follow that moves from the findings and perspectives of others to a consideration of the researcher's own position and findings on a specific topic and how he or she thinks the variables that have been identified are linked together (Regoniel, 2015). The research problem started

simply as: *why do young people carry knives?* In response to this question the chapter has suggested that knife carrying can be usefully approached as normative behavior, principally but not exclusively in relation to a violent street culture that both regulates and generates violence, defined here as 'street life'. This goes beyond a 'risk factor' paradigm and conventional approaches to onset, desistence and resilience.

This chapter has developed the 'street' as an important physical and normative site in which young people negotiate social relationships. Anyone who lives in a deprived area must engage with and traverse the street as a physical space, but the street also holds important subjective meanings and is a site of different contestations of place. Offenders and non-offenders exhibit and adhere to distinct codes which reflect these definitions of place. A 'security gap' occurs when young people do not have the capacity to confront risk – whether because of a lack of personal or social resources upon which they can draw. This is temporal and varies according to both the time of day and the particular stage an individual is at in their life. It is also spatial and based partly on subjective definitions of place and space. Young offenders do not necessarily lack resilience, but they might for a time at least, lack the necessary resources to respond to the 'security gap' in ways which are socially acceptable. Those who are not street oriented must confront, avoid or engage with the street in their daily lives and in doing so confront the 'security gap'. This might be done through what is construed as a 'civic code'. The different forms of resilience possessed by offenders and non-offenders lead to distinct endeavours to close the 'security gap'. The role of knife carrying in this will be explored in the empirical research. Indeed, the themes highlighted here are central to the empirical research for this thesis. The conceptual framework developed in this chapter provides the means with which to do this.

A central assertion of the chapter has been that 'street life' refers to a collective symbolic space that exists *a priori* the individual and which influences the individual even as the individual constitutes and reconstitutes 'street life'. This in turn can be both a response to and a generator of a 'security gap'. This has significant implications for identity formation

and social integration at a crucial point in young people's lives. It also provides an important tool with which to explore identity and experience. 'Street life' overlaps with the school environment as a central space in which complex and multi-dimensional violence occurs: it is structured by normative orders including violent street codes and a countervailing civic code or codes. In this space, young people negotiate their relationships with their peers, the parent culture and the wider world during a period of transition. In these contexts, young people can be seen as actively constructing and negotiating their identities in a complex contemporary culture in which local, national and global forms of being, formal and informal orders, adult and young people's ideas, racial, ethnic, class and gender identities conflict and oblige young people to make active choices about not just who they are but how they present to others in an equally complex environment.

As shown in the previous chapter, that there is a link between knife use and 'street life' is supported by some academic research, but this is by no means straightforward (Bannister, 2012; Firmin, 2007; Hallsworth; 2005; Royal Armouries, 2007). The preceding discussion suggests that these conflicting orders must be explored in the wider context of regulatory and legal frameworks and the 'moral panic' around knife crime, which have significant implications for young people's ability to negotiate a complex transitional period and in he context of ongoing insecurity. This chapter has suggested that sometimes young people's resilience and attempts to negotiate this insecurity is misconstrued, and their actions frequently bring them into conflict with other orders, both formal and informal. This can act as a barrier to both resilience and desistence from offending, not to mention exposing them to a heightened risk of victimisation. The role of knife carrying in this is complex and is for the empirical research to explore further.

The framework developed in this chapter suggests a sensitisation to the importance of 'performance' to a young person's successful management of regulatory orders and acceptance by peers. One does not simply follow the rules but must be seen to be doing so – and individual's ability to do so has significant implications for the level of recognition

and respect they achieve. According to the code of the street this performance would appear to be simply a capacity for violence. Whilst the rewards for success are high, the consequences for failure are equally so. For street-oriented young people knives might augment existing capacities for violence. At the same time, if violence is governed not just by normative street codes that encourage it, but also by a contrasting civic code that constrains violence it, it is reasonable to assume that knife carrying might be governed by normative rules, just as it is in Scottish street gangs as highlighted by Bannister *et al.*, (2012) and discussed in the previous chapter. The usefulness of the concept of 'street life' is that it allows a multi-dimensional conception of offending that can incorporate the diversity that is encountered when engaging qualitatively with such phenomena. This requires a commitment to the voices of those people whose lives they are commenting on (Weininger, 2005: 120).

The aim of this chapter has not been to explain knife carrying, but rather to develop a conceptual framework that allows the research to explore knife carrying qualitatively and within a robust conceptual framework. This 'sets the stage' (McGaghie *et al.*, 2001: 923) for the next chapter which operationalises the research questions and statement.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Studying knife crime and 'street life'

Introduction

This chapter explains and describes how the research for this study was designed, conducted and analysed. It justifies the choices that were made and considers the limitations that these choices posed. The purpose of this is to show that the study was conducted with due reference to existing research traditions, and that the data were collected and analysed in ways that were methodologically, conceptually and ethically robust, albeit with awareness of their limitations. It does this in three sections. Section one describes the overall research design with reference to the approach and methods adopted. This includes discussion of the use of gatekeepers, and the selection of both the research sample and research sites. Section two describes the actual conduct of the research: the recruitment of participants; the design of the specific research instruments; analysis of the data; and, adherence to relevant ethical guidelines. Section three addresses the major methodological and procedural limitations posed by the research design, and considers issues of validity, reliability and generalisability. In doing so, there is a discussion of the problems encountered in recruiting participants, establishing rapport and the use of gatekeepers. The conclusion reflects on some of the lessons that were learnt and the implications of these challenges for both the conduct of the research, and, the extent to which the research met its objectives. The research design reflected both the absence of research data identified in Chapter Two and the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Three. However, the foundation of the chapter is that the methodological approach was necessitated and justified by the nature of the topic and of those who took part, and required attendance to methodological, conceptual and pragmatic concerns.

Research design

This section explains and justifies the various choices that were made in the overall design of the research, including the epistemological and methodological foundations of the study, the chosen research approach and methods, and the selection of the research sites and research sample. As already noted, the role of 'gatekeepers' was central to some of these choices, and this is also described below.

The main *aim* of the research was to listen to young people's own accounts of knife carrying and the ways in which they made sense of knives, either as carriers of knives or as those who share the same spaces as knife carriers. The empirical study on which the thesis is based initially set out to answer the following questions:

1. What experiences and processes lead young people to start and stop carrying a knife?
2. How do young people who carry knives understand, justify and make sense of their knife carrying?
3. How do young people who do *not* carry knives understand and make sense of knife carrying?

The research employed a qualitative methodology and a mixed methods approach. The fieldwork for the research was conducted between March 2011 and September 2013. The data used in the thesis are drawn from three key sources:

1. Transcripts of twenty-three recorded semi-structured interviews with children and young people who were identified as having carried a knife. They were aged between 9 and 19 (21 males, 2 females).
2. Transcripts of six in-depth focus groups with a total of 64 children and young people aged between 12 and 18 (34 males and 30 females) who lived in or near to areas with high levels of violence or 'knife-crime' but who were not known to have carried a knife or to have been convicted of a related crime.

3. A field diary was kept and used as a means of supporting the analysis and providing additional triangulation. Several excerpts are presented verbatim in the findings chapters to augment the interview and focus group data.

How and why this design and the methods used is explained in the remainder of this section, along with a rationale for the selection of both the research sample and the research sites. First however there is a brief discussion of the role of gatekeepers in the research.

A note about gatekeepers

Gatekeepers played a pivotal role in this research, and for this reason, and with attendance to the need to preserve the confidentiality of participants and research sites, it is important say a little bit about both their formal roles and their influence on the conduct of the research. A gatekeeper in the context of a social research study can be defined as 'the person who controls research access…in an organization, or the person within a group or community who makes the final decision as to whether to allow the researcher access to undertake the research' (Saunders, 2006: 126). In the course of conducting the research I visited four separate Youth Offending Team offices; three youth groups; a charity working in schools; and, took part in a university-based initiative designed to encourage school leavers from 'non-academic' backgrounds to enter higher education. In each of these there was one or more gatekeepers and these directly influenced both the selection of the research *sites*, and the selection of research *participants*. This had a number of implications for the research overall: whilst it arguably increased participation among 'hard to reach' groups, it also had some potentially negative implications for the robustness of the research design, and leaves the research open to questions considered in the third section of the chapter, about among other things the influence of power on the production of research data.

In addition to gatekeepers a number of other people influenced the research, including several police officers, who worked in schools and with gangs respectively, a 'Guns Gangs and Knives' Regional Forum run by the Home Office, and a Policy Exchange

105

workshop on gangs and weapons, which involved police officers, youth workers, academics and ex-gang members. These individuals provided guidance on research design, advice on selection of the sample sites and the design of the research instruments: the police school liaison officer for example suggested that schools would be reluctant to engage in the research, whilst the police gang based officer gave advice on getting gang members to talk about their activities. The research design is described below.

Research design and methodology

There are different approaches to studying the social world based on different overarching ontological (the nature of the social world), epistemological (the nature of knowledge) and methodological (the ways of attaining knowledge) positions. In keeping with the research objectives, the empirical research was approached in an interpretive/interactionist spirit. An *interpretive* approach, broadly put, conceptualises humans as active, creative agents responding to both external objective structures but also constructing, sustaining and reproducing subjective meanings in their every-day lives and relationships. This would help the research to better explore the complex 'attitudes, emotion and self-concepts' (Maruna, 2001: 40) that might drive knife carrying. An *interactionist* approach explores agency and identity as a reflexive process in which a person's goals and plans reflect the subjective narratives they employ to make sense of their lives (Maruna, 2007; 1999). There is room within this for objective structures but the 'action' occurs within the spaces where individuals interact (Layder, 1998: 57). This is in sharp contrast to a positivist epistemology which seeks to apply the methods of the natural sciences to the study of the social world and consequently the focus is on externally measurable behaviour (Garland, 1994).

The epistemological and ontological choices described above had implications for the selection of the *research methodology* – that is, the method or methods by which the research objectives were executed. There are two principal methodologies: a quantitative methodology is most often (and sometimes erroneously) associated with a positivist approach and generally uses methods like surveys that allow for the collection and

analysis of large data sets (Williams, 2001). A qualitative methodology is usually associated with post-positivist, interpretivist, feminist and constructionist approaches and generally utilise methods like in depth-interviewing as a means of engaging with smaller populations (Walklate, 2003). Despite increasing recognition of the value of 'mixed methods' approaches (Silverman, 1993: 22), the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research provides a useful label for describing two relatively discrete sets of methodologies (see also Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Gubrium and Holstein, 1997; Bryman, 1988; 2004).

A qualitative methodology was also the most sensitive and sympathetic to the research problem, and the potential research participants. Whilst quantitative methods provide a powerful tool for exploring patterns of behaviour, they often neglect those who are not easy to identify, locate or engage with, such as offenders and especially young people. Qualitative research provides by contrast the means and methods for effectively *engaging* with some of these groups. One of the strengths of qualitative research is an ability to explore how individuals understand, interpret and respond to their experiences (Becker, 1986; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Morrow, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). This can be especially useful when broaching difficult subjects and/or engaging with 'at risk' and 'hard to reach' groups including young offenders, victims of violence and young people more generally (Taylor and Kearney, 2005).

Within a qualitative methodology, the research employed two approaches to the collection and analysis of the data. On the one hand, a *narrative* approach, and on the other, what Silverman (2004: 124) calls a 'realist' approach. Narrative criminology constitutes not a discrete social theory but rather a loose collection of methodologies that aim to explore the relationship between subjective experience and offending through the stories offenders tell (Maruna, 1999; Hayward and Morrison, 2013; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Katz, 1988; Ferrell *et al.,* 2008; Barry, 2006). The strength of a narrative approach is that it provides a means of eliciting the stories that people use to describe and 'make sense of their world, and 'opens up' the culturally rich ways in which interviewer and interviewee

generate plausible accounts of the world, and how interviewees understand and explain their own behaviour (Holstein and Gubrium,1997: 120; see also; Lofland, 1971; Silverman, 1993). The use of personal autobiography in narrative approaches has been considered a credible alternative to positivist empiricism (Maruna, 1997; Sarbin, 1986). Crucially, understanding individuals through the stories they tell about themselves provides not just insight into past behaviour, but their stories represent a form of self-creation which can guide future action and provide insight into their future behaviour (Maruna, 1997).

A narrative approach was not considered sufficient on its own, however. Whilst the study aimed to explore the ways in which participants constructed narratives about their activities, it also aimed to elicit factual descriptions relating to the processes and experiences involved in carrying a knife. In this, the research drew on what Silverman (2004: 124) calls a 'realist' approach, which treats what the respondent says as descriptive of an 'external reality (i.e. facts and events) or 'internal reality' (feelings, meanings). Silverman (2004) distinguishes between narrative and realist approaches, arguing that the former is concerned with *stories* whilst the latter is about *realistic* accounts of actual events. Silverman (2004) is however sympathetic to the idea that they can be usefully combined. He cites as an example the work of Miller and Glassner (1997, in Silverman 2004: 124/5) in their study of urban American gangs in which they treat responses to questions as both 'culturally defined narratives and possibly factually correct statements'. As Maruna (1997) notes, various methods allow us to access an individual's stories, including the use of semi-structured interviews, especially in the field.

Bryman (2004) has divided qualitative research into two principal methods. One the one hand, *ethnographic* approaches utilise participant observation as a means of gaining entry to closed worlds and deep experience of individuals, groups and communities. By contrast, *qualitative interviewing* either in the form of interviews or focus groups provides a means of understanding subjective experience through individual language and stories. There have been some excellent ethnographic studies of matters relating to this thesis (see for instance Gaskell, 2008; Hallsworth, 2005; Anderson, 1999; Bourgois, 1995).

However, attempting to conduct an ethnographic study on knife carrying might have been dangerous and would have been unlikely to satisfy the requirements of the ethical committee. As a result, qualitative interviewing was selected, based mainly on the objectives of the research and on my own personal experiences of having conducted research using this method. This involved conducting one to one interviews, and group interviews (focus groups) in settings that were sympathetic to participants. These are described below.

Data collection methods

The research aims suggested two forms of qualitative interview would be appropriate. A *semi-structured interview format* was used to engage with these those who had carried a knife. Interviews provide a means to explore meanings and motivations around individual behaviour and, more broadly, participants' 'constructions of reality' (Noaks and Wincup, 2004: 75). The semi-structured format is especially popular because it provides both structure and flexibility. A thematic structure allowed the research to explore theoretical assumptions and to ask questions relating to the how, why and where of knife carrying. However, the flexibility provided by the interview is perhaps its major strength (Oppenheim, 1992), as the interviewer is able to critically engage with the interviewee and at times challenge or question their accounts and stated motivations (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997). At the same time, the format allows and encourages participants to go *off-subject* and to define what is important to them about the topic (Bryman, 1998; see also: Burman *et al.*, 2001).

The aim with the second cohort was to explore wider normative and collective processes, their attitudes towards knives and those who carried them. This objective lent itself to a group discussion format. *Focus groups*, like interviews, allow direct engagement with participants, but their strength lies in their ability to explore the 'ways individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it' and can 'foreground' issues that are deemed especially significant (Bryman, 2004: 338). Moreover, as Bryman (2004: 336) has noted, focus groups are useful for 'eliciting a variety

of views' on specific issues or phenomena. They are especially useful when working with vulnerable groups including young people and offenders (Stanko and Lee, 2003; Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). In particular, they can help to reduce imbalances in power between the researcher and participants by providing a setting which 'closely resembles' ordinary peer group interactions (Burman *et al.*, 2001: 449). This can encourage greater participation and provide a sense of security when voicing opinions, by allowing participants to share and discuss their own experiences with both the group and the researcher (Burman *et al.*, 2001). How these approaches were operationalised is described immediately below with reference to the selection of the research sample and sites.

Rationale for the selection of the research sample

As already stated, the initial idea behind the research was to speak to young people who carried/used knives or had done so in the recent past. A useful typology of knife use (Lemos, 2004:6) has outlined four principal groups of young people involved in knife crime, those who:

a) have been convicted of a knife related crime

b) are known to agencies as carrying weapons frequently but have not been convicted of this

c) carry weapons less frequently and are not known to any agencies (in relation to knife use)

d) are known to associate with knife offenders but have not been identified by the criminal justice system.

It would have been ideal to have spoken to individuals in all of the groups listed above, but in practice it was very difficult to identify those in categories c) and d). Moreover, this was amended at an early stage in the research process in the light of considerations that were both theoretical and methodological. First, the data considered in Chapter Two suggested that many young people who carry knives go undetected, and that only the 'usual suspects' and those engaged in the more serious forms of offending might show up in official records; second, the conceptual approach outlined in Chapter Three

suggested the existence of a number of conflicting normative or moral codes through which young people might frame knife carrying and knife crime. Considering these developments, a second cohort was identified – that is young people who do not ostensibly belong to a) or b) above and who are not known to have carried a knife, although they might belong to groups c) or d). They might have carried a knife though, and could nonetheless be considered 'at risk' on account of their age, socio-economic status, peer groups, and especially the risks arising from living in deprived communities (Beinhardt *et al.*, 2002; Patchin *et al.*, 2006) and their proximity to 'street life' as defined already. Based on these factors, the conceptual framework and the research objectives, two principal 'sample units' (Bachman and Schutt, 2014: 102) were thus identified:

1. Young people who had carried/used a knife
2. Young people living in areas with high incidences of violence and/or knife crime

As described already, a qualitative methodology was chosen. The intention was to speak to as many people as possible who might have had the relevant experiences as defined above. Because of this, a non-probability sample was adopted (Bachman and Schutt, 2014) as a means of selecting both the overall sample and the research participants. Within this, a *purposive* or judgement sampling strategy was initially adopted (Bachman and Schutt, 2014; Black, 2010; Teddlie and Yu, 2007; Coyne, 1997). This is especially useful when conducting qualitative research and research interested in 'narratives' (Teddlie and Yu, 2007: 84) or with complex and hard to define populations – Miller (2001) for instance adopted a purposive sampling strategy when researching female gang membership. This approach was used to set the limits of the sample frame which was principally defined by three factors: age, offending history (for the first cohort) and where the participants lived (both cohorts). Chronological age was important as it related to the 'crime-age curve' (see Chapter Two), which suggested that the majority of knife carrying occurs roughly between the ages of 12 and 18. These ages also mark roughly the ages of onset and desistance of other forms of offending behaviour (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Burman, *et al.*, 2001). In terms of location, areas that had a high incidence of knife crime and/or violence were targeted, as discussed further below.

The process of *selecting* participants was, like the adoption of the particular sampling strategy, partly an exercise in expedience. In practice, the sampling strategy came to resemble as much a *convenience* strategy where the individuals selected 'are the easiest to access' (Lund research, 2012) as it was a purposive strategy. Two principal approaches were used to identify possible participants – first, identifying them by their activities/circumstances – second, identifying them by where they live using existing data and advice provided by gatekeepers, a strategy suggested by Emmel and Clarke (2009). Initially there was an intention to conduct semi-structured interviews with practitioners so as to provide a contrasting perspective to that of the young people. This idea was subsequently dropped for practical reasons, so that the focus might be entirely on young people. Nonetheless, a number of professionals facilitated access in the sites, including a police officer, a YOS worker, a YIP worker and a local government person supporting knife based initiatives. These provided critical advice at various stages of the research process and were in the best position to make judgements as to who should take part and to encourage them to do so. The actual process of recruitment is considered further below, the next sub-section outlines the process of selecting the research sites.

Rationale for the selection of the research sites

The selection of the *research sites* and the *research locations* was guided by the conceptual framework and a combination of data, advice and pragmatism. As has been shown, knife carrying occurs across the country and in a range of settings, but is concentrated in areas of high deprivation. Deprivation is measurable, and areas of high deprivation are identifiable using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011). At the same time, existing data on knife crime, (as explored in Chapter 2) allows for some identification of general areas subject to high levels of violence and knife crime, but this should be supplemented with other sources of information including media stories and local knowledge. The researcher has significant experience of working on research projects with a similar theme and cohort and was able to utilise contacts in some of the selected locations as a means of gaining access to gatekeepers and research participants. Gatekeepers and other interested parties provided significant advice, and the availability and enthusiasm of these contacts

was central to the selection of locations and to a lesser extent particular sites within each location.

Two sites were chosen and six principal locations were selected within these. Twelve of the interviews and five of the focus groups were conducted in three locations referred to as 'Urban Yorkshire' so as to maintain participant confidentiality. The other eleven interviews and one focus group were conducted in Metropolitan London, across three boroughs. The implications of this imbalance in terms of the focus groups is considered in the final section of this chapter. The selection of London was an obvious choice given the concentration of crime and the sites that were used reflected many of these problems. In addition, the researcher already had a network of contacts in two of the selected boroughs. A third location was selected when these failed to provide sufficient interview participants and was approached via a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies, with some success.

'Urban Yorkshire' is a medium sized metropolitan area. It incorporates some areas that are among the most deprived in the country and is very ethnically and socially diverse. Around ten *per cent* of the population is from an ethnic minority group, but some areas have up to 40 *per cent* ethnic minority population. Despite substantial urban regeneration in the last decade or so there remain areas of deep and entrenched deprivation. Compared to broadly similar areas this site has lower than average rates of violent crime and robbery but higher than average rates of burglary. According to one practitioner, 'youth nuisance' remains a problem and a high priority for enforcement agencies. There have been a number of knife related fatalities in the area over the last ten years or so. Within this area, the participants came principally from three sub-areas with especially high levels of violence but which are not identified. At the same time, the area provided both commonality and contrast with London: both areas had problems with knife crime, but participants in London were more likely to be involved in organised street gangs, whilst those in Yorkshire were more likely to be 'troublesome youth groups' (Bannister *et al.*, 2010) and were less focused on serious criminal activity.

113

There were three London sites. Two of these were inner-city boroughs with high levels of deprivation and a large social housing stock. Both have populations that are both younger and more ethnically diverse than many parts of London, and are home to large populations of settled and new migrants. Crime, including youth violence and knife crime, is higher than the London average in one borough, roughly average in the other, and higher in both than in the Yorkshire site. Both boroughs have significant problems with gangs and public drug dealing. Both were the site of significant disturbances during the 2011 riots. The third borough is in outer-London and compared to the other two sites has a relatively high proportion of owner occupied housing. This site still has pockets of deprivation however and several large housing estates which have high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. There have been significant problems with knife carrying among young people in the borough. How the sample was recruited and engaged with is described and explained in the next section below.

Data collection and analysis

The previous section considered the overall research design and the various strategic choices that were made, about who to engage with, and how to engage with them. This section explains the process of conducting the research and the various strategic and tactical choices this entailed. This includes discussion of the recruitment of participants and some of the characteristics of participants; the design and deployment of the research instruments, and the collection and analysis of the data.

Recruitment of participants

As with the selection of the sample and the research sites, 'pragmatic' considerations (Wincup, 2004: 100) were as important as methodological considerations when it came to the selection and recruitment of participants. For instance, as noted above, the aim was to speak to young people aged between 12 and 18. In reality however, young people carry knives outside of these limits, and given the limited number of possible participants, this was not set as a hard and fast rule. This meant that there were 'outliers' on either side who were nonetheless of interest, so as a result the youngest participant was nine

years of age and the oldest was nineteen. Particular effort was made to engage young people from the same general areas in both the interviews and focus groups. This was achieved to some extent – albeit usually at different locations within the broader site. At the same time, some interviews were conducted in Youth Offending Service offices which drew young people from a wider area.

The principal mechanism for recruiting participants was through the use of existing and new contacts, and the fieldwork was facilitated by the enthusiasm of practitioners at various levels of various organisations. In addition to helping with recruitment, some were prepared to meet informally and provide advice and guidance on how and where to best contact young people, and also, in some cases, offered advice on how to approach the interviews. These included polices officers and Youth Offending Service personnel. Local Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) provided a significant proportion of the interviews and assisted in Yorkshire and two of the London areas. This had several methodological and ethical implications as discussed in the section on limitations of the research further below. This support was crucial to the success of the project however – indeed some participants were only known to have carried a knife because they had disclosed this to someone in a support function, or had been observed to have carried a knife by someone in a support function, who had subsequently asked them if they would like to take part in this research. It is these kinds of groups who are usually absent from social research. The decision was made not to approach schools directly, was based on previous research experience and following discussion with a school based police officer who suggested this would prove difficult, because many schools were unwilling to admit that knives were a problem. However, some of the agencies who assisted the research worked within the school environment and so several of the focus groups and two of the interviews were conducted in a school setting, facilitated by a Youth Offending Service (YOS) officer and several representatives of a charity. The next section briefly introduces the research participants.

About the participants

In total, 23 *one to one interviews* were conducted with children and young people aged between nine and nineteen years of age. They came from a range of ethnic backgrounds although ethnic data was only partial. Several participants were not asked about their ethnicity or did not self-identify as a particular ethnic group. About a third of the cohort described themselves, or were identified as, white British, another third as black, predominantly black British, and one participant who had emigrated with his family from West-Africa in his early teens. Most of the rest were of mixed heritage, mainly mixed black/white British, except for one British Asian man and one young man of British-Latin heritage. Two young women took part, but to preserve anonymity their ethnicities are not divulged.

Most of the interview participants lived with one or both parents and many described their home environment as loving. A few participants lived with both parents whilst a significant number lived in a single parent household, mainly with their mother or in one case a grandmother. One participant lived with foster carers, and one was living on his own. Some described relatively stable home lives, whilst others had more fractured backgrounds, including several whose fathers/brothers were in prison and/or whose families were spread across several households with estranged parents and step-brothers and sisters. The majority were in their final year at school or in further education, and three were currently excluded from school, in one case for fighting and in another for offending. Two were unemployed, several more were learning a trade. One participant had a full-time job and this was through a family member. When asked about their future aspirations, most were focused on finding work and starting a family, and nearly all articulated a desire to move away from where they lived.

Six *focus groups* were conducted with a total of 64 participants. Five of these were conducted in the site referred to as 'Urban Yorkshire' and one was conducted in London. This imbalance and its implications is considered further in the chapter. The principal mechanism for recruiting participants was through the use of existing and new contacts,

and the fieldwork was facilitated by practitioners at various levels of public and charitable organisations. The five focus groups conducted in Yorkshire took place at three youth groups, a charity that worked within a school and a course designed to encourage school leavers from 'non-academic' backgrounds to go to university. Two of the youth groups were run through the local youth service, and one was run by a Christian charity. The sixth focus group, conducted in London, was a school based group run by a local charity.

Focus group participants were asked less direct questions about their personal characteristics or circumstances than interview participants. Nonetheless some information (albeit partial) was gathered using the consent forms and further information (again partial) was provided by facilitators. Two of the focus groups were composed entirely of white British participants, two were mostly white British, and two were significantly more mixed, with one focus group composed of participants of a range of ethnicities including of Indian, Pakistani, Middle Eastern, African and central Asian heritage whilst the other was composed mainly of young people of black British origin. Ethnic origin is indicated at the bottom of any quotes used and the codes are based on codes used by the Office for National Statistics (listed in Appendix table A.3 on page 319). The focus group participants were slightly narrower in their age range and nearly all were of school age or were school leavers. There was a more even split between the sexes than in the focus groups, with 34 males taking part, and 30 females. Only one of the focus groups was comprises of males only.

Few of the focus group participants were considered to be engaged in any kind of serious offending by the gatekeepers who assisted in the research, and any offending had not been sufficient to have brought them to the attention of the authorities. Most could however be defined as 'at risk' of engaging in violence and/or knife crime on account of their proximity to offending peers and violence (Beinhardt *et al.*, 2002; Patchin *et al.*, 2006; Eades *et al.*, 2007). The relative youth of participants posed a number of challenges which are discussed in the next section, and also immediately below, with reference to the

design and deployment of the research instruments. First however the process of turning the research objectives into researchable questions is described.

Defining variables/turning concepts into researchable questions

As stated already, the main *aim* of the research was to listen to young people's own accounts of knife crime and the ways in which they made sense of knives, either as carriers of knives or as those who share the same spaces as knife carriers. The empirical study on which the thesis is based initially set out to answer the following questions:

1. What experiences and processes lead young people to start and stop carrying a knife?
2. How do young people who carry knives understand, justify and make sense of their knife carrying?
3. How do young people who do *not* carry knives understand and make sense of knife carrying?

To achieve the research objectives with sufficient academic rigor a *conceptual framework* was developed. This set out the key themes that would guide the empirical research. A principal assertion made in the previous chapter was that knife carrying and knife crime might be 'normative behaviour' governed by unspoken street codes but also potentially by civic codes within a subcultural context. Both codes could be said to regulate violence, but in different ways, and with significant consequences for identity formation, integration and safety. It was further hypothesised that knife carrying and street codes would fruitfully be studied in the context of 'youth transitions' and ongoing relationships with formal and informal regulatory orders. This moved the research beyond an *exploratory* study towards a more ambitious *explanatory* study, which aimed to engage more substantively with young people to understanding better the meanings that they apply to knife crime.

Moving the research forward theoretically then from trying to understand 'why' young people might start or stop carrying a knife, the research set out to explore the rules

discussed above, and their implications, if any, for knife carrying. The process of 'operationalisation' can be defined as (Shuttleworth, 2008: 3).

'the process of strictly defining variables into measurable factors. The process defines fuzzy concepts and allows them to be measured, empirically'.

The literature review and conceptual framework described in Chapters Two and Three represented the first stages of this process. These were then used to generate a mind-map which guided the ongoing operationalization of the research. This map is presented below and generated a range of themes through which to explore knife carrying empirically. The full list of sub-themes is listed in Appendix B, the overarching themes included: knife carrying/crime; the role of normative codes; engagement with street cultures; encounters with street cultures; the role of formal and informal regulator orders and, wider issues of youth transitions, transgressions and identity. These themes generated a mind map, shown in Figure 4.1., below, and other maps explored each sub-theme. These were used in several planning sessions conducted with experienced colleagues, during which the broad themes were turned into an overall research design.

Figure 4.1. Mind map: operationalization of conceptual framework
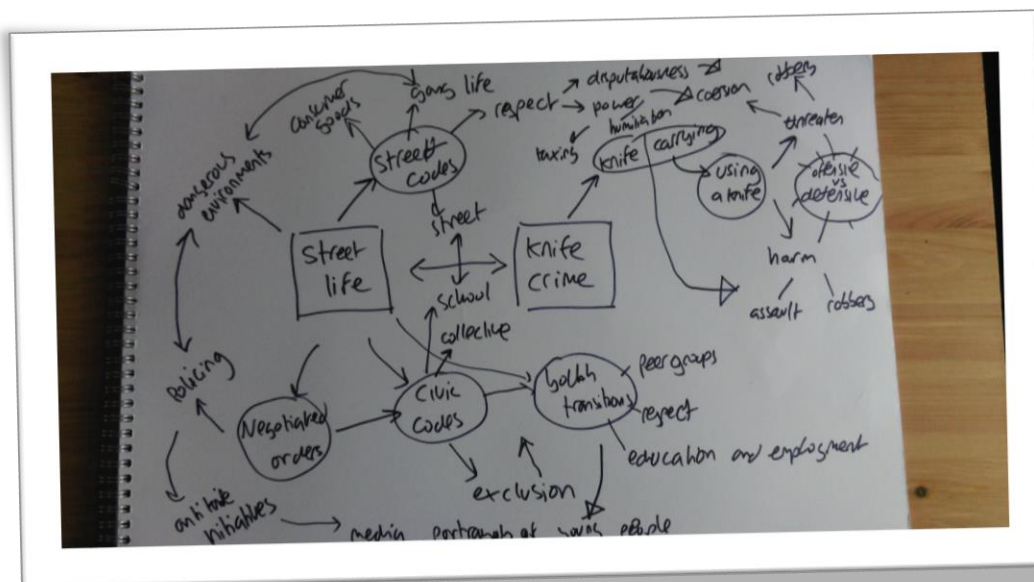
The concept of 'street life' was central to the thesis. As noted in the previous chapter, however, 'street life' is a somewhat 'fuzzy' concept (Shuttleworth, 2008: 3) and as much a symbolic space rather than an actual concrete place that does not fit neatly into formal boundaries and cannot be identified on a map. Similarly, 'knife carrying' and 'knife crime' takes many forms, and not all incidences of knife carrying are easy to identify. The study sought to relate knife carrying to 'street life'. At the same time, the research was interested in exploring the relationship between street codes, youth transitions and formal and informal regulatory orders. This suggested the value of engaging not just with those who had carried knives, but also young people more broadly who shared the street. How these themes were explored and turned into a series of specific questions, exercises and research schedules is considered in more depth in the next sections.

Designing the research instruments

The design of the research instruments, that is the schedules and the specific set of questions (copies of the schedules are included in Appendix B), represented an important transition in the research process from abstract to more concrete activity. The creation of the questions represented a refinement of the initial research objectives as outlined above and the themes that were identified in the operationalisation process. It was also attuned to the sensitivities of both the research subject and the research participants. Advice was also sought from colleagues with experience of working with young people, from practitioners in the field, and from a substantial body of work on how best to conduct research with groups such as children and offenders.

To give an example, within the theme 'encounters with street cultures' was the sub-theme 'concerns about, and experiences of, victimisation'. This theme required careful attention because to ask a direct question like 'have you been a victim of crime' for instance would have risked not only upsetting the participant but might also have had implications for the success of the interview overall. The directness of such a question may, for instance, have prompted a participant to exaggerate or play down any victimisation they had experienced (see previous section for a discussion of this). Instead then, this sub-theme

was operationalised as a discursive point which started with a more general question about how safe the participant felt walking around their area. This gave participants the opportunity to discuss their own experiences of victimisation should they want to, but also gave them the opportunity to avoid talking about specifics or to speak generally about a specific incident in a way that was less threatening. At the same time, it was important to try and ensure, as much as was possible, that truthful answers were given to these questions – i.e. answers that best reflected participants' lived experiences, rather than what they thought it would be politic to say. Rather than simply ask participants directly about 'why' they carried a knife, they were asked first to recall and describe the processes and circumstances that led to their first carrying knives and any subsequent consequences of this action, including when, if at all, they had stopped carrying a knife. By doing this, the intention was to sidestep simple rationalisations after the fact. In doing this it is also possible to address some of the concerns about validity considered in more depth further below.

In both the interviews and focus groups the general approach was influenced by what Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 118) call 'active interviewing'. This entails a close and critical engagement with participants, both listening respectfully but also probing responses and at times challenging or questioning their accounts and recall of events and their feelings about events and activities. This provides what Fielding (1990: 610) calls an 'intercalary role' located between those of passive informant and sceptical interrogator. It celebrates the collaborative and even dramatic aspects of qualitative research, as a series of singular moments '*in situ*' where new meanings are created and new understandings are reached (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997: 115).

Both the interview and the focus group schedules were piloted and whilst the general themes identified above remained largely unchanged, there was some experimentation as to how they were 'administered' in practice. After a pilot focus group session for instance, which did not go very well, I was inspired to think more creatively. The quote below is from the research diary (see further below for a discussion of this).

… a graffiti session at [youth group]…I was completely outclassed by two hip young graffiti artists who engaged their audience with pictures. It inspired me to think more creatively about the project though and I have created some A3 sheets which I want young people to draw on to show me where they feel safe and don't feel safe. I found an online graffiti generator and printed out some stickers in various fonts and stuck these to the paper. I tried the first one today with Lee and it really worked well (Research diary, August, 2012).

The main aim of this kind of experimentation was to find ways to better foster rapport and trust (Glassner and Loughlin, 1987; Spradley, 1979; May, 1993) among participants in a relatively short time frame and in the context of working with young people and offenders. Fraser (2004: 22-24) argues that it is important to regard young people as competent actors in their own lives and argues that research should create a space in which different vocabularies and 'conceptual outlooks' can be negotiated in such a way that the young person is able to relate to the concerns of reference of the researcher. This point provided the inspiration for the use of maps in the interviews and vignettes used in the focus groups. Several scholars (Kirby, 2004, Morrow, 2001) have suggested that the use of '*physical props*' and '*visual aids*' can can make the research experience more engaging and help to break the ice with young people (Kirby, 2004: 22-25). Maps and mapping exercises have been used to explore young people's perceptions of space and experiences of territoriality (Bannister and Fraser (2008; Kintrea *et al*., 2008; Morrow, 2001). Morrow (2001) has argued that the use of maps can help young people to more easily articulate their experiences. Bannister and Fraser (2008) used mapping exercises with school children in Glasgow to explore links with gangs. Participants were presented with a street map of the catchment areas around their school, or in some cases where a map was not available were asked to draw their own map. They were asked to identify their homes, the homes of friends and family and places where they socialised. In a related study, Kintrea *et al*., (2008) explored gangs, territoriality and weapon carrying among young people in six British cities. Maps were used in interviews and participants were asked to indicate among other things places where they felt safe and unsafe.

Drawing on the studies highlighted above, and inspired by the graffiti session alluded to in the diary excerpt, a series of maps were produced with the title 'my world' in a graffiti style. One of these maps is reproduced in Figure 4.2., below.

Figure 4.2. Map showing an interview participant's perceptions of risk and safety
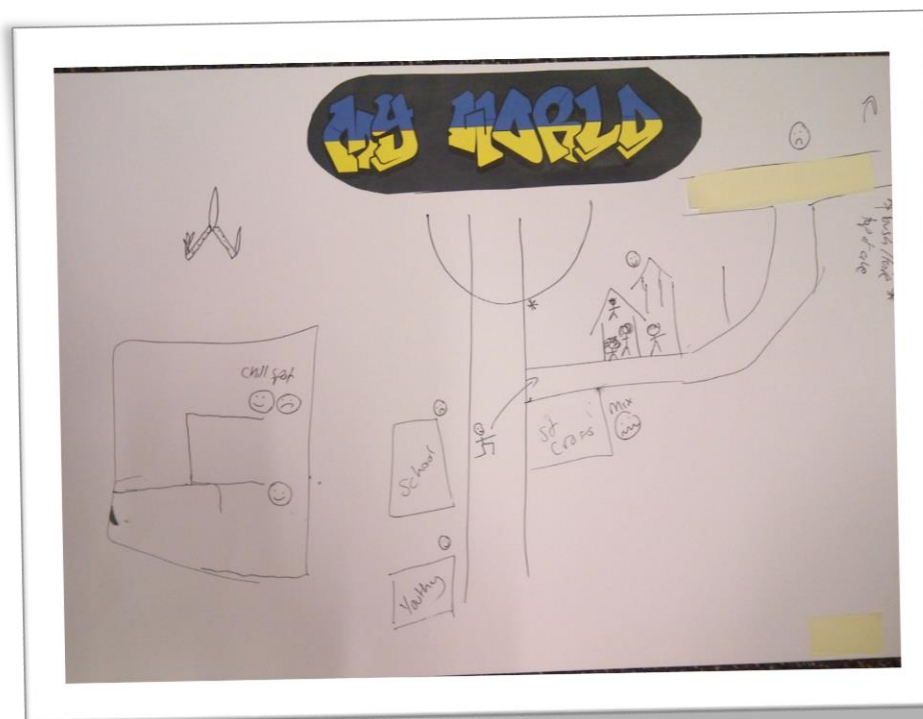
The maps were especially useful for understanding perceptions of space and place among interviewees. Participants were asked to indicate on the map any areas that were significant to them including where they lived and went to school, and to indicate areas where they felt safe or unsafe, where they carried a knife and so on. On the example above, faces were drawn on the map to indicate where the participant felt more and less safe in his neighbourhood, and in several places this is dependent on who else is there as illustrated by the double face to the left. Several of the younger interviewees found the maps useful and they provided a bridge for further discussion. Older participants were generally more articulate and less amendable to this approach. Nonetheless, those that were produced did feed into the analysis and added to the 'richness' of the data (Flick, 2002: 226).

The focus group pilot also generated some important changes in the overall structure of the sessions, and in particular, the development of a three-stage session, which became progressively less structured as it moved through each stage. The stages are outlined below (see appendix B for copies of these).

Stage 1 was a short presentation on knife crime by the researcher that provided some scope for interaction by participants. This provided a useful means of bring focus to the start of the session, whilst asking questions of participants and allowing them to comment and ask questions helped to generate rapport.

Stage 2 was a group activity based on the use of 'vignettes'. These were fictitious accounts of two incidents involving young people and knives and were informed by media accounts of real incidents. Vignettes can 'help broach difficult subjects and facilitate a non-threatening environment', especially when working with young people (Barter and Renold, 2003: 91; see also Burman *et al*., 2001). To devise these I drew on my own experiences of teaching seminars to under-graduates, and modified a model I had used to elicit debate among students. Participants were asked to read the vignettes and to discuss the incidents in groups. They were then asked to decide what action should be taken with those involved. Each group was assigned one of three different perspectives, crudely conceptualised as: a) the Conservative party, b) a youth group, and c) a 'families against knives' group. These were chosen because they could be said to represent a range of positions on young people generally and on knife crime and on specifically. It has been my experience in working with young people that the 'Conservative party' provides a useful if crude stereotype on which to hang views that are both right wing and perceived to be generally hostile to young people (whereas the Labour party is a more complex and ambivalent stereotype). Similarly, a 'youth worker' can be conceived of as someone who is broadly sympathetic to young people and who understands some of the real-life problems that they face. If these represented two poles, I was keen to provide a more ambivalent perspective and so selected the concept of a 'families against knives group' as a way of exploring a perspective that might be both sympathetic and hostile to

124

certain aspects of young people's behaviour. Though not perfect, this trinity provided scope for participants to express views that were both sympathetic and hostile towards knife carriers, in such a way that they could do so 'in character' with less fear of being judged. This stage ended with a short presentation from each group. One of the visual presentations is reproduced in Figure 4.3., below, and shows the thought processes of the group in relation to the principal characters in the vignettes.

Figure 4.3. Focus group presentation
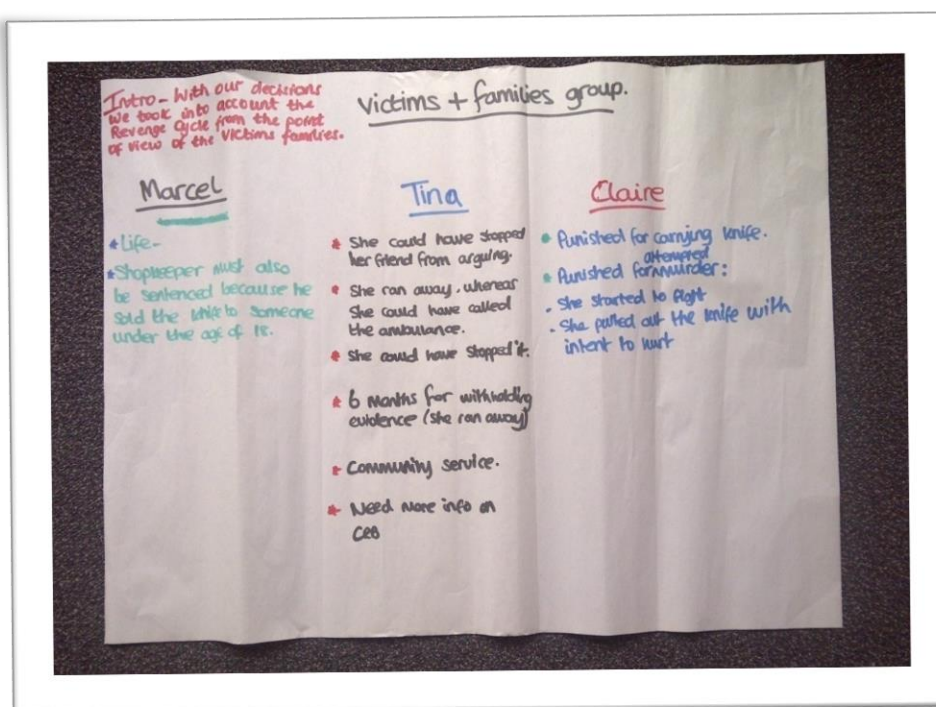
Yorkshire, nine participants: 10 male, 9 female, mixed ethnicity including WB, BB, BA.

Stage 3 was a semi-structured discussion based on the themes outlined above. A flexible schedule provided space for participants to lead the debate and take it in directions that seemed appropriate and important to them. There was also scope at this stage to feed back some of the data emerging from the interviews and focus groups that has already been conducted, and to ask participants to reflect on this and to comment on the validity or otherwise of what was being said. This was then fed back into subsequent interviews and focus groups, which, as is discussed in the ethics section below, provided a form of triangulation to the research.

This section has so far considered the *collection* of the data. This was a long and complex process that required the operationalisation and implementation of the research objectives and the chosen methodology. The main aim of this operationalisation was to facilitate the collection of appropriate data that was appropriate to the initial research questions and subsequent conceptual framework, and that did this in such a way as to guarantee, as far as was possible, that the data was methodological robust. The *analysis* of the data complements this and is considered immediately below.

Conducting the analysis

The method of analysis needed to incorporate the key themes identified above including the concepts of 'street life', 'security gap' and the idea that these were relational and subjective. It also needed to be sensitive to the research participants and allow their voices to come through. As described above, within a qualitative methodology the research combined a *narrative* approach to the collection and analysis of the data with what Silverman (2004: 124) calls a 'realist' approach. The former emphasises attendance to the stories participants tell about themselves, the latter aims to elicit factual descriptions relating to the processes and experiences involved in carrying a knife. The stories and explanations participants gave represent the primary data on which this thesis rests. A major problem with qualitative research however is that it generates substantial amounts of data, much of it in the form of 'prose' (Bryman. 1998: 388). A systematic approach is therefore required to make sense of this data (Bryman, 1998, 2004; May 1997). Analysis of focus group data presents a particular challenge, as, according to Bryman (1998: 349) there is a need develop a strategy that 'incorporates both themes of what people say and their patterns of interaction'. The research was informed by several structured approaches to data collection which helped mitigate against some of the problems discussed above. These were Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and Qualitative Data Analysis (Seidel, 1998) and are described in turn below. Combining these two approaches provided a comprehensive means of analysing the research.

Grounded theory contains some useful methodological tools, not least an array of coding techniques that assist in the development of concepts and categories and the use of 'sensitising concepts' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 43). Grounded theory also advocates a sensitive approach to the fieldwork and this was appropriate in the context of interviews with vulnerable individuals. If a qualitative method was chosen to give voice to people whose perspective is often supressed, it was important to retain this sensitivity in the analysis of the data. Grounded Theory has been criticised as overly inductive however, and, of ignoring the role of existing theories (Bryman, 2004). Indeed, in qualitative research generally there is growing acknowledgement of both the difficulty and undesirability of approaching the field without existing theories and concepts (Bryman, 2004; Charmaz, 1997).

Qualitative Data Analysis (Seidel, 1998) uses a similar approach to Grounded Theory but without the same commitment to a pure inductive approach. The main thrust of this approach is to pay attention to three elements which the author argues are present in all qualitative analysis techniques to some extent. These are:

1. Noticing things (coding)
2. Collecting things (codes, concepts, instances)
3. Thinking about things

Whilst qualitative analysis software such as Nvivo and N*dist can be useful for analysing large datasets, these were not used for this research. Personal experience has shown that whilst these tools can facilitate the quick and easy creation of categories, they also have their downsides. Indeed, Siedel (1998) has argued that coding and collecting in themselves are insufficient. One must also employ one's cognitive faculties to make sense of the data, to look for patterns and relationships, and to make 'discoveries' about the problem being researched (Siedel, 1998: 3). Siedel advocates close attention to sections of text. In a similar fashion, Silverman (2004) advocates moving up and down the texts, and between texts, to make connections between different aspects and

phenomena. This is better facilitated by the old-fashioned use of highlighter pens and colour coding. At the same time, Siedel also warns against the dangers of over-coding and getting lost in the data, something which is much easier to do when using analysis software that in effect 'smooths out' many of the more mundane but nonetheless useful aspects of data analysis.

The actual process of doing the analysis then combined both technological and more traditional techniques. The interviews and focus groups were recorded using an electronic recording device and were transcribed by either the researcher or an external contractor: the former and the latter had worked together on a number of similar projects over a period of six years and the contractor was both familiar with the kinds of data recorded and the requirement for confidentiality and discretion. A simple word processing package was used to identify and eliminate superfluous sections of text in the transcripts such as introductions. The transcripts were then printed and the text was colour coded. The development of themes was guided by, and premised upon, the conceptual framework, but at the same time was open to the development of novel themes and avenues. In this way the research moved towards the concept of resilience, which emerged from the data, as one way of explaining not knife carrying *per se*, but rather the complex social patterns that operate among young people. As is argued in the next chapters, these patterns are partly generative of knife carrying.

The analysis was not done in a linear fashion however, but was rather a circular process – initial findings were discussed with supervisors and others who provided much needed sounding boards. At the same time findings from the focus groups were fed back to and 'tested' with interview participants, and vice versa, in an effort to improve the quality of the data and to balance out some of the weaknesses inherent in the research design. A field diary was used as a means of supporting the analysis and providing additional triangulation. The writing of a field diary is a reasonably common practice in qualitative research (see for instance Gaskell, 2005; Burman *et al.*, 2001). The diary was useful during both the collection and analysis of the data and was also useful in presenting the

data. Field notes helped to record group dynamics within the focus groups and at some of the interview sites where there was interaction with groups of young people prior to and after the interviews; they also helped to recall some of these experiences and specific participants when reading through interview transcripts. Several excerpts are presented verbatim in the findings chapters to augment the interview and focus group data. This and other measures are considered in the final section, below, which addresses the methodological and procedural limitations of the research and the ways in which these were responded to. A further and significant consideration for this research, bearing in mind the cohort and subject matter as described above, relates to ethics, and in particular the issue of the potential harms arising from the research (Berg, 2001; Bryman, 2001) and the researcher's obligation to anticipate and minimise these (Wexler, 1990). This is considered in the sub-section immediately below.

Ethical concerns

The research presented several ethical concerns and potential harms which might have resulted from participation in the research. Some of these risks were anticipated in the initial research proposal and subsequent submission to the University of Leeds Faculty Ethics Committee (see Appendix C). Others arose during the conduct of the research and had to be responded to as and when they occurred. These related principally to the sensitive nature of the research topic, and the vulnerable nature of (potential) participants. These are explored in turn below.

A central issue, given the nature of the research *topic,* was the risk to participants through the possible disclosure of things they might say. Participants were being asked to talk about their offending histories and especially their engagement in violent offending. Whilst at least some of these were formally recorded as the result of having been arrested/convicted, not all of them were. Participants were also asked whether or not they were still offending, and again this might have, and indeed did, result in discussions about crimes that had not been caught or prosecuted for. Similarly, sometimes the conversation touched on experiences of being victimised or perpetrating violence with reference to

other people. Disclosure to the authorities of this information might result in legal sanctions. Disclosure of these matters to significant others might entail more personal risks to participants, such as the risk of retribution (Lee, 1993). It was crucial then to make sure that what participants said in the course of their participation would not harm them in some way, and that their words, if quoted, would not be attributable to them. This meant making every effort to protect confidentiality and anonymity as far as was possible. These are described in turn below.

Confidentiality relates to a researcher's responsibility not to disclose things said in the course of the research in ways that might harm participants and is defined by the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). The risks of disclosure were made emphatically to participants at the beginning of and throughout the fieldwork (Lincoln and Guba, 1989; British Criminological Society Code of Ethics, 2006), as was the researcher's ethical responsibility to report information should they be told that the participant was planning to hurt someone, or someone was planning to hurt them (Israel and Hay, 2012).

Anonymity refers to the capacity to identify a participant in a research project (University of Leeds; 2013). During interviews and focus groups participants were not referred to by name, and any names and other identifiers were removed during transcription. Interview participants were offered the chance to choose a pseudonym and if they chose not to, one was chosen for them at a later stage. Whist some challenges to confidentiality could be anticipated in the research design, other matters emerged spontaneously and required more immediate solutions. For instance, when two focus group participants asked not to be recorded, switching off the recorder would have adversely affected the focus group. To have excluded the two reluctant talkers might also have created resentment in the group towards them or even towards the researcher. Instead, a compromise was reached whereby it was agreed that the recorder would be switched off whenever the participants in question wished to speak.

A further concern was related not to the research topic but to the research *participants*. As the British Sociological Association's (BSA) Statement of Ethical Practice (2002: 3) asserts, 'special care' is required when working with young participants who are vulnerable because of 'age, social status and powerlessness'. As a consequence, ensuring that *informed consent* was attended to was crucial. This relates not only to a research participant's right to know that they are taking part in research, but to understand, as fully as they are able to, the purpose of the research they are taking part in (Lincoln and Guba, 1989). For Burman *et al.*, (2001), gaining true informed consent from marginalised persons is difficult because they might not understand the concept of consent or the purpose of the research. With these concerns in mind, participants were informed at the outset of the research and throughout the process that they could withdraw from the research at any time. This was also written into a consent form which was read out at the beginning of each session. Consent forms were used for all participants (see Appendix C). Shaw *et al.,* (2011) provide a useful guide to the legal issues around gaining consent with under and over-sixteen's. A parental consent form was used where gatekeepers did not have the appropriate parental rights that often arise as a result of a participant's involvement in a particular project or service (Shaw *et al.,* 2011). Throughout, participants were repeatedly reminded that despite the value of the research that they could leave at any time during the process, and that changing their mind would incur no negative consequences. Indeed, one participant changed his mind and left before taking part in the research.

Other potential harms and risks arising from the research design included '*situational*' and '*ambient*' risks (Lee, 1993: 27). The former might include risks to the researcher from meeting people with a history of violence. The latter includes potential emotional or psychological harm to participants through discussing difficult matters (Stanko and Lee, 2003). These risks cannot necessarily be approached methodologically or procedurally, but rather require drawing on a range of interpersonal skills and experiences. The practice of paying participants for instance is cited as a possible threat to participants, although Seddon (2005) has concluded that paying participants can increase participation,

especially with 'hard to reach groups', with only *minimal* risks (see also Nicolaas and Lynn, 1998). The concept of 'minimal risk' raises the question about what level of risk is acceptable or justifiable in conducting research and indeed this issue was salient throughout the conduct of the research and was discussed with gatekeepers at every opportunity. There was one occasion when this became an issue, after interviewing an especially young and vulnerable person: his gatekeeper was worried that giving him a £15 voucher might put him at risk of victimisation. As a result of this concern, he was instead given a voucher worth £10 instead. When the voucher was given to him he did two things. First, he said that he had never seen a voucher before, and asked how he would spend it. When it was explained to him, he said he would use it to buy something for his mum. This illustrated the circumstances in which many participants lived in, the kind of circumstances where a ten-year-old boy had never seen a gift voucher before. Second, he immediately put the voucher into his sock for safety. This illustrated the validity of the gatekeeper's concerns and the kinds of risks young people were exposed to in their daily lives. It also illustrated an unanticipated competence on the part of the participant at negotiating these risks.

This sub-section has considered some significant ethical concerns and the ways in which they were responded to. The examples discussed above raise important questions about the nature of ethics and the unanticipated consequences of participation in research. An ethical approach at the outset did not always translate into a perfect ethical execution. Nor did attention to procedure always prevent problems or dilemmas from occurring during fieldwork. Guillemin and Gillam (2004: 261) make a distinction between satisfying the requirements of ethical codes and committees and responding flexibly to what they describe as 'ethically important moments'. This places a responsibility on the researcher to think beyond the ethical guidelines and the needs of the research and to consider what is best for participants as problems arise. Ethical issues at times created restrictions on the researcher's ability to satisfactorily conduct the research. These, and other limitations are considered in the next and final section below.

Limitations of the research design

There were several limitations and challenges inherent in the operationalisation of the research. Some of these problems were conceptual, as described immediately below. Some were related to the overall research design, especially the selection of a qualitative methodology, and the nature of both the research topic and the research participants. These can be roughly divided into two categories – methodological and procedural. The main methodological limitations related to notions of validity, reliability and generalisability inherent in the decision to conduct a small scale qualitative study. The main procedural limitations related to recruitment problems, establishing rapport, and the use of gatekeepers. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

Operationalising the theoretical framework

Some of the problems encountered over the course of conducting this thesis were conceptual. Turning abstract concepts into researchable and measurable questions was more difficult than anticipated. For example, as noted in the conceptual chapter, a 'street code' has multiple definitions depending on the research study. This kind of complexity hampered the construction of the conceptual framework, and made it hard to create concrete definitions on which to construct the research schedules. This was made harder still by the use of two different research instruments and a divide in the empirical research between offenders and non-offenders. At the same time, these difficulties required getting to grips with a number of contrasting perspectives and conceptual frameworks. This meant, however, that there were problems integrating the different theoretical perspectives that were deployed in the research, and a number of contrasting ontological and epistemological frameworks. Socio-cultural criminological concepts such as 'street life' did not always fit easily with sociological concepts around resilience and youth transitions, for example. Likewise, legal and normative explanations of desistence were difficult to integrate with developmental explanations of desistence.

The sheer scale of some of the research topics that had to be grappled with was also problematic. Whist the research on knife crime is relatively limited, it overlapps with

several much broader literatures. Youth offending or 'delinquency' for example, comprises a significant, if not *the most* significant canon of work in criminological research. To give an example of the scope of this canon, the British Journal of Criminology was until 1960 the British Journal of *Delinquency* (Tierney, 1996). Violence similarly constitutes a massive body of scholarship stretching over centuries and encompassing an array of different disciplines. This made it very difficult to effectively narrow the focus and select appropriate concepts. The concept of 'street life' provided a useful means of narrowing this focus, but it did mean setting aside some potentially useful avenues of research – such as social learning theories.

These problems did provide some valuable lessons, not least that attendance to different conceptual frameworks had real implications not just for the way the research was approached, but the data that were generated. The majority of the limitations were not conceptual however, but were rather methodological and procedural. These are considered below, starting with a discussion of the role of 'gatekeepers' in the research and the implications of this.

The use and role of gatekeepers

Much scholarly work has focused on the role of gatekeepers. They can be especially important when working with children and young people (Kirby, 2004) especially as it regards consent. At the same time, a significant amount of scholarship has focused on the potentially corrupting effect of gatekeepers: they can influence the objective selection of participants/data and access to data more generally and even influence the analysis and subsequent presentation of data (Van Maanen 1998). Indeed, the role of gatekeepers in controlling access to powerful institutions and bureaucracies has in part been blamed for the focus in much social research on what Liazos (1972:11) has called 'nuts, sluts, and perverts,' at the expense of a focus on the crimes of the wealthy and powerful. It was certainly the case, as already discussed, that the gatekeepers played an important role in the selection of both the research sites and of participants. This was hard to avoid however: gatekeepers were uniquely well placed to provide guidance. Indeed, given the

difficulties already addressed in contacting the selected cohorts, the effective utilisation of gatekeepers could be considered innovatory rather than limiting and allowed the research to speak to at least *some* young people who have not been engaged with before in relation to the research topic. Despite Liazos' assertion, whilst much of the criminological enterprise is concerned with the activities of young people, there is a lack of attention paid to their perspectives, and there remains a pressing need to 'embed' young offender's narratives into theories of offending (Bottrell *et al.*, 2010: 59). Crucially, the use of gatekeepers, and the sampling strategy adopted in the research, had implications for validity and reliability, as discussed below.

Validity and reliability

The research design posed several concerns about *validity* and *reliability* (Silverman, 1993; Bryman, 1998; Fraser, 2004; Glassner and Loughlin, 1987; May, 1993) that are common when conducting qualitative research. The interview setting for instance can compromise *validity* as it amplifies people's natural tendency to present themselves in ways that are socially acceptable, especially when asked questions relating to 'prestige' or that concern difficult or shameful issues (Oppenheim, 1992: 67). Research participants can distort, suppress, exaggerate and reinterpret the truth (Edgar *et al.*, 2003); legitimise actions on 'moral grounds' (Edgar *et al.*, 2003: 77), or simply blame the victim (Lewis *et al.*, 2003; Sykes and Matza 1957). Interviews can also be subject to 'interviewer effect' through asking, for instance, leading questions (Stanko and Lee, 2003; Oppenheim, 1992; Bryman 1998; Noaks and Wincup, 2004). Certainly, the relaying of these experiences in the empirical research *did* involve a certain amount of subjectivity on the part of the young people. However, the purpose of the research was to explore young people's lives in relation to knife carrying, and the ways in which they constructed their own behaviour and experiences is an important element of this. Therefore, paying attention to how they sought *subjectively* to justify their knife carrying would help to understand this behaviour.

Problems of *reliability* are especially salient when dealing with what could be called '*captive* populations'. As noted already, there was an over-reliance on local Youth

Offending Teams for interview recruitment. Several authors (Polsky, 1967; Ferrel *et al.*, 2008) have argued that people who are incarcerated are more likely to say what they think the other party wants to hear than share objective truths. This is a compelling argument and whilst almost every young person who was interviewed was happy to discuss knife carrying, including using a knife to rob another person, not one participant admitted to having physically injured someone (although this may indeed have been the case). Similarly, few participants admitted to having carried a knife post-conviction, and even fewer admitted to still carrying a knife on a regular basis. Nonetheless, participants on the whole demonstrated a balanced appraisal of their own culpability in the incidents they recounted: any blame was generally either directed towards themselves or the authorities for failing to provide adequate security. Moreover, whilst the Youth Offending Service is closely linked to the Criminal Justice System, one of its objectives is a reduction in young people going to prison so it is one step removed from actual incarceration.

In response to the kinds of concerns highlighted above, Lincoln and Guba (1989: 242) developed alternative criteria for assessing the validity of qualitative research based on two primary criteria – *trustworthiness* and *authenticity*, and this is related to the nature of the fieldwork setting, the questions asked, and the quality of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Hammersley (1995: 18) likewise emphasises the importance of *plausibility* and *credibility*. He believes in an external verifiable world but accepts that all 'truth claims' are to some extent subjective and require analysis, rather than simply acting as a mirror to reality. Indeed, the use of a narrative approach can be considered an alternative to positivist methods and aims to achieve 'a contingent, temporally structured and contextualised understanding of human behaviour …[through]… self-narratives [which] act to shape and guide future behaviour' (Maruna, 2001: 40). These stories are not viewed simply as *post hoc* rationalisations but rather as an integral part of the impetus to offend. As Silverman (1993: 114) has argued, such accounts should not be treated as either entirely trustworthy or entirely untrustworthy, but rather, as 'compelling narratives'. Attention was also paid to triangulation in the collection of the research data, as described above. This was achieved principally by a

form of *cross pollination*: points made in the interviews were discussed with the focus groups, and vice versa, interviewees were asked to comment on points made in the focus groups. The various forums I attended also provided important opportunities to present and consider, with people from a range of professional backgrounds, some of the initial themes and findings to emerge from the data analysis. This kind of triangulation adds depth and rigour to research findings (Silverman, 1993; Silverman, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Bryman, 1998).

Authenticity was also pursued in other ways. The section on ethics above raised the matter of 'ethically important moments' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 261). For example, interview participants described being severely assaulted, being bullied, and the death of friends. Responding appropriately to these moments required a sympathetic and non-judgemental demeanour (Barter and Renold, 2003: 91; see also Liebling, 2001). This is important morally and ethically when discussing sensitive topics, especially with young and/or especially vulnerable participants. A sensitive an approach can also benefit the research however. Liebling (2001: 474) argues that there is a clear link between 'warmth, openness and capacity for sympathy' and the depth, or quality of the research data, where the researcher must be 'affectively present' to achieve some level of *verstehen* with participants. These issues have implications for a third and related concern generalisability. This is considered below.

Generalisability

A further and significant criticism levelled at qualitative research, and one that can be levelled at this project specifically, relates to the size of the sample. Because sample sizes tend to be smaller in qualitative research than are generally used in quantitative research (Silverman, 2004; Noaks and Wincup, 2004), the former is sometimes dismissed as anecdotal (Bryman, 1998) or mere 'journalism' lacking intellectual rigour and objectivity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 13). This is important in a contemporary sense because of the emphasis that policy-makers place on generalisability, but it is also important more broadly because of historical attempts by social scientists to align themselves with the

natural sciences, which has always placed a heavy emphasis on generalisability. The research conducted for this thesis was a small-scale sample. As noted already, the sample was selected on the basis of pragmatic as much as methodological considerations, and as a result it cannot lay great claims to scientific rigour or generalisability. Three points are made in defence of the study nonetheless.

The first point made in defence of this study, with respect to generalisability, is that there is no intention here to argue that the kinds of experiences explored by this study *should* be reproducible to larger populations, but rather, that there is *value* in exploring the lives of individuals and that such an ambition can nonetheless contribute to understanding human behaviour. Despite claims to scientific rigour, human behaviour as studied by the social sciences is substantially less easy to quantify than many of the phenomena studied in the natural sciences. As a consequence, qualitative researchers, including those working in feminist research and cultural criminology, continue to assert the value of small scale qualitative projects (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Katz, 1988; Ferrell *et al.,* 2008; Maruna, 1999). Qualitative research does not necessarily seek to make broad generalisations, but rather it aims to unpick and explore those generalisations, sometimes made initially by quantitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Indeed, this research did not set out to provide a sample that was representative of either the population of young people as a whole, or even the population of knife carriers. As already noted, given the fact that many knife carriers are 'hidden' in official data, it would actually be very difficult to create a truly representative sample.

The second point in defence of this study, with respect to generalisability, the first point notwithstanding, is that it in contributing novel data this research *has* produced data that can make empirical and conceptual contributions (Silverman, 1993), and that might be generalisable to a wider population. By adhering to alternative criteria of truth and reliability as described in the previous section, the findings can be said to have plausibility, and, rooted in the voices of young people, authenticity, even if they lack scientific

replicability. Anderson's (1999) ethnographic study of street codes provides an example of this. His study was restricted to a small location and population living around a single street in Philadelphia in the United States. Despite the small sample size, his findings were subsequently subjected to both qualitative and quantitative assessment in other parts of America and were found to be empirically and conceptually robust (Brezina *et al*., 2004; Rich and Grey. 2005; Brunson and Stewart, 2006). Anderson's concepts were also subsequently found to be relevant to understanding street codes in the United Kingdom (Brookman *et al*., 2011; Gunter, 2008) and Norway (Sandberg, 2008). Similarly, research by Bannister *et al*., (2010) had a sample but nonetheless made important empirical contributions to research on gangs and knife crime. Moreover, Bannister *et al*., (2010: 11) acknowledged the difficulty in finding participants who had carried a knife but were not tied to a gang, but the approach taken in the research for this study did just that.

The third point made in defence of this study, with respect to generalisability, is that a qualitative approach is especially useful when broaching difficult subjects and/or engaging with 'at risk' and 'hard to reach' groups, including young offenders, victims of violence and young people more generally (Taylor and Kearney, 2005; Weininger, 2005). Indeed, one of the strengths of a qualitative approach is a commitment to the voices of those people whose lives they are commenting on (Weininger, 2005). Such groups are often hidden in research and constructions of crime (Taylor and Kearney, 2005). In this sense a qualitative methodology was sensitive to the principal aim of the research, which was to explore young people's motivations for carrying a knife and their experiences of doing so, in their own words and from their point of view (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 9; see also Flick, 2002). This requires a more intimate and sensitive method than the survey questionnaire, and is therefore harder to replicate on a grand scale. As Maruna (1999: 4) has argued: 'Positivist approaches ... help us to 'understand crime.' These do not however permit us to 'understand criminals,' [and] must be supplemented with portraits of offender perspectives'.

This sub-section has problematized the notion of scientific generalisabity. It has also argued that the research did not set out to achieve generalisability but has nonetheless produced worthwhile data. Some of this has the potential to make conceptual and empirical contributions. If there were methodological problems inherent in the chosen research design, the study also encountered procedural problems along the way. These were not necessarily inherent in the research design, but were nonetheless anticipated in the research design, and responded as and when they arose. Not least among these was the problem of recruitment, considered next below.

Recruitment problems

Another challenge that confronted the research from the beginning was that of recruiting research participants, and in sufficient numbers, especially from the first cohort - those who had carried/used knives. Many potentially helpful agencies were so inundated with requests by researchers that they were loath to assist even when they thought the research was worthwhile. Moreover, it was difficult to maintain contact with these agencies and individuals. This was especially the case with non-statutory agencies that were often run by a small core of dedicated individuals, often on a very limited budget. Even when agencies were keen to help, it often took a great deal of time to negotiate through different levels and chains of command. For example, the process of negotiating access with one organisation lasted nearly three years and yielded a single interview. These problems were compounded by low attrition rates. Three possible participants failed to attend, and a fourth turned up but decided not to participate. The latter sneered at the gift voucher that was offered as encouragement to take part. That he was with two friends at the time seemed to have influenced his decision however, and his subsequent visible rejection of participation.

An important consequence of the recruitment challenges described above was an over-reliance on local Youth Offending Teams. YOTs had greater resources than the smaller agencies and enjoyed generally more formal and regular relationships with the young people. This reliance had implications for the ability to develop a sample that reflected the diverse array of knife related behaviours. The majority of participants were young men whose behaviour could be categorised as in the middle range of offending – that is,

serious enough to have attracted the attention of the criminal justice system, but not serious enough as to warrant a lengthy incarceration. That said, some interviewees *were* recruited through other sources, and included some whose behaviour had not attracted the attention of the authorities, but had been picked up on by individuals working with that person in a supportive capacity. At the same time, some groups were especially hard to contact - agencies that worked with young women were particularly hard to contact. This meant that the research missed out on insights into those young women who claim to have carried a knife, and also leaves the research open to the critique that much of criminology is concerned with men (Stanko and Lee, 2003).

Recruitment problems also meant that there was a significant imbalance in terms of the focus groups that were conducted - only one in London compared to five in Yorkshire. This occurred despite a great deal of effort to expand numbers. It was also, in part, the result of proximity. Focus groups can be difficult to organize and place a significant logistical burden on researchers, gatekeepers and indeed interviewees and the fact that the researcher lived closer to the Yorkshire site and had a larger and indeed closer network of contacts and potential gatekeepers here was undoubtedly a factor. As noted already though, the objective of the research was to explore the ways in which groups and individuals constructed knife carrying and crime. The aim was not to be generalisable, and whilst a more even spread of focus groups might well have improved the quality of the data, the lack of this balance does not invalidate the data that was collected.

Recruitment problems were undoubtedly exacerbated by the researcher's status as an 'outsider' (Breen, 2007: 2). 'Insider' accounts have numerous advantages over 'outsider' accounts. These include a familiarity and intimacy with both the specific group and the culture of the group being studied, and a consequent 'ease' in interaction with members of the group (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002, cited in Breen, 2007: 2). They also make it easier to identify potential participants and to recruit them in ways that are likely to encourage them to participate effectively. The example given in the previous sub-section of the young man who turned up to be interviewed but then changed his mind is a case

in point. Had he turned up to be interviewed by someone he knew and trusted, it is more likely that he would have participated. He might also have encouraged his friends to participate.

Outsider accounts have their own strengths of course, in particular, an objective distance from the research subject (Breen, 2007), but being an outsider can create other problems, not least recruiting participants, but also in gaining trust and establishing rapport, especially in the context of a short, one-off session. These problems were to some extent anticipated in the research design. Attention was paid to how the interviews and focus groups were approached and this went some way to reducing at least some of the challenges around building rapport and trust, and maintaining focus. Efforts were also made to conduct the research in settings and locations in which the participants would feel comfortable, including within schools and youth group facilities.

The problems outlined above did have some positive consequences. They provided some important lessons for future research, and stimulated more innovative approaches to recruitment. This included the creation of a poster, as shown in Figure 4.4., below. This was sent out to various agencies and increased the overall number of participants.

Figure 4.4 Recruitment poster
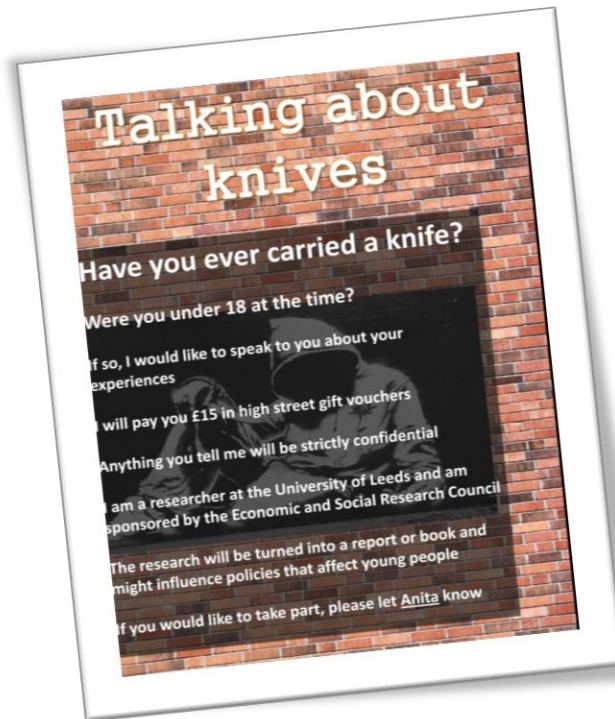
Image used © Banksy.

This section has considered some of the limitations of the research design and some of the problems this posed. Overall, these challenges were dealt with constructively and in ways that minimised any negative consequences for both the quality and quantity of the data collected. These issues undoubtedly had implications for the size and breadth of the samples, the quality of the data and the researcher's overall ability to conduct the research. They also provided opportunities to innovate, however, and to improve the quality of the data that were collected. In this sense, finding ways to constructively deal with problems was an important part of the learning process.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design and methodology employed in the conduct of this research, some of the ethical and procedural issues that were encountered, and how these were resolved. A significant concern given the chosen methodology was that the research would not meet accepted criteria of truth, reliability and generalisability. The

chapter has considered this and argued for alternative criteria, based on plausibility and authenticity. The research might, like the examples given earlier, contribute concepts and findings that are generalizable to a wider population but this was not the express intention of the research. Rather, in line with a qualitative, narrative based study, the study aimed to provide explanations rooted in individual experience that would illuminate certain aspects of behaviour. These might then be generalisable, but this was not the express intention, rather, the research would at the least augment existing quantitative explanations of knife crime and generate data that was both plausible and reflective of the reality of participants' lives.

Contacting, recruiting and engaging with those who took part in the study presented significant challenges. Conducting research with young people can be challenging generally, and especially so if they are also offenders (Stanko and Lee, 2003). Young offenders represent an especially 'hard to reach' (Taylor and Kearney, 2005) group and those who carry or have carried knives as a specific sub-set are even harder to reach. The importance of engaging with these groups cannot be overstated. As Marfleet (2008) has argued, young people's experiences of victimisation *must* be recognised if crime and violence among the young are to be dealt with effectively. Qualitative methods provided both the means and methods to effectively engage with the groups identified above. A number of innovative methods were used in both the interviews and focus groups which helped foster rapport and ultimately enhanced the quality of the data. As a result, 17 young people who had been convicted of carrying a knife, and could broadly be said to be or have been, engaged in an offending lifestyle took part in the research. An additional five young people who had carried knives but who either had not been convicted of an offence or who had been convicted but were not otherwise offenders also took part. Although a small number, this still represents a significant achievement. At the same time, the research also gave voice to 64 young people who were not ostensibly offenders but who nonetheless had experiences of, and opinions on, those who carried knives and those who offended more broadly.

Despite some of the challenges touched on in this chapter, the fieldwork on the whole was a positive experience and some important lessons were learnt. Not least among these was that recruiting and engaging with challenging groups and individuals is difficult, but not impossible, requiring persistence and flexibility. The overall tone of the research helped to minimise some of the problems considered above. Participants were approached in a sympathetic, though not uncritical manner (see Becker, 1967 for a discussion of objectivity and sympathy in social research). This sentiment was rooted in awareness that many of those who carry knives have also themselves been the victims of knife crime and other forms of violence. Certainly, many of the participants responded well to this approach. The research was received enthusiastically by the majority of the participants. It is fair to say that this was the result, in part, of the thought and effort put into how participants could be effectively engaged. It is also the case, however, that many of those who took part were simply pleased to be asked about their lives, even if at times this meant discussing difficult and painful matters. Sieber and Stanley (1988: 55) have noted that researchers sometimes resolve these problems by simply 'opting out' of such research altogether. Barter and Renold (2003: 90/91) have argued that it is nonetheless crucial to engage children and young people in 'sensitive research'. It is hoped that this study has demonstrated that sensitive research of this kind can be done, and can produce worthwhile and valuable data.

This chapter concludes the first part of the thesis. By outlining the contextual and conceptual frameworks in which the empirical research was conducted, and the process by which it was conducted, this first part sets the scene for the second part of the thesis. Part Two comprises four findings chapters which outline the major findings to emerge from the empirical data, and reflects on these with reference to the earlier, contextual and conceptual chapters.

Part 2: Findings, discussion and conclusions

Chapter Five: Pathways *into* knife carrying

'Street life' and the 'security gap'

…do you feel you've got a right to be safe on the street?

Yeah.

And do you think it's your job to enforce that [by carrying a knife]?

Yeah, because no one else is gonna…Who else is going to? If you don't look after yourself, who else is going to do that?

I'm not disputing it. But the thing is if you look after yourself, you get into trouble with the police anyway don't you?

Yeah. I mean there's other ways innit. But what can you do? If you're like a kid my age, and you're involved in all this, then something will be bound to happen at some point.

And what do you mean by 'all this'?

Like I don't know how to explain it man. The road life innit…If I go out to go shopping that happens to me. Not round here, I won't get robbed around here, it's unlikely. If there's other people from another area that I don't know but – let's say I go somewhere else. Like if I go another area it could happen.

Again, it doesn't sound like there's anyone you could tell, like the police can't help you.

No one can help you.

(Merlin, London, aged 16).

The quote presented on the previous page was selected as an exemplar to illustrate many of the points made in this chapter. The research participant's comments express frustration, anger and determination, and speak to some of the paradoxes that face young men when they try to make themselves feel safer. This chapter conceives of this problem as a 'security gap'.

Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings from the empirical data that relate to the circumstances that led participants to start to carry a knife. The chapter is in three sections: the first section introduces two important and related distinctions to have emerged from the data: between offenders and non-offenders, and, between the different kinds of violence they were exposed to. It also describes the principal trajectories that participants took into knife carrying, and the relationship between these and offending careers more broadly. The second section explores the influence of peers, offending and normative codes on knife carrying behaviour, by drawing on the concept of 'street life' as it was developed in Chapter Three. The section outlines two issues that can be shown to have necessitated the need to carry a knife: first, engagement in collective offending, and second, the risk of lone victimisation. Adherence to a violent street code and an offending lifestyle more generally created significant problems around movement and visibility and carrying a knife provided, for some, an 'effective' solution to these problems. The third section examines sources of social support that participants could have drawn on as an alternative to carrying a knife. Further, it examines the relationship between offending, knife carrying and both the perceptions and experiences of formal and informal regulatory orders. The next chapter examines offenders' decisions to stop carrying a knife, with reference to both the findings of this chapter and the conceptual framework.

The main argument put forward in this chapter is that the participants experienced a 'security gap' that had significant implications for their conduct in general and their knife carrying in particular. This was bound up in and contributed to 'integrational difficulties'

for many participants. It was also related to intrinsic perceptions of place and space. There were two kinds of participants – offenders and non-offenders, both of whom had carried knives. Both groups had initially carried for defensive purposes, but within this there were differences by what was meant by 'self-defence'. These differences were a consequence of the kinds of violence participants claimed to have experienced, and their consequent perceptions of their local environment. The offenders tended to experience more frequent and more severe violence as a result of their offending. Their offending then can be seen as both a response to and a cause of a 'security gap' in their local ecology. By contrast, the small group of non-offenders in the sample experienced bullying and some street violence, but overall this was less severe and less frequent. They generally carried a knife for self-defence, but for shorter periods, and less frequently, than offenders.

Starting offending was often part of a vicious circle: the more offending participants engaged, in the more likely they were to witness, experience, or even participate in street based violence, necessitating ever greater attendance to self-defence. At the same time, becoming entrenched in an offending lifestyle brought participants into contact with peers on a similar trajectory who could offer some collective support, but it also eroded already difficult relationships with other more durable sources of support and protection, further exposing them to the threat of victimisation. Indeed, as is explored further below, relationships with the police, especially, could not only exacerbate an offending trajectory but in assigning to participants a 'troublesome' or 'outlaw' status, could also exacerbate the very threats or 'security gap' participants sought to mitigate through the carrying of a knife. In these contexts, knife carrying could become habitual and this was where the more offensive uses of a knife were more likely to be realised.

The first section below develops the distinction between offending and non-offending participants, and the consequences of this for knife carrying. First however there is a description of participants' neighbourhoods and their experiences of place and space.

Place, space and participants' neighbourhoods

One of the principal themes of this research has been that some young people respond to extant social conditions, especially the presence of a violent 'street culture' (Hallsworth, 2008) by engaging in offending behaviour. They are not necessarily aware of the implications of this when they start on this pathway, but one of the consequences for many of these appears to be a rapid escalation and intensification of experiences of violence and the threat of violence. These experiences are rooted in place and space as these were defined in Chapter Three. In other words, participants experienced more generalise spatial risks when moving around, but also more specific and place based risks, according to share subjective definitions of certain places. It was apparent in the course of conducting the fieldwork that many of the areas where participants lived and studied were run down and badly maintained. Some spaces had an air of menace (at least it seemed that way to the researcher), even during the day. It would be an exaggeration to say that this as equivalent to that described by Anderson (1999) in downtown Philadelphia. At the same time, in a British context at least, some areas felt dangerous in the way that Anderson described areas where a 'street code' prevailed. These feelings were recorded in the fieldwork diary, an excerpt of which is presented below.

> Visited [area, London] today. Arrived mid-afternoon. The sky was already dark grey and mirrored the dismal surroundings. The estate is entered through a gate which I'm guessing gets locked at night. Not sure if it is to keep people in or out. The hut where I conducted the interviews was equally miserable. The door was lined with dented sheet metal and there were bars on the windows (not unusual). The staff who let me in were friendly but seemed quite strained. They helped me move faded plastic chairs and tables around the otherwise empty hall. The interviewees were friendly and chatty though. Left at about 7.30 pm, the staff member who let me out seemed concerned for my safety, but it was all quiet on the way back to station (Research diary, October, 2011).

There was also, in some places, a sense of implicit threat, of hostility and a lack of *security*. This was sometimes because of the visible presence of potentially hostile others. Some youth offending service offices felt particularly threatening and at times quite volatile:

150

> Visited the [location] YOS today. Parked close by, stood on broken windscreen glass as I stepped out of the car. I was told to go in by the back door. Walking towards the offices I could see why - a large group of lads stood smoking outside the main door. One asked me if I had a light as I walked past, another spat on the ground through his teeth (Research diary, March 2011).

Sometimes the sense of threat was related more to the physical appearance of a particular place, especially were there were signs of disorder or the potential for disorder. Some spaces were marked as symbolic places: several areas had large amounts of graffiti and 'tagging' which is can be used to signal gang ownership and affiliations (Hallsworth, 2005; Gaskell, 2008). Likewise, schools and youth offending service offices where the research was conducted were heavily defended and supervised: this included locked areas that were only accessible to staff members with special keys, and two of the schools had high fences and areas of segregation for younger and older children. Of course these personal reflections are subjective. However, they reflect the perceptions of a reasonably confident adult who over many years has had exposure to such places. At least some of the research participants shared this general view, and in some of the accounts they described the areas in which they lived in derogatory ways.

> *And do you like where you live? Is it a nice place?*
> Not really.
> *Why do you say that?*
> Loads of trouble.
> *What kind of trouble?*
> Like [where I live] got this…woman…Her sister's boyfriend pulled a knife out and the next door neighbour from mine on that side, they were having an argument and then he pulled a knife out on the kids (Lee, Yorkshire, white British, aged nine).

This was in contrast to other areas in the vicinity which were regarded as being more pleasant. Indeed, many participants voiced aspirations to leave the areas where they lived and to relocate to a place nearby, or even to leave the area completely and start a life somewhere else. At the same time, some expressed a pride in where they lived, mainly

relating to long standing social ties, whilst simultaneously speaking ruefully of the general physical and social environment.

The presence of violence has been cited as an important predictor of knife carrying: violent environments can lead to a vicious circle, and exposure to violence, either as victim or witness, can cause stress and fear, or make a person more disposed to commit violence. Lemos (2004) has argued that knife carrying among young people was linked to whether they felt safe in their area from crime and victimisation, and there is a substantial body of research linking deprived neighbourhoods with high levels of offending and violent offending (Silverstri *et al.*, 2009; Patchin *et al.*, 2006; McGee 2003). These kinds of experiences are considered in the section below which describes an important distinction in the research, between offenders and non-offenders.

Offenders, non-offenders and knife carrying trajectories

This section introduces an important distinction in the data between those engaged in an offending lifestyle at the time they started to carry a knife (herein referred to as 'offenders' or 'offending knife carriers') and those who were not engaged in an offending lifestyle, (herein referred to as 'non-offenders' or 'non-offending knife carriers' - see Chapter One for a discussion of these terms). In both cases, participants often described experiencing a 'security gap'. That is, they experienced as sense of physical or psychological *in*security that was not ameliorated by the actions or presence of formal regulatory orders, such as parents, teachers or the police. At the same time, participants had struggled to provide for themselves a sense of security. This sense of a 'security gap' was created by experiences of, or the threat of, violent victimisation. There were differences in the kinds of violent experiences that participants were subject to, and this had consequences for knife carrying behaviour. Crucially, in both cases, their experiences can be described as having created a 'security gap' and their knife carrying was a response to this.

The data suggest that violence was a common occurrence in the schools and neighbourhoods of the young people who took part. Most participants could share some stories about violence and violent people, whether this was direct violence, threats of violence, having witnessed or heard about violence from others. Some had personally experienced serious and life threatening violence, which informed collective narratives of violence and amplified the concerns of the majority. Verbal violence, threats and intimidation were relatively common and frequent, and in purely physical terms relatively mild. By contrast, physical violence was generally less common, but more severe.

Two principal kinds of experiences were described by participants: bullying and street violence. *Bullying* has been shown to be a pervasive aspect of many young people's lives (Olweus, 1993; Smith and Sharp 1994; Gaskell, 2008; Whitney and Smith, 1993) to the extent that it is regarded as a 'normal' aspect of school life by many teachers and students in the UK (Phillips, 2003, see also Phillips 2008). Bullying can involve 'physical aggression towards the child and/or their possessions, and/or social and relational aggression, such as rumour mongering or verbal assaults' (Fonagy, 2003: 224). Bullying is tied to wider processes of socialisation, hierarchy formation and the negotiation of identity in the school and the wider ecology of an area (Phillips, 2003; McAra and McVie, 2012). There are also more 'spectacular' (Breines *et al.*, 2000: 16) forms of violence which can broadly be classed as *street violence* (Gaskell, 2008). Though not an everyday occurrence, these shape young people's world-view and their perceptions of space and place – space being largely undifferentiated, whilst place is subjective to the individual and shaped, by among other things, the existence of street violence and street codes, the presence of gangs and experiences of violence and victimisation (Valentine, 1996).

Experiences of violence were textured by a range of risk factors. Age has been shown to be an important determinant of experiences of both victimisation and offending. Developmental approaches emphasise, among other things, increased exposure to violence in social ecologies as young people age and seek to demonstrate maturity. Further, research has shown that experiences of violence increase rapidly between the

153

early and late teens (Moffit, 1993). The empirical research for this thesis included participants from nine up to nineteen and certainly the severity of violence appears to have increased with age, up to a point. Some of the younger boys had experienced bullying but this appears to have been relatively limited. By contrast those aged fourteen to fifteen had experienced more severe forms of violence and several participants regarded their age as a crucial risk factor. Beyond this point age seems to have reduced vulnerability as young people became more mature and other changes occurred relative to their exposure to violence, and this is explored more fully in the next chapter.

> But you're cool, you're a grown man, they won't approach you…It's like when you're in the same kind of thing as them, the same kind of group like they see you as someone, I don't know how to explain it…when you're a grown man, no one will fuck with you… (Merlin, London, aged 16).

Offenders and non-offenders in the research had carried knives. Given that all interview participants admitted to having carried a knife, it is clear that being an offender is not necessary to carrying a knife. However, the extent of participants' offending, and their subsequent experiences of violence, did determine the nature of their knife carrying. The majority of participants claimed to have first carried a knife because they had been victimised or were anxious about the risk of being victimised. For offending participants, this was related to their wider offending trajectories. For offenders, the 'security gap' they experienced was exacerbated by engagement in an offending lifestyle. It was this that, at least by their own accounts, was the principal 'turning point' that prompted knife carrying. In most cases this did not directly cause knife carrying, rather, it was becoming involved in 'street life' that for many participants heightened the risk of being victimised, and increased the severity of the violence they were likely to experience. Experiences of victimisation, or the threat of victimisation, were also cited by all five of the non-offenders as being critical to their knife carrying. For non-offenders, it was related to concerns about bullying. This is not to say that non-offenders *only* experienced bullying however, nor that *only* non-offenders experienced bullying. Rather, non-offenders were more likely to

complain about bullying, whilst offenders were more likely to report being a victim of street violence.

The distinction made above is important then, because engagement in 'street life' as it was described in Chapter Three did not necessarily determine *whether or not* a person experienced violence, but it did influence both the *frequency* of victimisation and *severity* of the victimisation they witnessed or experienced. These experiences had important implications for trajectories of knife carrying. This is explored further below.

Non-offenders and knife carrying

As the section above has argued, the most significant distinction that emerged in the research was between those participants who were regular offenders and those who were not. Five out of 23 of the participants could be classed as non-offenders at the point at which they first carried a knife. That is, prior to carrying a knife, they were not engaged in an offending lifestyle and had had limited contact with criminal justice agencies. According to all of these, experiencing or anticipating being bullied was a precursor to their decision to carry a knife. Six of the interview participants described having been directly bullied: this included two offenders but importantly all five of the non-offenders. For the most part this kind of violence involved an individual or group of individuals who were known to them threatening or verbally or physically attacking them. This had occurred within friendship groups and between a group and an individual, at school or on the way to and from school, in parks and playgrounds and even outside one interviewee's house. For some, these experiences were relatively short lived and discreet, but for others they were more persistent. Several participants had been taunted verbally, or threatened with violence which had not subsequently materialised. At the other end of the scale one young man was regularly bullied by his friends, whilst another had been bullied on and off for over two years by an older boy at his school and this had resulted in violence on several occasions.

Experiences of bullying were linked by some participants to their decision to carry a knife. Whilst non-offenders generally demonstrated a capacity to move quite widely, those non-offenders who carried knives experienced inhibited movement, as a result of a specific vulnerability, and/or the same kinds of anxieties about victimisation that prompted their knife carrying. Two of the interviewees who described bullying were nine and ten years old respectively. The ten-year-old was regularly bullied outside of his home and these incidents sometimes involved actual attacks on his home – boys of his own age and from the same school would throw stones at his house. This experience prompted him to take a knife from the kitchen in his home.

> *…So why do you think you carried [the knife]?*
> I don't know…I just, these two lads called [names] they just kicked some stones at the windows.
> *…Just your windows?*
> Just mine.
> *Why did they throw stones at your windows?*
> I don't know.
> *…And did you get into trouble [for carrying a knife]?*
> Yeah. (Paul, Yorkshire, white British, aged ten).

The further three participants in this category were older (aged 16-17). None had a history of offending prior to their decision to carry a knife, although two were subsequently caught and convicted of carrying a knife in school.

> I actually got caught in possession of a knife, got arrested for possession of a knife due to having a problem with an older boy in my school… we've been having our problems since…he's just been like picking on me and bullying me…And things got a bit heated, family got involved in it and there was threats being made to me about him having quite a few other older boys from outside the school to come and attack me…So [one particular day] when I was having my breakfast, I looked in my cutlery drawer and I saw the knife was there. I picked it up, I wrapped it around in a cloth and I put it in my bag. And I took it into school. (Rav, London, British Asian, aged 16).

Four of the five non-offenders had not subsequently engaged in an offending lifestyle. Several were very young and it was unclear what their futures held. Two were older and both had recently completed community service and were looking forward to engaging with training and employment. The fifth had subsequently gone on to engage in an offending lifestyle and he claimed that the events that precipitated the carrying of a knife had also precipitated his offending.

> *Can you remember the first time you ever decided to carry [the knife]?*
> Yeah. It was a big kitchen knife out of me mum's drawer…I was getting bullied on the estate by the older lads and I just – I got told I were gonna get battered by this lad so me mum asked me to go to the shop. And I didn't want to go but I did, so I just took that with me. Didn't see the person.
> *…Did you feel safer with it?*
> Yeah. (Lenny, Yorkshire, white British, aged 17).

Overall, the non-offenders carried a knife for only a short time and infrequently. One had carried on only one occasion and had been caught in the act. The others had carried sporadically but only for a short period, the longest had been about six months. Two of the non-offenders had been caught in possession of a knife – one on the first and only time that they had carried a knife. The other three participants had not ostensibly been caught for any crime and claimed only to have carried a knife on a few occasions over a relatively short period. Two of these were nine and ten respectively at the time of carrying a knife and were known by their gatekeepers to have carried a knife. Whilst those non-offenders who had been caught seemed stop as a result (see next chapter) even those who had not been caught carried a knife for only a short period. Their carrying on the whole was not 'successful'. That is, it did not seem to reduce experiences of or concerns about victimisation. By contrast, offending participants carried for longer and more frequently. Whilst some offenders described incidences of bullying, they also were exposed to street violence more frequently and of a heightened severity. As is discussed immediately below, for many this was a significant influence on their decision not just to carry a knife, but when and where to carry a knife.

Offenders and knife carrying

The majority of participants (17 out of 23) *were* or *had been* regular offenders at the time they started carrying a knife. A significant minority remained so at the time they took part in the interview. Most claimed to have stopped carrying a knife, for some this was relatively recent whilst for others it had been several years ago. The majority of participants were sixteen and seventeen and most of these described their offending as having ceased or as being less frequent than it had been, whilst for those who were in the fourteen to fifteen age bracket, offending was still an ongoing process. Several were on a programme run by the Youth Offending Service designed to address knife crime (See Chapter Two), whilst several more were on the Prolific and Priority Offender Program. For the most part their offending was or had been quite versatile (Sampson and Laub, 2001; Farrington, 1996).

As has been suggested by research on criminal careers (Farrington, 1996; 2005), the process of engaging in offending is often incremental. Most participants in the study did not start by committing serious crimes and most described a graduation from less to more serious forms of offending (Farrington, 1996; 2005). This was often a process that started with just hanging around in groups (14), which then progressed to petty crime (4); engagement in group conflict (7), street robbery (4) and drug dealing (3). Several seemed to be or have been more specialised (Sampson and Laub, 2001) and were principally involved in committing burglary. Four participants admitted to having committed at least one street robbery, several had on numerous occasions, and four or five had been directly involved in violence between groups. At least five participants had spent time in prison for various offences and nine or ten had had served non-custodial sentences. No participant admitted to having physically injured another person.

Offenders, on the whole, carried a knife for a longer period than non-offenders. The majority of offenders described carrying over a period of between six months and two years, some had carried a knife habitually over long periods. The majority of offending participants had been caught in possession of a knife (10 out of 17), whilst committing no

other offence. Three participants had been caught as a consequence of offending with a knife, whist three were caught committing a different offence but in possession of a knife, including burglary and drug offences. Several offending participants had *not* been caught with a knife: three of these were frequent offenders and had been prosecuted for other crimes but were known to carry a knife, or admitted to having carried a knife, to their respective 'gatekeeper'.

There was clear evidence in the data that for the majority of participants their knife carrying *was* related to an offending lifestyle, and the majority of offenders were already offending at the point at which they started to carry a knife. This was not necessarily a linear progression though. Indeed, for many participants, their offending did not directly involve or require a knife, rather, engaging in an offending lifestyle more broadly necessitated the carrying of a knife. Moreover, knife carrying for the majority seems to have begun relatively early in their offending careers, when they were hanging around in groups, rather than later, when some became involved in more serious forms of offending.

Whilst some offenders had experienced bullying, especially when they were younger, (between 12 and 14) they also reported substantial experiences of street violence, and substantively more than non-offenders. Indeed, offenders on the whole described more frequent and more severe experiences of violence to that of the non-offenders. Not only were they more likely to experience victimisation, they also reported more frequent incidents of being threatened with or assaulted with a weapon, and many participants had experienced multiple incidents of victimisation. Numerous offending participants recounted tales of people they knew directly who had been beaten up, and several participants who knew people who had died after being attacked with a knife. The injuries inflicted by street violence were generally more severe. These included serious injury from knives and guns, visible gang violence, sexual violence and murder. Indeed, at least five young men and several young women had been threatened with a knife, and two young men had been stabbed and inured with a knife, one on two separate occasions. Both of these young men had been sufficiently injured as to have been hospitalised – one

had been stabbed in the head and thigh in a busy public area. One interviewee had been stabbed by two members of a rival gang in a public place.

> I've carried knives before, and I've been stabbed before. I know a lot about knives…I could have died. If someone hadn't saved me, I could have died, bled half to death ….it's so dangerous because you can't feel it, it feels like a punch. Just like that…I tried to walk home but then my chest felt a bit warm so I looked down and there was blood everywhere, everywhere. And like I put my hand on my head, and there was blood on my hand. From there I just knew – I thought it was game over, I got stabbed in my chest and my head. And there are times in school they are telling you those two places are [bad places to be stabbed]. (J.D. London, black British, aged 17).

It is not unsurprising that offenders were exposed to greater levels of violence as a result of *becoming* offenders. Research has consistently shown that offending young people have been exposed to community violence, whether through direct experience or witnessing violence, prior to becoming offenders (Patchin *et al.*, 2006). Research has also demonstrated positive correlations between offending and violent victimisation across a range of different behaviours including violent crime, theft, vandalism and alcohol use (see for instance Hindelang *et al.*, 1978; Sampson and Lauritsen, 1990; 1994); engaging in high risk situations and activities (Brennan *et al.*, 2010); and being part of an offending peer group (Smith, 2004; McAra and McVie, 2012). Witterbrood and Nieuwbeerta (1999) for instance conducted large scale longitudinal surveys in the Netherlands and found that an offending lifestyle exposed young men in cities to regular violence through their routine activities.

What was not always clear from the data was the extent to which experiences of violence were *directly* related to individual participants starting to offend. Research *has* suggested that offending is both a response to violence and reproductive of violence (including Bannister *et al.*, 2012, Hallwsorth, 2008 and Wikström, and Treiber, 2009, France *et al.*, 2012). Violent experiences can promote engagement in offending through the development of a particular orientation to violence. Smith (2004) found that offending

behaviours are most strongly associated with being a victim of assault with a weapon, and robbery, and that repeat victimisation was an important *predictor* of engagement in offending. Some participants definitely linked their own offending to earlier experiences of violence.

> Since then I just – since then, that was the reason why I started robbing.
> (J.D. London, black British, aged 17).

What *was* clear however, was the strength of the relationship between experiences of street violence and the decision to carry a knife. Engagement in 'street life' prompted a significant increase in the threats of violence that participants were exposed to. These threats became more frequent, and when they materialised, the violence was more severe. These threats were complex, however, and determined both by the complexity of their offending lifestyles and complexity of their experiences of street violence. These experiences are described in the next section below, in relation to experiences of 'street life', as it was conceptualised in Chapter Three.

Responding to 'street life'

This section outlines in more detail the experiences that prompted, according to their own accounts, the majority of offending participants to start to carry a knife. If some offending participants had experienced bullying, for the majority their knife carrying was related to more extreme and complex forms of violence that they experienced as a result of engaging with 'street life'. The concept of an offending lifestyle was discussed in the Chapter Three, where it was seen to comprise a range of behaviours including engagement in anti-social behaviour and vandalism, fighting, gang violence and street robbery. 'Street life' was a wider and more complex concept that had important normative and communicative characteristics. A 'street code' was conceptualised as a form of social pressure that encouraged people living or passing through certain areas to act in a more aggressive manner and to response *with* aggression *to* such visible manifestations of aggression (Anderson, 1999; Bourgois, 1995; Brookman *et al.*, 2011; Gunter, 2008).

People did not simply respond to provocation with extreme violence, but did so in adherence to a violent street code that determined that this was the most effective and strategic response to violence and in the short to mid-term at least reduced the risk of further victimisation. Not everyone has equal capacity to response in such a manner however, and whilst some sough to avoid the kinds of places in which a street code operated, others sough to mitigate the risks by carrying a knife.

The findings of the empirical study confirm many of the previous research findings described in Chapter Three in relation to 'street life'. The existence of an 'outlaw' or 'street code' (Hallsworth, 2005) as described above was demonstrated by participants in the empirical research at both sites. Several participants referred to the concept of being 'on road' (Earle, 2011; Hallsworth, 2005), as a signifier of participation in a violent street culture, and an especially British manifestation of an 'outlaw' street code (Hallsworth, 2005: 132; Earle, 2011). This encompasses among other things the cultivation of an aggressive demeanour, a preparedness to engage in violence and a versatile approach to offending rather than necessarily any specialist offending. Two principal kinds of violence were described as having prompted the initial decision to carry a knife and also to be related to subsequent carrying: first, there was collective violence, especially fighting between groups, and second, the threat of being victimised whilst alone. These are described in turn below.

Gangs and group conflict
This sub-section explores participants' experiences of engagement in group conflict and the relationship between this and their knife carrying. The concept of a gang was problematised in Chapter Three. As noted, various definitions exist, including a criminal gang, a street gang and a troublesome youth group (Bannister, *et al.*, 2010; Klein, *et al.*, 2006; Pitts, 2007). As discussed however, the definition of a gang is a contested term, and is frequently rejected by young people themselves (see for instance Bannister *et al.,* 2010; Firmin, *et al.*, 2007; Aldridge and Medina, 2007). For many of the participants in the research for this thesis, spending time with friends was an important aspect of their daily

lives, and formed the backdrop for both mundane and more spectacular forms of behaviour (France, *et al.*, 2012; Gaskell, 2008), including: playing sport or video games; engaging in anti-social behaviour such as drinking; and, 'hanging around'.

> …sometimes if I went to my mate's house and we got another couple of lads to meet up with then obviously we'll meet up with them. But there's like 12 of us, we all can't just pile into my mate's house. We just go around and chill and have a laugh and that… (Gary, Yorkshire, black British, aged 15).

Offending and non-offending participants in this research frequently challenged the idea that they were part of a gang and emphasised the social aspects of group activities, rather than any criminal activities. Some participants did acknowledge that others might view them as being in a gang. Participants at both sites illustrated some of the frustrations that young people experience when seeking to engage in 'ordinary' youth activities.

> No, I wasn't part of a gang. You see…I live in an estate where there's gangs on the estate where I was living. But me personally…So my friends, there are a good ten of us but we won't personally say we are a gang. We just say we are just friends, we care for each other…But then again, people outside of it, they will just see us a group of boys and think that's a gang. It's not really a gang (Tony, London, black British, aged 17).

Some participants did nonetheless admit to 'membership' of an identifiable gang and in some cases an offending gang. Research has highlighted the protective aspects of gangs, although this is often neglected in commentary on young people. Marfleet (2008: 81) refers to this as 'corporate safety in numbers' and can be seen as one solution to the experience of a 'security gap' as described in Chapter Three. As already suggested however, and explored further below, such a response can be counter-productive. As Marfleet (2008) notes, membership of a gang, whilst ostensibly offering protection, actually engenders violence through increased risk of participation in violence, and through constituting a threat to other gangs and individuals. In this context membership of a gang also involves obligations, one of which is a duty to engage in collective violence

related to disputes with other gangs (Bannister *et al.*, 2012; Marfleet, 2008; Aldridge and Medina, 2007). For at least six of the young people in the empirical research for this thesis, the decision when and where to carry a knife was in part related to group conflict and they claimed that knives were sometimes carried in anticipation of gang fights, as the quote below illustrates.

> Well normally like we'll be together and I don't know, we'll probably get a phone call saying something's just happened to so and so, or what not. And then that will kind of raise alarms within the group sort of thing. So people think ok, so we've got trouble with these people now, you need to get your knife ready, you need to go get your – they call it shanks. You've got to go get your shanks. (Klint, London, black British, aged 17).

Empirical research has demonstrated links between the presence of gangs and knife carrying. Research conducted on behalf of the Scottish Government in 2010 (Bannister *et al.,* 2010) provided an overview of gangs and gang structures in five Scottish locations, and protection was given as the main reason by for carrying a knife. This was prompted either by direct experiences of victimisation, or wider concerns about the threat of violence in the context of collective fighting and in part reflected a widespread assumption that members of other gangs would be carrying knives. This concern was echoed in the findings of the empirical research for this thesis and at least four young people voiced the expectation, also noted by (Brennan and Moore, 2008) that knife carrying was ubiquitous. For instance, the participant below claimed to have had a friend who had died after being stabbed and linked this to his decision to carry a knife.

> The first thing [that led to carrying a knife] was that my friend got stabbed and obviously….. I could be a target. So I thought I'll carry one just in case… (Avro, Yorkshire, black British, aged 15).

For some participants, what started out a single incident would often escalate and precipitate further conflict. This is connected with what some commentators have called the 'weapon effect', whereby the presence of a weapon in a conflict situation can actually lead to an escalation of conflict and a heightened risk of violence (Brennan and Moore,

2009; Silvestri *et al.,* 2009: 7). As Silvestri *et al.,* (2009: 7) note: 'the presence of weapons may escalate conflicts and increase the likelihood of injuries or death'. Wilkinson and Fagan (2000) draw attention to the role of 'scripting' in conflict situations, and the limited repertoire of responses many young people draw on in conflict situations. This is illustrated in the quote below.

> …About six, seven month ago…a few of me mates had an argument, we might have been, I think they were having a drink on a weekend. And they started fighting and somebody's hit somebody with a bottle and then obviously then it started from there. And they knew all the people that were at the party so then, they've obviously come back and tried looking for us in vans and cars and obviously everybody just had to carry a knife then. Just in case they come back again. (Ben, Yorkshire, white British, aged 16).

Some studies have found variable and unpredictable links between knives and gangs (Bannister *et al.,* 2010, Bannister *et al.,* 2008; Aldridge and Medina, 2007). Bannister *et al.,* (2008) considered a range of activities, from anti-social behaviour through to fighting, theft and drug dealing. Engagement in violence was found to vary between gangs and localities, with gangs in some localities seeming to favour premeditated and territorial fighting, whilst in others fighting was less entrenched and more spontaneous. Knife carrying was equally variable – some gang members carried knives, whilst others didn't, and some gangs tended to favour the use of knives whilst others were strongly opposed to them (Bannister *et al.,* 2010). This is an important point because it challenges the notion of a subculture of knives that is sometimes articulated. The findings here suggest rather that there was less a subculture of knife carrying than there is a collective and widespread *awareness* of knives as a potential response to collective violence. Some of the participants highlighted this ambivalence, and even though they had carried a knife on occasions themselves, spoke to the complexity of the relationship between knives and gangs.

… Because what a gang does, they buy guns, they buy loads of knives, drugs and that. We don't do none of that, we just you know – We don't do nothing like what a gang does. (Tony, London, black British, aged 17).

Gangs, and knife carrying, were also linked in complex ways to matters of ethnicity and gender. In London, and especially among the black males who took part, the issue of gangs seemed particularly salient. As already noted, however, deprivation has been cited as an important intervening variable between gang membership and ethnicity – that is, gangs tend to be more common in areas of deprivation, which is also where ethnic minority groups are often concentrated. Research has also explored the links between gender and gangs membership/knife carrying. On the one hand, research into knife carrying has found that women are often relegated to the role of carrying weapons for males, and often are often coerced into this. On the other hand, research on gangs has shown that young women are equally able to initiate and engage in violence as male gang members (Miller, 2001). The two female participants in the interviews had both had some involvement with gangs. In one case, a participant had experienced gang conflict whilst with their partner.

there's been loads of occasions where I've been with people who've had knives. I've been in the situation and my friend's boyfriend got robbed and they all had like samurai swords with them. And one of them must have pushed my friend to the floor and I must have got the boy and threw him up against the wall". (Jacky, London, aged 16).

The two young women's experiences of violence, and indeed their weapon carrying, was often directly related to male partners. Both talked about the issue of carrying weapons for males. One had firmly resisted doing this, but accepted that some young women did do this:

I've had debates like this where people say girls are forced to carry knives and stuff, and they're bullied, pressured into it. But I don't know – if my boyfriend told me to carry a knife, I will say no because I'm not an idiot. I'm not a little dummy and don't tell me to carry something which is yours. Because if I get caught with it, I'm the one that's gonna go down for it,

because you ain't. So – there's some girls out there like me that will say no, and then there's some girls that want to say no but they can't because they're scared. (Jacky, London, aged 16).

The other young woman admitted to having carried a knife for her partner.

Well I carried a knife but I was with my friend and we was in like an area that he had an issue with, but there was like police around. So he asked me to take it because he is more likely to get searched and whatever than me…so I've always just done it like…Yeah. Because like, I don't know like because I'm a girly girl right, I don't really see like why I would get stopped (Charlie, London, aged 17).

The interviewee quoted above nonetheless sought to challenge the idea that this was necessarily coerced or passive activity, as the quote below demonstrates.

There was one time where he was gonna stab someone but I had a knife and I wouldn't give it to him. I wouldn't give it to him… He was gonna stab this guy…Because this guy was, he was just waiting for him like, and he was just like what! Am I an idiot! You can't be talking to me like this, and they got into an argument and they started fighting. And then he was like ah, he wanted the knife, and I was like 'no' (Charlie, London, aged 17).

Both female participants had also been subjected to harassment in public, sometimes, but not always because of their associations with a particular gang, from members of other gangs. Neither of the young women admitted to having acted as initiators of violence, however. It was clear though that neither were comfortable being presented as either vulnerable or victims. This is explored further below.

This section has so far explored perceptions and experiences of collective violence. Many participants challenged dominant conceptions of gangs and sought to emphasise the positive aspects of group membership. Gang membership did nonetheless sometimes generate violence and knives were sometimes carried in anticipation of collective violence.

These only rarely turned into actual incidents of fighting between two groups. This can perhaps be explained with reference to Collin's (2009: 10) concept of 'conflict tension' that arises between adversaries that are roughly equally matched. These collective hostilities nonetheless amplified concerns about victimisation for some young people, which necessitated paying extra attention to personal safety. The *greater threat* to participants in this research, and one that seemed most readily to transition from potential violence to actual violence, was not collective fighting *per se*, but the risk of either the eruption of spontaneous violence, or of being targeted by hostile others whilst alone. These situations are described below.

Being targeted whilst alone: movement, visibility and vulnerability

Being targeted whilst alone was a significant concern for offenders. As noted already, participants displayed a range of offending histories including drug dealing, street robbery, theft, fighting and more generally anti-social behaviour. It was whilst participants were alone that they were most vulnerable to these kinds of attack, especially when outside of their own areas and in areas that were not 'owned' by any one group, particularly non-residential areas like town and city centres, which attract a broad range of young people from various areas (Collins, 2009: 13). It was clear that offenders were exposed to increased risk of being victimised in the course of their 'routine activities' (Felson, 2002; Witterbrood and Nieuwbeerta; 1999; Hallsworth, 2005 and Wikström, and Treiber, 2009, France *et al.*, 2012) and in particular as the result of an offending lifestyle. The young man quoted below were involved dealing drugs and one had also been involved in robbery.

> Yeah. It's like obviously if you go to [area] at certain times, like late night, then you're bound to meet someone with a knife wherever. And somewhere in [area] you're bound to meet someone.
> *So how do you deal with that situation?*
> Well, obviously you mean if someone came up to me with a knife?
> *Has it happened?*
> Yes...(Jonz, Yorkshire, black African, aged 16).

Participants were also exposed to lone victimisation as the result of more mundane activities. Many of the offending participants were required to travel to or through other

areas and neighbourhoods and this increased their exposure to hostile others. One participant had to travel through a hostile area to reach the Youth Offending Team office that had been assigned to work with him post-conviction. Another had been excluded from school and had to attend a school for excluded youths that required travelling through an area where he had had problems with other offenders in the past. One participant discussed the risks involved in running errands for his mum.

> …if my mum was to send me somewhere like for example to my aunty's house in Tottenham, I would think right Tottenham. What's going to happen there, I can't go them places. If my mum was to tell me oh, go [area close to home], yeah, that's cool Mum, I'll go [there]. I would just come, but if my mum was to send me places, to my aunty's house like Brixton or Tottenham or…, that big kitchen knife's got to be there because like you never know what can happen. Because them areas they are gang affiliated. (Charles, London, black British, aged 16).

The majority of participants in this research described their areas as being threatening and dangerous in some ways, but there were variations caused in part by the differences in routine activities of the young people, and in part because of their wider offending identities. The non-offending participants in the research had a relatively restricted range but felt at risk both inside and outside of their home areas. Whilst this thesis argues that offenders were subject to more extreme and frequent street violence, as noted in Chapter Three, many accounts in the press focus on the victimisation of non-offenders by offenders. Research has supported this to some extent: Hallsworth (2005), for instance, has outlined some of the ways in which non-offenders can be targeted by gangs.

> …if you see all around us there's always gangs. And then if you're by yourself, you get most of the time picked on by the gangs. (Group interview, Yorkshire, seven participants).

Most offending participants in the research demonstrated a well-developed sense of spatial risk, and a sophisticated appraisal of where and when it was safe and not safe for them to go. Research suggests that offenders are restricted in their movements as a result of their lifestyle (Anderson, 1999; Hallsworth, 2005; Squires, 2009). Crucially,

visible participation in gangs and street culture more widely, whilst presenting opportunities for enhancing status, also imposed restrictions on participants and their movements through and around the places they live. Indeed, whilst offenders were equally likely as non-offenders to describe their areas as dangerous, crucially they did not regard them as dangerous necessarily to *them*. It could be that they themselves contributed to the dangerousness of their area through reproducing the street code. In this sense, a 'security gap' was place dependent, and its experience differed for different participants.

Offending participants travelled a lot around their own areas, but they were sometimes required to travel to other areas, and moreover, often seemed to cultivate a visible 'street' presence that exposed them to greater risk of victimisation in other areas. This was often but not always the result of engagement in an offending lifestyle, but often necessitated the carrying of a knife.

> *Why did you carry a knife?*
> To protect myself…I felt a need to carry a knife because like sometimes the way I live, I come home late and I'm walking through the street late at nights like you never know what's going to happen to you...Like someone might try and rob you...So it would be useful. (Charles, London, black British, aged 16).

It was when travelling outside of their area that offending participants felt most at risk, and it was in other areas to their own that they experienced as being dangerous. It was in anticipation of visiting or passing through these areas that they would carry a knife. The offender below is expressing his relative comfort with moving around in his own area.

> To me, I see [home area] as friendly because I've been brought up in that area…It's just a comfortable area.
> *And are there any places you feel uncomfortable outside of [home area]?*
> Like [nearby area] and [nearby area] and that.
> *Why do you feel uncomfortable in those places?*
> Because it's not my area is it…if I'm going through them areas then obviously it's just you need to watch your back and that…one of my

mates one time he got rushed up…He got beat up by about 12 people and he was on his own…Some places I don't like going through them. Well, I don't mind going through, it's just the fact of not feeling safe…(Gary, Yorkshire, black British, aged 15).

As noted already, dressing on-road could act as a signal to other offenders. Indeed, an offending lifestyle encompasses not just offending, but extended to the use of specific bodily and verbal expressions, modes of communication and even the wearing of particular clothing. As one participant described it:

…what do you describe as dressing 'on road'?
Like wearing tracksuit bottoms, wearing all black, all hoody up all the time. Or wearing like just the main designs like Nike, all black, all grey Nike, navy blue Nike. (Charles, London, black British, aged 16).

This self-presentation is part of the ongoing negotiation of 'respect' through 'daily interactions' (Sandberg, 2008: 157) and is characterised by a low tolerance for disrespectful behaviour and a propensity to use violence in response to relatively minor slights. Whilst, as noted above, offenders did sometimes target non-offenders, a principal theme of this thesis is that offenders themselves are more likely to be victims of violence than non-offenders. Indeed, dressing 'on road' presented risks as it attracted the attention of hostile others, especially others who are on road, and seeking to enhance their own status at the expense of other offenders.

Did it ever come in useful having your knife?
Yeah. Because I thought like, there was the way I would dress was like the road innit. So it would be attention seeking to other gang members which will try approaching me, which means I would need to use a knife or not use a knife or need to have a knife with me. Whereas right now, as I'm not that much road and like I wear my clothes differently, that it's not really attracting other gang members. (Dan, Yorkshire, aged 17).

Sometimes participants carried a knife out of fear of victimisation that was related to specific aspects of conflict with known others. At other times, it was from strangers who

themselves were street oriented. In either case, they were often victimised as a result of their own demeanour and self-presentation.

> It started with a look…Him to my friend. And then my friend started the problem and then I got involved, he tried to take my hat. I wasn't having that, I punched him in the face.   But it's just things like that, and sometimes you get approached by other people.   They'll just be like oh this and that, where are you from blah blah blah.   I like this and that. What phone do you have blah blah. But it all depends, if you've got bad luck, that kind of stuff will happen to you but it can happen…that's the road. (Merlin, London, aged 16).

It was noted above that there did appear to be stronger links between ethnicity and gang membership. There were also clear associations between ethnicity and gang membership, at least in the minds of some of the participants. As the interviewee below noted, ethnicity played a role in his concerns about being victimised, and directly influenced his decisions around knife carrying:

> This area's a bit dodgy because around the corner is [area]… black boys, try to rob me. (Merlin, London, aged 16).

Similarly, as alluded to above, the two female participants in the interviewees had both experienced harassment whilst alone. One of the young women had not been an offender at the time she carried a knife, and had been subjected to violence from a group of girls at her school.

> I have experience of having been threatened with a knife, on a few occasions. [on one occasion] this group of girls come up to me and was like give me a £1 and I said no I'm not giving you £1. But these times I was more like a quiet shy person and then one of the girls said if you don't give me £1 will stab you. (Charlie, London, aged 17).

The other had been harassed by males from a gang that had conflict with the gang associated with the area in which she lived.

> There was another gang in [area] which is not far from [area], and they asked for my number and I said I'm not gonna give you my number. And then after that, he was like oh you're from [area], why are you in this area for?…And then he was like alright, cool, I should stab you because you're in the wrong area…(Jacky, London, aged 16).

These kinds of experiences had led to her carrying a knife:

> I've carried a knife before but I wasn't gonna use it. It was just for protection or if I was intending to use it, it would have been like to show so the person would get scared. I would never, I wouldn't – I don't think – I don't have it in me to do something to someone. (Jacky, London, aged 16).

Miller (2001) has discussed the different roles that young women can play in a gang. Rather than simply take on passive roles, she has argued that some young women attempt to exercise violence or the threat of violence as a masculine resource in the absence of alternate resources. The young women cited directly above seems to support this idea:

> So that was only like back in the days when I was younger, but that's when I was in lots of trouble. It's not a thing where I had to but I thought I might as well because I'm always getting confronted by boys and I think I was like a boy as well because I my mentality was kind of like a boy's. So I think I kind of attracted the wrong attention. (Jacky, London, aged 16).

As demonstrated above, however, it was not just the *fear* of *violence* that motivated offending young people to carry a knife. It was fear of becoming a *victim,* and in line with some of the precepts of a violent street code, highlighted above, many young people felt compelled to respond to violence or provocation with violence. To retreat would be to invite worse punishment, or indeed, to take on a victim identity (Anderson, 1999). This was particularly the case when it came to being robbed or 'taxed'. The issue of robbery was identified in Chapter Two as something which potentially drives knife carrying among young people. Hallsworth (2005) has referred to the increases in street robbery and

highlights the use of robbery in gang initiation rituals. Hallsworth found that young people in gangs felt under increasing pressure to participate in such activities. In this sense, street robbery was used as an extension of bullying aimed at humiliating and intimidating members of other gangs. The empirical research for the current study found that knives *were* sometimes used to commit robbery. There was some evidence of robbery being used to humiliate, although this was not always explicit. Some participants talked about being 'tested' for instance. Failing such a test might involve being forced to hand over goods, or showing fear, or being physically harmed.

…are there people out there who don't rob but still get robbed?
It depends on who you are innit.
And is that all about how you present?
Yeah, basically. I don't know how to explain it. If you're small and that, you could look vulnerable but in some situations you can get robbed but sometimes you can't. If you're a big guy, you're likely to get robbed as well because people will test you out innit. My cousin's a big guy, this guy's about - 6 ft 2, he's my age but he's got facial hair and he looks like a big man, he gets moved… and he's had knives to his face.   We were going home…on the bus, [this lad] put a knife to him…where are you from, this and that…I think it's just luck as well, just depends on the person because I don't really get robbed like that. I've never been proper robbed. I can't say I've handed over my stuff or they've taken it off me. But I've been asked questions but never taken, never violated like that. (Merlin, London, aged 16).

Knives then were shown to be useful. Carrying a knife in the contexts described above provided an increased sense of confidence which allowed offenders to go about their lives. Sometimes this was simply a sense or perception of increased security. At the same time, the usefulness of a knife for self-defence in these contexts has been observed in the literature on knives (Marfleet, 2008; Brennan and Moore, 2009). Marfleet (2008: 35) refers to it as the 'fear and victimisation' hypothesis, and in her research found a strong positive correlation between weapon carrying and feelings of fear and vulnerability or what is called in this these a 'security gap'. Marfleet (2008: 36) describes a 'temporal order', where prior experience of victimisation or fear of victimisation precedes the decision to carry a weapon, and in which the assumption that others are carrying a knife is an

important link in the decision-making process. She goes onto describe a 'feedback loop' whereby victimisation leads to weapon carrying, which leads to a reduction in victimisation (Marfleet, 2008: 36). In effect, carrying a knife can help to bridge or close a 'security gap'. The effects of this are illustrated in the quote below.

> Well it's happened... They've come running towards me…and obviously I had to pull out the knife and I'm waving it about saying if you don't go away from me…it's not fair. I ain't done 'owt wrong, you're just chasing me through this park for no reason. And they all just walked off because I had a knife in me hand and they knew they couldn't do 'owt. If I wouldn't have had a weapon, I'd have probably got beat up, I probably wouldn't be here today. But that's the things that go on in life. (Ben, white British, aged 16).

When knife carrying became habitual however, the empirical data collected for this thesis suggest that the 'opportunity related benefits' (Marfleet, 2008: 32) of knife carrying were more likely to be realised. That is, a knife was more likely to be used for purposes that went beyond simple protection. A small proportion of participants admitted to having used a knife to rob others (it is possible that others had also done so but were reluctant to discuss it – see discussion in Chapter Four). Four participants talked about committing robbery, and three of these had been convicted of this offence. In all four cases an attraction of the knife was that it was seen to make a robbery easier and increased compliance and this is illustrated below. In this sense a knife, even used offensively, was used to reduce the need to engage in violence and therefore reduced the risk of physical harm.

> Stanley knife...I just thought it would make [robbery] a little easier.
> In what way would it make it easier?
> Just there would be no problem, no scuffling or anything, just instant. (Shyboy, Yorkshire, white, aged 16).

Only one participant claimed to have carried a knife with the express intention of using it to commit robbery. According to his account, this had been the first and only time he had carried a knife and he had acted in a 'moment of madness', during a family crisis, in order

to get some money. For the others, there was also ostensibly a financial incentive. One of the participants had committed multiple robberies:

> I've done robbery with a knife before, yeah…Well, robbery with a knife was to help me get money. If I was to do a robbery, like nowadays, when I would do a robbery I would have to use a knife because like, if you was to do a robbery without a knife, then like you would get into a fight, which means screaming is happening. And then other people, other civilians are aware and then the police come. So obviously, robbery with a knife is like, it's basically knife to the face, shut up, don't speak and give me all your goods. Make things quick. (Charles, London, black British, aged 16).

The use of a knife to rob however might be more complex than it at first appears, and may even be related to a search for security. Whilst the kinds of experiences described above could be humiliating, this was not necessarily the ultimate objective. Offending generally and robbery specifically appeared rather as a form of what Barry, (2006: 14) has called 'misguided instrumentality', and again this can been seen as a misguided attempt to bridge the 'security gap'. Indeed, the other three participants who admitted to committing robbery with a knife maintained that this was not the principal reason for carrying a knife - this had been self-defence. Importantly, their knife carrying had preceded their use of a knife in a robbery. Three of the four who had committed robbery also described having been robbed themselves. This could indicate a direct causal link between the two. One was unequivocal, the experience of being robbed was a direct influence on his own decision to commit robbery.

The implications of habitual carrying, and of getting caught, are discussed further in the next chapter. This section has explored participants' perceptions of space and place as defined in Chapter Three. It is argued that engagement in 'street life' prompts an increase in the threat of victimisation and that knife carrying is one response to it. This is somewhat paradoxical, the idea of a 'security gap' was reiterated at the beginning of the chapter – if offending can be seen as a response to this, the findings described above suggest that offending also considerably worsened this gap. A knife can facilitate greater geographical

movement for young people who feel that their movement is restricted by the presence of hostile others, and provides an increased sense of confidence for those who are exposed to victimisation because of membership of gangs and engagement in 'street life'. This suggests that the knife provides a resource for dealing not just with the threat of victimisation, but also with feelings of anxiety associated with the threat of victimisation. This section has unpacked this notion of 'self-defence', and it is argued that what many participants meant by self-defence was not simply a passive response to the threat of victimisation, but rather was a more pro-active attempt to facilitate greater freedom of movement in a complex and hostile social environment. Sometimes a knife was used to commit robbery, but the data suggest that this was generally a secondary consideration or a 'benefit' that became apparent once a knife has already been carried. Carrying a knife also increased the chances of participants getting into trouble with the police. The next section explores alternative sources of protection and support available to participants, and argues that engagement in offending not only exposes individuals to increased threat of victimisation, but also erodes other sources of support, thereby further increasing their likelihood of being victimised.

The erosion of alternative sources of support and protection

This final section examines the alternative sources of support and protection that existed for participants in the interviews. The majority of participants in this research were offenders, and their knife carrying was, according to their own accounts, conducted within the context of an offending lifestyle. Given that the majority of participants had been caught for carrying a knife, and/or convicted for other crimes, it is reasonable to assume that this would have had some negative consequences for their ongoing relations with informal and formal regulatory orders (McAra and McVie, 2012). Indeed, both the offending and non-offending knife carriers in this research expressed significant problems managing relations with agents of regulation and could be said to have experienced 'integrational difficulties' more broadly. This was especially pronounced for the offending participants however, and had negative consequences for those seeking support or protection when faced with victimisation. Two issues emerged as problematic:

antagonistic relations with the police, and a lack of support, or unwillingness to seek support from, parents and teachers. Research has consistently highlighted these issues (Bannister *et al.*, 2012; Marfleet, 2008; Aldridge and Medina, 2007; Eades *et al.*, 2007). In Marfleet's (2008: 61) focus groups, for instance, participants expressed a 'unanimous lack of faith in parental and police capacity to protect them among participants taking part in her focus groups. This thesis links these problems directly to the decision to carry a knife. This is especially at a time when young people are moving away from close relationships with their family and were spending more time with peers. These issues are explored in turn below.

Confiding in parents and teachers

Chapters Two and Three explored the literature on gangs and found that young people joined gangs for many reasons, including support, protection and companionship. Some research has shown that gang membership is in part a response to problems within families and issues around parenting (Sampson, 1993). Most participants did not describe neglectful or inadequate parenting, and some described positive relationships with significant adults, including parents, siblings and teachers. Nonetheless, some participants described ongoing difficulties with parents and some had been formally excluded from the school environment. Some participants simply had families that were not able to offer the kinds of protection they needed: research has, for example, highlighted the risks of victimisation posed to children of single mothers (see for instance Wikström and Loeber, 2000). Several participants lived with their mother only: one young man had seen both his father and older brother sent to prison; another lived with his grandmother.

Some participants stated that they were less able to discuss these matters since they had become offenders. This had led to a worsening of relationships with supportive adults and, as is explored in the next chapter, engendered significant feelings of shame and guilt. Poor relations with parents might have prompted offending in the first place, but also subsequently meant that young people could not fall back on parents for support when

their offending escalated (McNeill *et al.*, 2012). It was not that parents and teachers necessarily abandoned or rejected participants. Several participants said that they would not share fears or experiences of victimisation with their parents, articulating this in different ways. For some, it was about avoiding getting into trouble, for others, there was a sense of not wanting to burden their families.

> *Have you talked to [your parents]?*
> No, I'd rather just keep it to myself, I don't want to stress my parents out. Say if I had a problem with someone on the street and that, I wouldn't go running to my mum and ask for advice and that, I'd rather just deal with it myself. (Gary, Yorkshire, black British, aged 15).

Regardless of their home life, the majority of offenders regarded significant adults as only being able to provide at best limited support. Some did go to their family, but had not received the help they felt they needed. For example, in the dialogue below, the young man had been repeatedly victimised by an older boy at his school for several years. He had approached his family prior to the incident that led to him carrying a knife into school.

> I've got an older brother…I told him to come down because he's quite familiar with their family...I told him to come down instead of leaving violence for the answer. But he said he couldn't come because he had work that day. So when I was having my breakfast, I looked in my cutlery drawer and I saw the knife was there. I picked it up, I wrapped it around in a cloth and I put it in my bag. (Rav, London, British Asian, aged 16).

If parents were not regarded as able to offer protection, neither were teachers regarded as allies or as effective sources of protection.

> Because teachers, it's something I wouldn't want to discuss with teachers and stuff like that…Because I just think it doesn't comply with the whole school thing and I don't like expressing my feelings, I'd rather just keep it to myself and get on with it. (J.D. London, black British, 17).

The difficulties that parents face in these circumstances are understandable when much of the violence young people experienced occurred on the street or at school. It is arguably the responsibility of teachers to prevent violence in schools. When considering violence on the street however, the police are the most obvious agency with responsibility for protecting young people. However, if parents and teachers sometimes proved inadequate, the police were generally perceived by participants as a *source* of victimisation rather than a solution to problems of violence and victimisation. This is explored in the final sub-section below.

Relationships with the police: the "biggest gang"

For many whose lifestyle brought them into regular contact with the police, the sense of threat or 'security gap' described above was exacerbated by a sense, often borne of experience, that they are 'outside of the law' and therefore also outside of the protection of the law. These feelings were reinforced by long running and mutually antagonistic relations with the police. About half of the offending participants had experienced what they felt to be unwarranted harassment by the police, and four described more serious forms of abuse, including verbal abuse and physical assault. This is not necessarily surprising, as Reiner (2010: 274) has stated, offenders, the poor and other groups who are regarded as 'police property', have 'always borne the brunt of coercive policing'. It nonetheless has significant implications for young people's perceptions of the police. Indeed, learning to negotiate relationships with the police was regarded as crucial part of daily negotiations of space and safety.

> I don't personally like the police but it's just one of them things where you have to like them. Well you don't have to like them, you've just got to find a way to work around…It's like the biggest gang in the world isn't it….The times I've been arrested and that, the police can sometimes be stupid and that like try and throw you about…Like if they see me on the street they'll just try and pick and pick and pick at me just to make me say something to them so I can get arrested and that. But now that I've got older, and obviously I've learnt how to react to the police and that. (Gary, Yorkshire, black British, aged 15).

These sorts of sentiments also had direct consequences for young people's sense of a 'security gap'. As a result of this antagonism very few participants said that they would approach the police if they were threatened or had been victimised. Marfleet (2008: 81) has argued that this is responsible for at least some young people seeking illegitimate ways of protecting themselves and suggest that this might indicate an important 'causal link' in the decision to carry a knife. Similarly, Eades *et al.*, (2007) link these problems to higher rates of excluded young people carrying weapons, suggesting that it is these groups that have the least trust in either police or parents.

> …if anything happened to do with me, just me personally, I wouldn't go to the police you know what I'm saying? (Tony, London, black British, aged 17).

According to many participants in this study, the police were not considered to have any interest in protecting young people, and repeated negative interactions had driven this point home – young people who had themselves offended, sometimes violently, could not turn to the law when they themselves were being victimised. To do so would invite mockery and possibly further harassment, and it was safer to depend on one's own capacities, as the participant below describes.

> *Would you ever go to the police, like when this lad was gonna beat you up?*
> I'm not really the person to talk to the police to be honest because I'm not liked by the police…Because of my crimes really. Burglary… they'd love to hear me ring up, they'd love to come round to me house because they'd just probably take the piss out of me.
> Do you not think though they still have that duty to protect you?
> They've got their job to do but it would be a laugh for them, they'd love to laugh about that. In my eyes they would, the coppers that I know and I've experienced, I know they would love to laugh at something like that.
> *… so when you've got problems*
> Myself, I sort my problems out myself. (Lenny, Yorkshire, white British, aged 17).

Most offending participants who had offended acknowledged the legitimacy of the police and recognised their right and responsibility to prevent them from offending. They also demonstrated some understanding of the particular demands placed on the police, and some regarded individual police officers as helpful and approachable. The irony that participants might sometimes depend on the police was not lost on participants. What many of them objected to however, and regarded as most definitely not legitimate, was the kind of treatment described below.

> *And what's your relationship with the police?*
> Back then it was terrible you know what I mean, back then…like they will arrest me, put me in a van and then they will start trying to beat me up. I haven't done nothing wrong, alright, fair enough, I was carrying a knife. You caught me, take me to the police station safely. Why you have to physically try hitting me and stuff like that? (Tony, London, black British, aged 17).

It was not just 'offending' *per se* that caused problems with the police, but the ways in which the police appeared to label participants as troublesome or assigned them an 'outlaw' status. This labelling behaviour was regarded by participants as ultimately counter-productive, and for one at least had actually directly prompted his offending and his knife carrying. Several participants attributed their treatment by the police to racism, others to discrimination on the grounds of class or the area in which they lived. The young man quoted above claimed to have been beaten up by the police and linked this to his reasons for starting to commit robbery. This individual had been apprehended by police for possession of a knife on a number of occasions. The young man felt that he had been persecuted on account of his ethnicity.

> So when I started robbing, I wasn't robbing people my colour, I was robbing fully white people. And that was the thing I had against white policemen you know what I mean? (Tony, London, black British, aged 17).

It was more likely though that participants attributed any differential treatment they received to their membership or *perceived* membership of a gang. In the latter case participants felt that they might be perceived to be a member of a gang because of where they lived, rather than because of their ethnicity. Several gang members *had* gone to the police, usually as a consequence of being very badly injured. One had been stabbed in in a busy public area and had gone to the police only to be arrested (initially) for causing affray. Another had been stabbed and hospitalised. His mother convinced him to report it to the police. The police, by his account, were nonplussed because of the history of gang related violence in the area in which he lived.

> My mum persuaded me to go to them, I went to them one time, the one time (interviewee's emphasis) I went to the police…when I was stabbed the way the police saw it…As soon as they heard that it was [a well know trouble spot for gangs], they labelled me as a gang member. Straight away they walked into the house and said how many people done it? I said so and so many people done it from that gang. They goes ok so you're gang affiliated da de dah. And they all kind of looked at each other - as if its gang affiliated or whatever isn't it. So they didn't really care. But if it was just a normal person on the…with a nice normal nine to five job or what not, that got stabbed, they'd have taken it a lot more serious. But they looked at me as a youth that's been stabbed, he's affiliated with gangs, what can we really do sort of thing…And it doesn't make me feel safe, it doesn't actually. (J.D. London, black British, aged 17).

It has been argued in this chapter that a knife provides a sense of security for young people faced with violent victimisation. This section has considered alternative sources of security and has found that these were on the whole lacking for participants, and that this absence contributed to the decision to carry a knife. Whilst parents and teachers were regarded often as well-meaning but inadequate however, the police were very much regarded as part of the problem. Indeed, the findings cited above suggest that perceptions of the police constitute, and on occasion directly informed the decision to carry a knife, even if this was not the principal cause. The way the police responded to participants, and the way participants responded to the police, can be conceptualised as mutually reinforcing and almost entirely negative. The police not only failed to protect participants, or to respond appropriately on the occasions that participants approached them for

assistance, but they actually reinforced many participants' sense of being outside of the law, exacerbating their sense of exposure to victimisation and increasing the likelihood that they would carry a knife. The kinds of experiences highlighted above also have important implications of the legitimacy of anti-knife carrying messages, as is considered in more detail in the next chapter.

Discussion: street life and the 'security gap'

This chapter has explored the experiences of violence described by the young people who took part in the study, and has examined in some detail the complexity of these experiences. The chapter confirms the argument advanced in Chapter Three that 'street life' and knife carrying are related, but illustrates the complexity of this relationship: knives are not necessarily endorsed, but rather are employed as a resource to facilitate movement in the context of a 'security gap'. It was argued in Chapter Three that offending generally and collective offending specifically can be seen as a response to the existence of a violent street code. It is argued here that what many participants in the interviews for this thesis described what can be conceived of as a 'security gap' that emerged from a complex of factors related directly and indirectly to age, experiences of violence and relations with formal and informal regulatory orders. The findings described in this chapter suggest that the carrying of a knife was both a response to this 'security gap', but at the same time could significantly worsen this gap for participants, exposing them to greater violence and the erosion of supportive relationships.

The findings described in this chapter have established the importance of an 'offending lifestyle' as both a major escalator of risk for participants and also as an important crucible in which adolescent 'outlaw' identities are formed. In this sense 'delinquency' can be seen as a 'cause of a cause' (Wikström and Treiber, 2009: 78). This suggests a non-linear relationship between offending and knife carrying and the influence of other variables. This is in line with research that suggests variable links between knives and gangs (Bannister *et al.*, 2010). Not all offenders carry a knife (even if they all did in this research)

and not all knife carriers are offenders. Offending was, for many participants, part of a multi-dimensional response to 'street life' which comprised pervasive violence, a violent street code and engagement with a normative framework favourable to the use of violence. For the offending group, knife carrying was done on the whole with competence and was rewarded with some success, in the context of engagement with violent 'street life'. Their knife carrying was more strategic, more prolonged and therefore had greater potential for causing serious harm. For those who were bullied, the carrying of a knife represented an attempt to resist bullying directly in the absence of any power to affect change in their wider environment. Those who were offending could be said to be equally powerless in a structural sense, and demonstrated this in the interviews, with one exception: some at least possessed a capacity for violence *and* expressed a willingness to engage in violence.

Participants did on some occasions demonstrate that they were prepared to engage with the police, but were often disappointed. Indeed, relationships with regulatory orders were overwhelmingly negative, and antagonistic relations between participants and the police were shown to actively contribute to many of the problems considered in this thesis – not only did they significantly exacerbate participants sense of alienation and consequent insecurity, but it can be argued that they helped to solidify an 'outlaw' or street identity. In the absence of formal sources of support and protection and, in the context of negative relationships with the police, participants often felt that they had no option but to rely on their own resources, including seeking the collective support of offending peers, and sometimes carrying a weapon. These behaviours further exposed them to violence and led to an erosion of already difficult relationships with formal and informal regulatory orders, especially the police but also teachers and parents, again increasing young people's sense of insecurity and the consequent 'security gap'.

The findings also support the assertion that a subculture of knives is not a fitting explanation for knife carrying (Firmin, *et al.*, 2007; Hallsworth and Silverstone, 2009) rather, a subculture of violence exists in which weapons are a form of currency. This is

185

an important point because it challenges the notion of a subculture of knives that is sometimes articulated, especially by policy makers. The findings here suggest rather that there was less a subculture of knife carrying than there is a collective and widespread *awareness* of knives as a potential response to collective violence, and where they are widely accessible. Neither was there significant evidence of peer pressure to carry knives, with the exception of one of the young women's accounts. She nonetheless challenged the notion that she had been pressured into this. The other young women, who had experienced significant violence, demonstrated a capacity to respond to violence that suggested neither passivity nor vulnerability. Neither was there evidence of pressure to engage in the kinds of activities Hallsworth (2008) described with reference to street robbery. Rather, the pressure came from engagement with a violent street code.

Conclusion

This chapter has developed the concept of a 'security gap' as a means of understanding participants' pathways into knife carrying. Carrying a knife can be seen as a response to insecurity that for many participants was bound up in an offending lifestyle and 'street life'. For offenders, the carrying of a knife could actually 'work' in that it reduced anxiety about the risks of being targeted whilst alone and facilitated greater movement. For non-offenders, their carrying was generally less successful. In both cases then the duration and frequency of knife carrying was determined how usefully and successfully a knife was carried, at least in the short term. In the longer term, however, for both offenders and non-offenders, the carrying of a knife increasingly became a liability: not only did carrying a knife expose them in some cases to greater risk. It also had significant implications for relations with, among others parents, and the police. Indeed, the decision to carry a knife for many of the interview participants put them on a trajectory that led to arrest, prosecution and in some cases prison. These experiences ultimately led to desistence from carrying a knife, and for some, desistence from offending more broadly. This is explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Pathways out of knife carrying

Getting caught, growing up and disengaging with street life

> Yes, it's changed now. I mean it's like, I still live in the same area but where you've grown up and the people have grown up as well, you tend to detach yourself from the people that got you in trouble before. Like I've been in trouble, I've been in prison as well so I think that helped me realise I can't be doing certain things any more. And with having a baby, it's like I've grown up a lot as well. And I think it's better that I went through them experiences then because now I know – like it's not the way forward. But I think once you've been in certain situations, unless you're an idiot and you don't wake up to things, you're gonna wake up because it affects your family as well…So it was kind of a shock for me … (Jacky, London, aged 16).

The quote presented on the previous page was selected as an exemplar to illustrate many of the points made in this chapter. The research participant's comments describe a process of change that they have gone through which involved both incarceration and changes to their life situation. Many participations in the research, though still very young, reflected on their experiences as someone who was much older and wiser than they had been.

Introduction

This chapter explores and describes the data from the interviews as they relate principally to matters of prevention, deterrence and desistence. A principal aim is to give a sense of the processes that led the young people who admitted to having carried a knife to stop carrying a knife, and the reasons they articulated for this desistence. The chapter is in two sections. The first section describes the overall trajectories of offending and knife carrying for participants. Attention is paid to desistence from carrying, and desistence from offending more broadly, and, to the failure of deterrent approaches to knife carrying. The second section describes two mechanisms of desistence that emerged from the data: the first, the impact of getting caught; the second, a more complex set of processes referred to here as 'growing up', which among other things involved the formation of new social bonds, the development of new identities and for many, a disengagement with 'street life'. These all had implications for knife carrying behaviour.

This chapter returns to the idea developed in the previous chapter, that knife carriers could broadly be divided into two groups. The first group could be categorised as 'street' oriented and engaged in an offending lifestyle at the time they started to carry a knife. The second group could be categorised as not street-oriented and not engaged in an offending lifestyle, even if some of them had been caught and in some cases convicted of carrying a knife. The foundation of the chapter is that desistence from carrying a knife for the majority of participants was promoted and supported by a reduction in engagement in an offending lifestyle and 'street life' more broadly, with its attendance codes and

pressures (Anderson, 1999). These both prompted and were supported by a closing of the 'security gap' that was introduced in the previous chapter. This came about partly as a result of formal punishment, and partly through participants' own agency. 'Agency' here is defined as a young person's self-determination, actions and thought processes as they seek to change. The mechanisms outlined above and the various processes involved were mutually supportive, rather than necessarily linear and sequential, and involved changes in the individual's routine activities and lifestyle more generally. These changes were accompanied by changes in how young people viewed themselves and the possibilities for their future. Consequence of these changes included a reduction in experiences of victimisation and concerns about victimisation; the development of, or a return to, supportive relationships and a different normative framework – and, as already stated, a closing of the 'security gap' The first section below explores general trajectories out of or away from carrying a knife.

Trajectories of desistence

This section explores the general trajectories of knife carrying described by participants. The majority of participants claimed to have stopped carrying a knife completely, and a smaller group claimed to have reduced their knife carrying significantly. The intention of this chapter is not to suggest complete cessation from knife carrying however, but given the data introduced in Chapter Two which show that knife carrying peaks at around the age of 16, it is reasonable to assume that most had at the least reduced it (Bottoms *et al.,* 2004). As considered in Chapter Four, whilst there was little chance to build trust with participants ahead of the interviews, with possible consequences for issues of truth, their honesty about other aspects of their lives does lend some plausibility to their claims. As noted in Chapter Three, the 'age-crime' curve was found to be a major predictor of desistence (Farrington, 1986: 189; Glueck and Glueck, 1937; Sampson and Laub, 1992). As yet however the exact relationship between age and crime has not been adequately explained and explanations have drawn on the role of biological maturation (Sampson and Laub, 1992), self-determination (Clarke and Cornish, 1986; Mofitt, 1993) and the impact of social relationships (Mofitt, 1993; Sampson and Laub, 1993).

An issue of particular significance for the research objectives, was the relationship between desistence in knife carrying and desistence from offending more broadly. The previous chapter explored the empirical data relating to the onset of knife carrying and showed that an offending lifestyle and engagement in 'street life' more broadly appears to have preceded and indeed prompted knife carrying for the majority of participants. This was rooted in the heightened risk of victimisation and the increased severity of violence that were attendant to an offending lifestyle. Given this relationship it might be assumed that desistence from knife carrying would follow desistence from offending more broadly. In fact, the opposite seemed to be the case for most of participants, and desistence from carrying a knife preceded desistence from offending. The majority of offenders claimed to have either stopped offending altogether or to be fairly advanced in the process of reducing their level of offending. As already stated, three participants were open about the fact that they were still engaging in an offending lifestyle, several of whom seemed to be advancing to more serious forms of offending. Three had ostensibly not offended other than receiving a conviction for carrying a knife and a further three did not offend and did not have a criminal record.

The previous chapter also suggested a non-linear relationship between knife carrying and offending, in the sense that whilst offending tended to precede knife carrying, there was not a clear progression through different stages of offending which led to knife carrying. There was though a more obviously linear progression from desisting in knife carrying to desisting in offending. This was often prompted by experiences of, or within, the criminal justice system, especially being caught for carrying or having used a knife. Getting caught was an important 'turning point' (McNeill *et al.*, 2012: 4) in the decision to stop carrying a knife, but this was as much about young people's own agency and desire to change as it was about particular configurations of risk factors. Indeed, despite the fact that some of those who got caught for carrying a knife continued to offend, they often did so without a knife as a way of minimising risk, and where they continued carrying a knife, they did so less frequently. The data also suggest a link between desistence from carrying a knife and desistence from offending. There was a significant role for the criminal justice in the

desistence process. As explored further below, this suggests that punitive responses to knife carrying do have some suppressive effects, even if they raise questions about the welfare of young people. If being apprehended had an impact however, this suggests that prior to getting caught the threat of punitive sanctions had not been sufficient to deter participants from carrying a knife. This is explored below.

The failure of deterrent approaches

This sub-section explores the impact of efforts to deter young people from carrying a knife. Chapter Two described governmental attempts to control the 'demand side' of knife carrying (Brennan and Moore, 2009; Eades *et al.*, 2007), principally because the supply side was difficult to police, given the ubiquity of knives. These included significant efforts to deter people from carrying a knife through legal means, that is, by increasing both the chances of being apprehended and the punishment for being caught, alongside efforts to highlight the risks of carrying a knife. The participants in the study who had carried knives had not on the whole been deterred. Three obstacles or processes emerged from this study as central to understanding why young people pressed ahead with carrying knives in the face of formal sanctions and more general disapproval. The first obstacle, as explored in the previous chapter, was the fact that for many of the participants, knife carrying 'worked', in that it helped them to either resist victimisation directly, or to feel less anxious about the threat of victimisation whilst going about their daily lives. The second obstacle to deterrence was that fact that many of the young people who took part in the interviews did not consider that they had viable alternatives. As described in the previous chapters, some of the young people had actively sought assistance from the police or their families, and had been disappointed. Indeed, the majority of participants were deeply alienated from the police and the criminal justice system more broadly.

The third obstacle to deterrence was that many of the young people who took part in the interviews simply did not think that they would be caught, or, decided that it was worth the risk. Chapter Three introduced theories of deterrence and suggested various reasons why deterrent approaches might *not work*, including the fact that people often under-

estimate the risk of getting caught, and are often also ignorant of the consequences of getting caught. The majority of participants displayed some knowledge of the legal consequences of carrying a knife, and most, when asked, could estimate roughly what the sentence was for possession of a knife, and several made reference to relatively recent changes to the law. This is not surprising given the investment made in raising awareness of the penalties associated with knife carrying, and there have been several well publicised amendments to the laws on knife carrying (Berman, 2012). That participants had been engaged in knife carrying makes it more likely that they would pay attention to these matters. Moreover, significant coverage in the media might suggest higher levels of knowledge of the punishment for carrying a knife than other crimes that have received less attention.

> I think people are carrying [knives] less…Because sentences are a lot stricter now for stuff like that. Knife crime [you get up to] three years. (Lenny, Yorkshire, white British, aged 17).

The behaviour described above must be considered in the context of a violent street code in which the need to prevent or resist victimisation outweighed the risks of being caught by the police. For adolescents, especially, 'proximal' concerns have been shown to outweigh more distant concerns when it comes to knife carrying (Marfleet, 2008). As a number of authors have argued, (Marfleet, 2008; Fagan and Wilkinson, 2000; Silvestri *et al.*, 2009; Eades *et al.*, 2007) young people frequently demonstrate 'myopia' (Brennan and Moore, 2009: 218) when it comes to the law. Marfleet (2008: 14) has further argued that children are 'by definition immature' and that those who carry weapons are 'arguably the most immature of all'. She goes on to describe the implications of this immaturity for violence – that an immediate fear of violence and the need to retaliate may override 'distant' concerns with legal procedure (Marfleet, 2008: 15).

> *When you were carrying the knife did it cross your mind that you might end up hurting somebody? Or that you might get arrested?*
> I didn't think about it because it was when I had the knife in my bag, I felt safe, I thought that nothing could harm me. That was like the main feeling

that I had, but there was other feelings where I kept looking back like I was paranoid, they could be anywhere type of [thing]
The people you were worried about or the police or both?
No, just them boys. I wasn't thinking about the police at the time, for some stupid reason. (Rav, London, British Asian, aged 16).

As was described in the previous chapter, not only were the majority of the young people who took part in the interviews deeply alienated from the police, but for over half of the sample, being pursued by the police was an occupational hazard, and a frequent occurrence. If 'familiarity breeds contempt' these experiences in themselves could be seen to reduce the fear of getting caught.

Most of the time back in those days, I didn't think about the police. They didn't scare me at all…once I got arrested the first time I was like is this it? But like sometimes, in the back of your head you think everyone that has carried a knife…they probably think well, if I stopped and I haven't done anything to anyone, then I'm still gonna get in trouble. (Jacky, London, aged 16).

If punitive sanctions sought to increase the legal risks of getting caught, there have also been significant efforts to educate young people as to the moral, psychological and physical dangers of carrying a knife. As described in Chapter Two, preventative education has formed a significant plank of governmental approaches to preventing knife carrying, and this has included primary schemes such as social media campaigns, secondary schemes such as Police and Community Safety workshops in schools and youth groups, and tertiary schemes that worked with offenders and ex-offenders. Most participants had received some kind of preventative education, for the majority this took the form of a police officer visiting the school. Most were quite scathing about these.

The police knife crime stuff, that does not work at all, that's one thing. I've seen this knife awareness, weapon awareness course, seen it like, six times now. That same Panorama show thing that they made in 2001 or something, it just does not work. It just goes in one ear and out the other. Weapon awareness, it's a waste of time. It's just not effective. To be honest, if I see it, I'd probably just laugh at it now... (Bean, London, black British, aged 17).

It was not then simply a lack of awareness that presented a barrier to deterrence, or a focus on more immediate concerns at the expense of longer term issues. What the quote above suggests, as do many similar comments made by participants, is that the *medium* is as important as the message. The police have already been shown to have very limited legitimacy for offending young people. It is unlikely, in this context, that police warnings about knife crime will have significant impact. Nonetheless, despite the failure of preventative messages, or perhaps because of the fact that many participants did not expect to be caught, the threat of sanctions became considerably more 'proximal' after the young person had been caught, as did the impact of deterrents on future conduct. These issues are considered in the next section below, which describes the empirical findings with reference to mechanisms of desistence.

Mechanisms of desistence

This section describes two mechanisms of desistence that emerged from the data. Punitive sanctions that were applied as a consequence of getting caught either for a knife related crime or another offence, and the continued threat of sanctions, served as one mechanism of desistence. The second mechanism was a more complex set of processes, referred to here as 'growing up'. This includes the development of new relationships and a move towards greater social integration generally, and a disengagement with offending peers. This was allied to a wider 'cognitive re-orientation' (Bottoms *et al.*, 2004: 356) or identity change, embraced to different degrees by many of the participants, and a more general disengagement with offending, 'street life', and, knife carrying. These are considered in turn below.

Getting caught

As argued above, deterrent approaches had clearly failed to prevent the young people who took part in the research from first carrying a knife. Many participants did not think that they would get caught, some also questioned the legitimacy of the law in the context of ongoing risks of victimisation and a lack of adequate protection, especially where the need to feel safe outweighed more distant concerns. The impact of getting caught

carrying a knife was nonetheless a significant factor in both desistence from, and a reduction in, incidences of carrying a knife. The majority of interview participants (17 out of 23) *had* been caught either carrying or using a knife, or had been apprehended after the fact. Of these, <u>ten</u> had been caught in possession of a knife, without it being related to any other offence. This was principally the result of random searches at school or on the street. One participant, for example, had simply been on the street with a group of friends and had been approached by the police. He had tried to hide the knife in some bushes but the police had seen him doing this and had arrested him. Another participant had been reported to his teacher by a friend who was concerned for his welfare.

As noted in the previous chapter – when knife carrying was done 'successfully', it could become habitual. This had implications for detection. Whilst searches and metal detectors did in theory provide a deterrent, young people did not always remember that they were carrying a knife or as already noted, did not expect to get caught. Two participants claimed to have been apprehended carrying a knife when they were *not aware* that they were carrying it. The young man below had been caught during a random search at school.

> I didn't encounter the police actually, but I went to school and I got arrested…this is the thing that I'm telling you about the knife thing…you don't think of yourself carrying it. It's like you forget your key, it's like that. You don't forget your knife if you go out, it's one of them things. It's like forgetting your phone, you don't do either do you...it's like you forget that you have it on you, like it's just – you pick up a pen to write, it's like that. So when I went into school...they search you down, that's what I'm saying with metal detectors and that. Then they found it…I got arrested and I got convicted. (J.D. London, black British, aged 17).

A further <u>six or seven</u> participants had been caught in the process of offending, or as a result of having committed an offence. Of these, three had been caught as a result committing a robbery with a knife: one had been apprehended moments after he had committed the offence, only a few streets away from where he had committed the act, two had been caught some time after they had committed the act. Another two participants had been arrested for an incident that did not directly involve a knife but where

they were carrying a knife incidentally whilst committing another offence: one participant was committing a burglary and been found in possession of a knife; the other had been engaging in drug dealing.

> *Can you remember the last time you carried a knife?*
> Me personally on me? October.
> *And can you remember what it was that made you not pick it up again?*
> Because I got nicked.
> *Nicked with a knife?*
> Yeah. I got stopped and searched on [street name], I put it up my bum and they pulled it out. (Merlin, London, aged 16).

Five participants had *not* been caught with a knife: two had been prosecuted for other crimes, including burglary and drugs offences in which a knife had not been used or found. The remaining three participants were two young men and one young woman who had not ostensibly been caught for any crime. Two of these were nine and ten respectively at the time of carrying a knife. The former was known to have carried a knife because the youth workers at the centre he attended had become aware of this and had spoken informally with a sympathetic police officer. They had both spoken to the young man in question about the dangers of carrying a knife and this had influenced his decision to stop carrying. The other two had carried knives and had agreed to take part in the research after also having disclosed this to someone in a support function.

As noted in Chapter Three, the suite of available sanctions for knife carrying and use is reasonably wide and although there has been a shift recently towards a more punitive sentencing policy, a number of alternative options are available. As a consequence, the young people who took in this research had experienced an array of sanctions from more to less severe. These, and the consequences of having been caught, for participants and for their knife carrying, are explored below.

Reflections on punishment

There were substantial variations in the sentences handed down to young people. All participants who had been *caught* carrying a knife (as opposed to those who were known by sympathetic support workers to sometimes carry a knife) had received at least a caution for carrying a knife and the majority had been assigned to work with the Youth Offending Service, post-conviction. At least another five had spent time in prison for a knife related offence, principally committing robbery, or for carrying with intent on or near school premises. Several participants had been excluded from school as a direct result of this conviction, whilst two others at least had been excluded for other incidents prior to their knife carrying. Four had been given community service orders. At least three more participants had multiple convictions for other offences and several were waiting to be sentenced at the time they took part in the interview.

Despite wide variations in the severity of the punishments the young people had experienced, they had been for the majority a salutary experience. This was the case for both those for whom the knife conviction was a first offence and for most of those who had experienced previous criminal sanctions. The former had found the experience shocking, upsetting and stressful, the latter on the whole. It was clear that prison had the desired effect in terms of stopping or reducing knife carrying.

> *And what do you think it was led you to stop carrying a knife?*
> I went to prison didn't I? (Bean, London, black British, aged 17).

Three of those who went to prison had not been incarcerated before and this had been an especially sobering experience.

> You don't really know, you don't understand the severity until you're going to prison…me, I used to get arrested and then I was just like oh yeah…go to court, probably get bail blah blah blah. And then when you're down there in the courts, they'll be reading out the stuff to you that this offence, you could face this. You could face that. When they say the prison one, it goes in one ear and out the other ear because you don't

know what prison is like. You've never been in it. It's not really an option. You always think you're going to get bail…then when it happens you start thinking ah yeah, what could I be facing? That's when you start thinking how to, what it will be like…. then you get to the prison [then it is] all about how you carry yourself and who you are. How you deal with it… (Bean, London, black British, aged 17).

Even those who had received a relatively light punishment had not enjoyed the experience and regarded themselves as having been lucky to have evaded more severe punishment. The young man below received a fine and community service.

> *And when you got arrested, what were you expecting the punishment to be?*
> Something more serious than youth offending. I got let off…There's other people out there that area carrying knives and they're only 16, and they're still going to young secure unit and things like that…I just pleaded guilty and I just told them my story and I said what I said. And they gave me a fine and six months [working with the] YOT. (Mo, London, black British, aged 16)

Those who were more familiar with the criminal justice system were less concerned about the experience of the punishment *per se* and were more concerned about the addition of another sanction to their list of offences and the consequences of this for their future prospects.

> *Do you still carry a knife?*
> No.
> *Why not?*
> It's too risky. I'm on the last, last straw. If I get caught with a knife I'm definitely going to jail.
> *So is that the only reason you don't carry a knife?*
> Yeah. Only because the police are gonna stop me…I won't carry a knife (Merlin, London, aged 16).

Bottoms *et al.*, (2004: 381) outline four 'mechanisms…of legal conformity'. These are instrumental/prudential compliance, constraint based compliance, normative compliance, and compliance based on habit or routine. These are not discrete but in a state of

perpetual interaction. It was clear that there was a strong role for instrumental compliance in the decision to stop carrying a knife, that is, most participants explained their stopping carrying in part out of fear of the legal consequences. There were two principal issues - first the increasing severity of sanctions, and second, having been caught already, the 'celerity' (Nagin and Pogarsky, 2001) of being caught again had increased significantly. There was a general acknowledgement that some kind of punishment was fair.

> Well, in some ways yeah. People should go to jail – it's the younger – when you're young, people won't say this. They won't say that they won't want to go to jail for having knives. When you get older you start thinking about different things and you're a bit more brainier and things like that when you're older. You think of things differently than what you do when you're younger. So like when you're older, you would think yeah, people should go to jail for carrying knives and things like that. (Ben, white British, aged 16).

The kinds of experiences described above had, for at least six participants, formed a significant 'turning point' not just in their decision to stop carrying a knife but in their wider offending lifestyles. Four more said that it had formed a smaller but nonetheless significant step towards longer-term change. Several were also of the opinion that their peers had been dissuaded from carrying a knife for the same reasons. In fact, many participants had friends who had also experienced prison and other punishments, some for carrying knives. This had clearly had an impact on their own carrying and that of their friends.

> He's meant to be coming out this year, December.
> *And how does he feel about that situation going inside?*
> Well, he got used to the idea that he's in prison, he had to. (Jonz, Yorkshire, Black African, aged 16).

Getting caught and the consequent stresses alone were not always necessary or sufficient to prompt desistence. Indeed, not everyone who had stopped carrying a knife had been caught for carrying a knife, or had been caught for any other crime. Similarly, some of those who had been caught for carrying a knife continued to carry a knife

199

subsequent to their punishment. It is reasonable then to assume in this case that there were other factors involved in the process. Alongside the actual experience of punishment, engagement with the criminal justice system can prompt a reassessment, and this, combined with other factors can prompt a change in orientation and a search for more durable forms of integration. These processes are considered below.

Growing up, identity change and disengagement with 'street life'

If 'getting caught' was a major prompt for young people to stop carrying knives, this was often complemented or supported by a more gradual and amorphous process referred to here as 'growing up'. Growing up is a complex process that involves physiological, emotional and biological maturation in addition to changes in a person's social context and changes, driven by young people's own agency, to their lives and lifestyles (Farall and Calverly, 2006). Taken together these processes seemed to have contributed to a general 'growing out' of knives and for some a growing out of crime. This was certainly, in part, prompted by formal sanctions, but it would be wrong to suggest that this was the only influence. It was also closely related to the fact that a significant proportion of the offenders were also growing out of offending more broadly. Three separate but overlapping processes can be seen to be at play here: 1) changes in an individual's social life, particularly in the formation of attachments that fostered desistence; 2) these often encouraged, and were supportive of, the development of a new identity and a moving away from 'street life' and an outlaw identity. This in turn prompted a growing perception that knife carrying was foolish, and, 4) a reduction in experiences of and concerns about victimisation. These are considered below.

Building new relationships

The formation of more positive social attachments involved two processes. First, the formation of bonds with pro-social others, and second, disengagement from relationships with offending peers. Both can be seen to have been at work here. Social attachments can lead to a reassessment of values or a 'moment to think' Maruna, 1997: 68). This re-orientation can strengthen existing attachments, or generate further attachments, leading

to a virtuous circle. Six young men claimed to have settled down into steady relationships and cited as a contributing factor, what Maruna (1997: 69) refers to as 'a steady job and the love of a good woman'.

> I'm trying to stop crime…and I'm spending more time with my girlfriend so I don't go out and commit crime. Yes, and my girlfriend's pregnant now so that's going to stop me committing crime when the baby's born. I've applied for seven jobs and I one got back to me last week asking me to go for an interview next month. So hopefully I should get the job…I'm in college at the moment doing…maths and English and joinery.
> …Just the thought of, I've got a baby on the way, and I need to stop committing crime because I need to get a new leaf in my book because it's all in the past now and I need to start changing my life around. (Whiles, Yorkshire, white British, aged 16).

Of course, not all of the participants were young men. Links were made earlier between the onset of offending for young women, and being involved with offending males. In the case of the young women involved in this research, desistence was supported by similar changes to those described by the young men.

> Like I've been in trouble, I've been in prison as well so I think that helped me realise I can't be doing certain things any more. And with having a baby, it's like I've grown up a lot as well. And I think it's better that I went through them experiences then because now I know – like it's not the way forward. (Jacky, London, aged 16).

Research has demonstrated that on the whole, young women are better able to desist form offending than young men (Maruna, 2001), and in part this is because they have less of an investment in a violent street persona. Importantly, desistence for the young women was also supported by moving away from association with offending males.

> No, he's part of my life…any more. (Charlie, London, aged 17).

Participants also talked about the improvement of relations with parents, or the continued support of parents and other carers as having an impact on their offending behaviour.

My mum, yeah. I get support from all my family, even from when I started robbing and that. They kept telling me, but I would just never listen. But they never stopped telling me. (Tony, London, black British, aged 17).

Other relationships also exerted a positive influence, in line with Moffitt's observation about the impact of a relationship with a steady adult presence (Moffit, 1993).

And are you still part of that life?
No, no, no.
So you've kind of left it behind?
Yeah, left it behind, …. New life, man…I know a guy that's about 30 that I used to look up to 30, 40, he got married with kids and still running around shooting and stabbing. It's like certain people in that college, I had a preacher for a teacher. He was always pushing me on the right thing, challenged me, do this, do that. Do you want to be – it's people that push you just…The environment changes, if you're around positive people you're going to be positive. I never thought that – someone told me that years have gone…but it's true, if you're around positive people…big issue (Avro, Yorkshire, black British, aged 15).

The issue of gangs has featured prominently in this research, and gangs have been shown to offer both protection and community whist at the same time exposing individuals to violence and obliging them to engage in collective violence. They also led to the accumulation of 'anti-social capital' (Coleman, 1988; Sampson and Laub 1993) and the erosion of relationships with supportive others. Many participants reflected on their relationships with gangs, as a result of both getting caught and maturing. Whilst participants were returning to established relationships and forming new ones however, some were in the process of severing, or trying to sever, bonds with others who had exerted an anti-social presence and several were also actively engaged in the process of trying to integrate better with non-offenders and thereby accrue 'pro-social capital' (Coleman, 1988; Sampson and Laub 1993).

Some of your friends carry knives?
I don't play with them any more
Oh so these are the friends you don't play with any more.
Yeah.

And how did you feel after you'd got rid of [the knife]?
Better, and not scared. (Lee, Yorkshire, white British, aged nine).

These changes were by no means uniform among participants, but it was clear that as meaningful attachments were being formed (or reaffirmed), normative attitudes were being re-orientated. Five participants articulated a desire to move away from offending peer groups. For some, this was the result of disillusion with these groups and the kind of social support they offered. Many displayed significant disillusion with offending peer groups and a recognition of the fragile bonds between such groups.

> …I still see them, don't get me wrong, I still see them and talk to them but I don't really go like chilling with them like I used to. I just see them in town or something or wherever, are you alright, yeah, yeah, blah blah blah. They go that way, I'll go that way. It's like obviously, you know when you're in a group you're thinking everything is – you go to prison obviously, them lot outside will be supporting you. They'll be sending you money, shoes, letters, everything like that. But when you get there, then you see who your true friends are. True friends, they're the ones who come to see you, they're the ones who send you stuff. The fake ones, you see them, they don't care, they don't care so I just knew that alright, these move like this, so I should move like this. So that's how I just left it. I just left it…I just moved on. (Jonz, Yorkshire, Black African, aged 16).

Whilst these factors seemed to make carrying a knife less attractive than it had once seemed, they were accompanied by a series of wider changes in participants' lifestyles and the majority of young people expressed doubts not just about knife carrying but about their wider offending lifestyles and of street culture. This is explored below.

Moving away from an offender identity/disengaging with 'street life'

Changes to a person's social context, in turn, prompted and were prompted by changes to how an individual saw themselves. Some of this was undoubtedly the result of a natural process of maturation, but the ways in which young people sought to actively change their sense of self should not be ignored. Matza (1964) has shown that young people can hold both anti and pro-social values simultaneously and tend to drift between a commitment to both or either. Indeed, as Barry notes (2006: 16), sometimes young people desist

without ever attaining supposedly pro-social values or opportunities, or indeed without achieving stable employment, marriage or any other of the markers that indicate desistance. In these contexts, desistance is viewed as discrete and divorced from wider life rather than as a positive and 'proactive' process of change (Barry, 2006: 19).

The majority of participants, especially the older ones, expressed fairly conventional and mundane aspirations: a job; a girlfriend; a house: and, perhaps moving away from where they had grown up. Some of the older ones were studying or on training schemes. Moreover, they seemed reasonably engaged in their communities, several were involved in organised sporting activities, many spoke about their normal relationships with parents and peers. As McNeill (2012) has observed, many desisters had simply grown tired of offending. The young man quoted below worked as a drug dealer and seemed reasonably successful. He also had some more 'legitimate' businesses in development, although he did not elaborate on these.

> *And do you see yourself, you talk about being on the road, do you see yourself moving on from that at some point?*
> A bit, like a small amount because there's just a bit, to be honest I've not been on it because I'm lazy. That's the only reason I've not been doing it again. I can't be bothered, it's a bit long. I've just got to think about everything and if I slip up once, - if I had a clean record that would be cool but this time, if I slip up one more time I'm pissed, I'll go straight to jail, there's no point risking it…I'm not going to say [never] but there's no point…if I carry on doing my legit thing, in the future I could be making more money than I make from this now. So it's just another way to look at it…and legit is much less stressful I can tell you. (Merlin, London, aged 16).

As was discussed in Chapter Three a risk factor approach to offending can sometimes be overly static and reduce individuals to a set of predictable responses to external stimuli. Recent 'pathways' approaches have developed a view of desistence as a process of change over time in the interactions between an individual and the social context (France *et al.*, 2012; Barry, 2008; Murray, 2012; Bottoms *et al.*, 2004; Lebel *et al.*, (2008) Maruna, 1997; 2004). The changes described above prompted, and were prompted by, a wider

reorientation in the individual, and the search for a new more durable and more socially acceptable identity. Importantly these processes entailed not just a settling down but a desire to create a new identity as a non-offender (Maruna, 2004). This was partly to do with the impact of other relationships. For some this was not just about the threat of further punishment, or simply a change in social context, but the interaction of a range of factors related to perceptions and uses of the knife and its relationship with a wider offending identity.

> I just think it's stupid to be honest. I don't really see the point in them doing it. Mine was particularly because that was gang associated so it's a different story. But it don't really go on as much no more. (Bean, London, black British, aged 17).

For many participants, the impact of a conviction described above went beyond the 'pains of imprisonment' (Crewe, 2011: 509) and had 'extra-legal' (Nagin, and Pogarsky, 2001) consequences. The incidents and subsequent convictions had been a cause of significant shame and embarrassment to both the young people and their families. This suggests a significant role for what Bottoms *et al* (2004: 381) call 'normative compliance' – that is compliance with a set of pre-existing norms and standards. If a violent street code or subculture compels some people to engage in violence or respond to violence with violence, it would be wrong to assume that this comprised the whole of their worlds. Shame can be defined as a 'social emotion' that emerges as a consequence of 'comparison of the self's action with the self's standards...' (Lewis, 1992: 10). It is clear from the interviews that people were able to articulate a sense of shame and a recognition that they had not always lived up to their own or other's standards. This was often framed within the context of the family.

> *And how did they react, how did your mum and brother react to this when you got arrested?*
> My mum, when she heard about the knife, she just like couldn't believe it. She was – heartbroken I would say. She didn't want it to be true and my brother he was just like – disappointed. I think he thought that I wasn't like that. I don't know if that makes sense…They thought that I wasn't like that, he thought that I was a different person when I took out the knife.

That's what I think he thought. But I can see in his face and his eyes that he was disappointed and he was thinking, he was disappointed, he's changed. (Rav, London, British Asian, aged 16).

These emotions had important consequences for participants' changing perspectives on knife carrying. A lot of the young people expressed regret at having carried a knife, not just because of the shame that going to prison had caused, as outlined above, but also for the shame that carrying a knife had engendered. In this it was clear that many had re-evaluated their position on carrying a knife. For some, carrying a knife was indelibly associated with a period of adolescence and foolishness which they regarded as having passed through. Constructing an identity in which they did not carry a knife was important. Indeed, the majority of participants seemed have come to view carrying a knife as both childish and self-destructive.

It's just that stage that everyone went through. You're young and dumb really. It was just…still a bit immature, younger, and obviously now I'm older and I've matured a lot and I just know that you don't use it. When you're little you do don't you. You have to have a little flick knife or something, you think it's cool don't you. But then, - you start getting, people start looking down on you, I think if you've got a knife…[now] I look down on people that carry knives. (Lenny, Yorkshire, white British, aged 17).

There was also increasing cognisance of the physical and psychological risks posed to themselves, and others, by carrying a knife, and this seemed to have become of greater concern as they aged. At least six interviewees linked this directly to risks to self in terms of conscience – the impact of harming a person on their own sense of self. If shame as defined above is a social emotion related to improper conduct, guilt, is a more personal emotion, defined as a feeling of responsibility or remorse for an action (Oxford Dictionary Online, undated). Certainly, the participants also expressed guilt, not just about things that they had done, but things they might have done had they continued carrying a knife.

> *When might you have first carried a knife?*
> When I were younger. Younger than I am now, like 15…I wouldn't do it now, I've got more common sense than to carry a knife…It's not worth the hassle that it's going to cause if something happens really.
> *Do you mean the police?*
> Not with the police, with death, I don't want someone's fucking death on my conscience, never. (Lenny, Yorkshire, white British, aged 17).

The feelings of shame and guilt as described above had profound implications for young people and how they saw themselves. Many participants articulated a desire to move away from an identity as an offender or offending or someone who was dangerous and instead to cultivate a new identity as a mature person, and someone who does not offend nor carry knives. Indeed, there was evidence that despite initial resistance to deterrent messages, as described above, some participants were starting to take on wider messages about knives and the dangers of knives. Indeed, some participants claimed to have not only absorbed these messages but to expound them to others.

> *Do any of your friends carry knives?*
> Some of them have but none of them now. Because ……I tell them that you're either going to hurt yourself with it or you're going to get arrested.
> *What do you think about people who might still carry knives?*
> I tell them not to. If it's my friends that do carry them, I say don't carry them because if you do pull it out on someone, and you don't stab them, then they're going to come back and stab you. So just don't do it. I wouldn't pull it out…obviously if you're going to pull it out, then you can pull it out. But if you pull it out and you're not going to do nothing then what if that other person sees you and you're by yourself, they would probably do the same. So they're thinking you're carrying one…and then his intention would be to stab him before he stabs you. (Avro, Yorkshire, black British, aged 15).

These changes, in part, contributed to a shift for some of the young people who took part and one that receives little attention in research, and that is a change in the young person's subjective sense of safety resulting from a reduced risk of victimisation. This is considered below.

Reduced risk of victimisation

An important consequence of a disengagement with 'street life' was a decline in experiences of victimisation and anxieties about being victimised. This disengagement meant a range of behaviours associated with street life – including self-presentation and routine activities.

> *Do you think to yourself as being on the road now? Or were you on road?*
> Yeah, it's like I'm not on the road but I've still got problems out there but like as before I was road, but like I'm not as road as much as I am now…I'm not gang banging or I'm not with a gang…but I still think that health and safety of using a big kitchen knife would be…[useful]
> *And do you still carry a knife at all?*
> Not any more. Not any more. (Dan, Yorkshire, aged 17).

Some scholars have drawn allusions to the pleasurable aspects of starting offending (Hayward, 2002) but as Murray (2012) notes, few have looked at the impact of this on desistence. Murray (2012: 35) explored this in research which looked at the differences between offenders and non-offenders and found that 'loss of kudos was a problem for desisters and that the loss of the pleasurable aspects of offending was also significant. If anything, what participants missed most about carrying knives was the pleasure associated with it and a wider offending lifestyle.

> *Do you miss carrying a knife?*
> No, I don't miss carrying a knife in particular but sometimes I do think about it and think ah, it was a bit fun you know.
> *And are you still in touch with some of the gang?*
> Yeah, but I don't move with them.
> *And how is that, is that an easy thing to do, to stop moving with them?*
> Yeah, me personally I think I've just grown out of that. I haven't got time for that. (Bean, London, black British, aged 17).

If desistence was only about normative/legal deterrence then it might be assumed that young people who stopped carrying would report feelings of increased risk. However the opposite was true, only one person said that they felt less powerful as a result.

> *You mentioned power before, do you feel carrying a knife makes you feel powerful?*
> Yeah, I think a knife can make you feel powerful.
> *Do you feel less powerful when you're not carrying it?*
> Yeah, I feel less powerful when I'm not carrying it. (Bean, London, black British, aged 17).

In fact the majority of offenders found that they felt more secure as they aged. It was nonetheless suggested in the previous chapter that the knife could be used by otherwise competent young men to balance a 'situational weakness' (Collins, 2008: 35). Though not directly alluding to this, several young men suggested that there had been a change in the kinds of situations they found themselves in, making it easier to desist.

> It's not my thing. I'd say I was the same but that was the situation, [the situation] has changed. (Charles, London, black British, aged 16).

Some of these changes were related to the fact that the majority of participants were disengaging from 'street life' and trying to forge new identities for themselves. Several however appeared to be on the contrary graduating to more serious levels of crime or at least engagement in the black-market or in 'fiddly work' (Barry, 2006: 31). Importantly however, these were also moving away from knives and this attests to, and illustrates, the centrality of insecurity for many young people. Even if not 'growing out of crime', as described above, participants were still 'growing up' and as a result were less vulnerable on the streets. These kind of lifestyle changes also lessened the likelihood of victimisation in many cases, and in others prompted a different response which was itself a move away from violence. This virtuous circle was enhanced by the reduction in anxiety and exposure to violence brought about by reduced offending and gang membership.

> That's what's going on with me now, I've got something to do now so I'm not really bothered in hanging about and that kind of thing. Like if I'm going somewhere, I'll be indoors or something like that, I don't need to be carrying a knife thinking ah, who's this and who's that. Yeah basically something to do. (Jed, Yorkshire, mixed ethnicity, aged 18).

This was in many ways a fragile peace, but many of the young people were determined not to start carrying a knife again. Some did suggest that if they experienced threats again they might consider it.

> *And can you imagine a situation where you might carry a knife again?*
> I don't know, it depends. If people start chasing me in cars and things like that, and I think I'm gonna get hurt, in me own words and meanings, then that might, I might have to do it again. But for now, I don't need to do 'owt because nobody is on me case or chasing me or looking for me. (Ben, white British, aged 16).

Whilst some participants prevaricated, others were adamant that they would avoid rather than engage with violence. This is an important point because as is explored in the next chapter, avoidance was a common strategy for non-offending youths.

> *Do you think you will carry a knife in the future?*
> No.
> *Never? In any situation do you think it might be justifiable to carry a knife?*
> No.
> *What if someone was, 20 lads waiting for you round the corner?*
> Then I'd just stay in.
> *What if you had to go to school and you had to walk past them?*
> I'd go a different way. Because my neighbours, I can go through this gap into another person's garden and then go up.
> *And is that an alternative way to school?*
> Yeah.
> *And do you sometimes use that way?*
> When people are waiting for me to batter me, yeah.
> *Are people waiting for you quite often?*
> No.
> *Just every now and again. And is that people wait for you because of these fights you've had? Is that why they're waiting for you?*
> Yeah. (Paul, Yorkshire, white British, aged ten).

There are other difficulties inherent in 'going straight' (Murray, 2012) however - not least a social pressure to respond to provocation with violence. The exemplar below encapsulates many of the points made above about desistence from knife carrying. The participant related a story about having been attacked about six months after he had

stopped carrying a knife and the challenges this presented in terms of both an immediate response and a longer-term requirement to retaliate. That he resisted doing either of these things represented a success in terms of his creation of a new identity and the development of a new way of responding to violence.

> Back then, from 13 to 16, back then, I never had anyone approach me like, with a knife or anything you know what I mean. Then I went to jail and when I was there I learnt a lot from what I did. So I started changing my life while I was there. And then I came out, this happened three week ago. I came out of [probation office] a guy approached me saying – asking me different stuff about a gang. And I said look, I don't know. I've no idea what you're talking about, I'm not involved in a gang and stuff like that. And he said my name…So at that point, he took out this big knife, like this…this knife was bigger than all the knives that I was able to carry you know what I mean, a big knife. Took it out, and I was thinking to myself, is this a joke or something? So I looked at it, I looked at it and I looked at his face. His face was serious. And I thought, it's about time for me to run. And I started running, running. As I was running…And this guy literally ran after me...I just kept running…Now that, if you understood me, if that was back then, that was before I went to jail, yeah. I would…just going to go out and look for this guy and I'm going to...but I went to jail, I learned from my mistakes you know. That's stuck with me. So I thought I'm just going to live my life…I'm just proud of myself like…If he comes again, I'm going to do exactly the same thing, run. (Tony, London, black British, aged 17).

This section has considered the principal mechanisms of desistence for the young people who took part in the research. Given the concerns expressed by young people in the previous chapter about safety and the 'security gap', not to mention their relationships with formal and informal regulatory orders (integrational difficulties), the section presents some optimism about young people's long-term prospects. If getting caught was a difficult and traumatic experience, young people displayed both agency and resilience in overcoming these difficulties. At the same time, their experiences also raise questions about the necessity and legitimacy of both deterrent and preventative approaches, especially where they are overly punitive.

Discussion: closing the security gap

The previous chapter examined pathways into knife carrying and established the importance of an 'offending lifestyle' as both a major escalator of risk for the young people, and as an important crucible in which adolescent 'outlaw' identities were formed. The findings suggest that offending does not cause knife carrying *per se*, but that for offenders, knife carrying can be viewed as a response to the intensification of violence that accompanies engagement in an offending lifestyle, bound up in a 'security gap' and 'integrational difficulties'. This chapter has focused on some of the theories of desistence outlined in Chapter Three, as a means of understanding the processes by which participants came to stop carrying a knife. There was also an exploration of the failure of deterrent approaches. The findings suggest that deterrence was initially ineffective but perhaps not surprisingly, the deterrent effect of criminal sanctions increased after they had been directly experienced. Punitive sanctions after getting caught and the continued threat of sanctions served as one of two main mechanisms of desistence. 'Getting caught' and the fear of getting caught interacted with, and was in some ways inseparable from, other parallel changes in the young people's lives. Many participants reflected on this from the standpoint of a) being older and more mature; b) moving away from an offending lifestyle and the 'street' or 'outlaw' identity that often accompanied it, and, c) a disavowal of knife carrying. Indeed, as was suggested in the Chapter Three, offending for some young people can provide much needed social capital and can aid integration during adolescence and the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood. For the majority of offenders, their offending eventually becomes more of a liability and a barrier to integration. Participants' use of agency as they attempted to move away from 'street life' demonstrates the complexity of desistence but also a determination by many participants to not offend. Often, this reflected a genuine desire to re-join the 'mainstream' and re-orientate to a non-offending way of life and a 'civic code'. This generated a moving away from an adolescent 'outlaw' identity and an attempt to forge a new identity. Participants increasingly came to see carrying a knife as childish and something that their younger-selves engaged in.

The vast majority of offenders desist from offending in their late teens or early twenties and the 'age-crime curve' has been shown to be one of the most 'empirically robust' (Moffit, 1993: 675) relationships to emerge from criminological research. Most of the participants demonstrated an awareness of what they were doing and the moral and legal implications of their behaviour, not to mention the physical and psychological risks. Many however felt that they had few other options at the time they carried a knife. This was bound up not in the accumulation of 'risk factors' or in childhood experiences but, rather, in their engagement in, sometime adherence to, or at least, an inability to avoid, a normative landscape that favoured the use of violence. This placed significant demands on participants to be able to both display and demonstrate a capacity for violence in their daily lives. That participants were able to stop carrying knives also illustrates the earlier finding that young people carried knives in response to a 'security gap'. As the risk of victimisation lessened, so did their need to carry a knife. That they were able to stop carrying knives also illustrates the earlier finding that young people were vulnerable because of their youth. Some found themselves feeling safer simply as a result of maturing physically and emotionally. This is illustrated by the small group who did not appear to be moving away from offending but for whom, nonetheless, knife carrying appears to have outlived its purpose. Knives had served a protective purpose but eventually outgrew their usefulness, whilst at the same time young people developed other responses to the problems they encountered others ways of 'being'. This can be seen as a closing of the 'security gap' and for some at least a healing or transcending of integrational difficulties.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined pathways *out* of knife carrying and the processes by which participants came to stop carrying a knife. This included an exploration of the role of deterrent approaches in this process. The findings suggest that deterrence was initially ineffective but, perhaps not surprisingly, the deterrent effect of criminal sanctions increased after they had been directly experienced. Punitive sanctions after getting caught and the continued threat of sanctions served as one of two main mechanisms of

desistence. The second mechanism was a more complex set of processes, referred to here as 'growing up'. These processes were mutually supportive rather than necessarily linear and involved changes in the individual's routine activities, self-identity, and lifestyle more generally. This was, in part, because of a general moving away from a delinquent lifestyle, and importantly, a moving away from an adolescent 'outlaw' identity and an attempt to forge new identities. Participants increasingly came to see carrying a knife as childish and something that younger people engaged in. That they were able to stop carrying knives was in part because of feeling safer simply as a result of maturing physically and emotionally and in part because they were moving away from the kind of routine activities that often led to violence: either way, many participants described a closing of the 'security gap' that for many prompted their initial decision to carry a knife. This chapter sets the scene for the next and final findings chapter, in which the experiences of those who took part in the focus groups is considered, and the ways in which young people who were not offending and who had not carried a knife avoided and managed risk and relations with offenders and knife carriers is explored.

Chapter Seven: Young people who don't carry knives

Responding to the 'security gap'

He pulled a knife out… I actually stood there and went go on...and he were like shaking like that…[demonstrates shaking in fear]

That's why I just walked off, me...he's my age, 14…He said sorry though, he were alright about it…

He were just a bit mad at the time…it weren't a big knife like that, it were a penknife, it's still [a knife] though isn't it? (Yorkshire, nine participants: 10 male, 9 female, mixed ethnicity including WB, BB, BA).

The quote presented on the previous page illustrates the complexities of participants' experiences of knife crime. Whilst media commentary tends to emphasise a binary between on the one hand vicious knife carriers and on the other, innocent and helpless victims, the truth is in many cases more complex. Sometimes otherwise 'ordinary' young people carried knives and got into difficult situations with them, at the same time, equally ordinary young people could demonstrate a capacity for responding to these situations that demonstrated strength and compassion.

Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings from the empirical data that relate to the perspectives of the non-offenders who took part in the research, principally those who took part in the focus groups. Reference is also made to those who took part in the interviews who were classed as non-offenders. The purpose of this, in line with one of the objectives of the research, is to provide a complementary perspective to those of the interviews, and to explore experiences of knives and knife carriers among a wider body of young people. The aim was to explore how those who have not carried a knife, and who do not offend to a significant degree, respond to the violent contexts already outlined. In setting this objective the research aimed to understand why the majority of young people *do not* carry knives, despite their circumstances. In doing so the hope was this would also illuminate, from a different perspective, why some young people *do* carry knives. The chapter is divided into three sections and draws in particular on the concept of 'negotiated orders' (McAra and McVie, 2012) introduced in Chapter Three. The first section explores participants' relationships with informal regulatory orders, specifically their relationships with peers, both offenders and non-offenders, and their attitudes towards knife carrying. The second section explores participants' relationships with formal regulatory orders, especially the police and schools, and participants' relationships with their families. The final section returns to the concept of resilience introduced in Chapter Three, and explores this with reference to the literature on youth transitions and 'negotiated orders' in the context of a 'civic code'.

The foundation of this chapter is that young people who do not offend to any significant degree, and who are not immersed in an offending lifestyle, must still negotiate risk and violent contexts on a regular basis. In doing so they draw on a range of sources of support and social capital, demonstrating complex forms of resilience and so avoid some of the integrational difficulties and the 'security gap' experienced by offending peers and a smaller group of non-offenders. Chapter Three developed a normative framework which explored offending and street codes, largely based on research which conducted interviews with offenders. However, it was suggested that this framework might also be useful in examining alternative normative codes employed by non-offenders. This has proved to be the case, and is explained with reference to the notion of a 'civic code', around which conformist young people might base an adolescent identity. Participants were also able to draw on this code in responding to knife carrying and crime among both offending and non-offending peers. This is discussed below.

Informal orders and a 'civic' code

The findings of this research suggest that violence was a common occurrence in the schools and neighbourhoods of the young people who took part in the focus groups. Most participants were able to share some stories about violence and violent people, whether this was direct violence, threats of violence, having witnessed violence or heard about it from others. That a small but significant minority had personally experienced serious and life threatening violence only served to inform collective narratives of violence and amplify the concerns of the majority.

> They're just for them to feel safe because like, if you see all around us there's always gangs. And then if you're by yourself, you get most of the time picked on by the gangs. The ones that intend to do something wrong. (Yorkshire, seven participants: 4 male, 3 female, all WB).

There were some important differences between focus group participants and those in the interviews. There was a more even distribution of males and females in the focus groups (34 males and 30 females) than in the interviews (21 males and 2 females). Focus

groups participants were also from a much wider a range of ethnic backgrounds, including the Middle-East and central Asia. As noted in Chapter Six, however, the strongest distinction that emerged in the research was between those who were street orientated and those who were not. This distinction is important because adherence to a street identity did not necessarily determine *whether or not* a person experienced violence, but it did influence *the nature* of any violence that was experienced, and there were variations in terms of both *frequency* of victimisation and *severity* of the effects of victimisation experienced by participants. Few of the young people who took part in the focus groups were considered to be engaged in any kind of serious offending by the gatekeepers who assisted in the research, and by their own accounts the majority had not engaged in serious offending behaviour. That is not to say that they had not engaged in any offending behaviour, as 'low-rate' offending by young people has been found to be the norm rather than the exception (Sampson and Laub, 2001: 10). Several focus group participants described having engaged in behaviour such as street drinking and fighting. One participant also expressed an interest in knives and claimed to own a knife that he would not carry on the street (and had taken a taxi after purchasing it). Neither he nor any other focus group participants claimed to have ever carried a knife in public or to have a conviction for carrying or using a knife. Moreover, their offending had not been sufficient to have brought them to the attention of the authorities, and on the whole they did not seem to ascribe to a 'street identity'.

Many of the non-offenders in both the interviews and the focus groups reported experiencing bullying. Many were able to share stories about bullying although not all had experienced it directly. Six of the interview participants described having been directly bullied; this included two offenders but importantly all four of the non-offenders. For the most part this kind of violence involved an individual or group of individuals, who were known to them, threatening or verbally or physically attacking them. This had occurred within friendship groups, between a group and an individual, at school or on the way to and from school, in parks and playgrounds, and even outside one interviewee's house. For some, these experiences were relatively short lived and discreet, but for others they

were more persistent. Several participants had been taunted verbally, or threatened with violence. At the other end of the scale, one young man was regularly bullied by his friends, whilst another had been bullied on and off for over two years by an older boy at his school and this had resulted in violence on several occasions. Whilst bullying is often in plain sight, it is often disguised by the 'complex linguistic and bodily dispositions of young people […and…] playground rules' (Gaskell, 2008: 42). These dynamics extend beyond the playground however to the streets where, away from adult supervision, violence can take on more visceral dynamics. Some victims of bullying described fights that resulted in relatively mild physical injuries, whilst numerous threats of violence failed to manifest. Often however there were psychological and social implications of being bullied, and related to ongoing anxieties about, and loss, of prestige (Gaskell, 2008).

Bullying often occurred on the street and in public and semi-public areas. Young people's perceptions and experiences of violence directly shape how they viewed the 'spatial and temporal' landscapes they inhabit (Gaskell, 2008: 46). As researchers have noted (Cobbina *et al.*, 2008; France *et al.*, 2012; Valentine, 1997), what might to an adult, walking or driving through a particular area, appear as largely undifferentiated space, for a young person it consists of important nuances and invisible lines bound up in experiences of violence. The majority of participants described their areas as being threatening and dangerous in some ways, but there were variations caused, in part, by the differences in routine activities of the young people and their wider offending identities. The non-offending participants in the research sometimes travelled quite widely, but felt at risk both inside and outside of their home areas. Specific streets were regarded as especially dangerous because of the presence of groups and individuals who had or were likely to victimise them, and it was whilst going to or through these places that they were most likely to carry a knife.

Negotiating street life and gangs

The concept of a violent street code has been a key theme of this thesis and was described in Chapter Three. A street code has been shown to exist in some areas, predominantly in some of the most deprived parts of deprived areas. Such a code compels individuals to respond violently to minor provocations, to act in an uncivil manner, and to pay heightened attention to how they present to, and garner respect from, those around them (Anderson, 1999; Katz, 1988; Bourgois, 1995; Brookman *et al.*, 2011). As already noted in Chapter Five, place and space were key signifiers of risk and both offending and non-offending young people were aware of this. Some of the risks described by participants were *spatial* and related to inherent physical characteristics in schools, particular streets and areas such as alleyways and parks. Having to negotiate the presence of gangs was a particular concern. Some *places* were more dangerous than others, in part because of the presence of gangs in those areas and the various meanings and symbolic attributes attached to those places. They were not necessarily hidden from view however but could be close to participants' homes and highly visible.

> Just like where I live now, before it was all gangs around, groups around and then the police was there every time. And then for me to get into my house, when I used to come late from school was kind of scary. Because if the police is there, there's a group just on the corner, and then if I don't get stopped by the police and searched, I'm going to get stopped by the groups. And then that kind of intimidated me. Every time I went past, I made sure that I was at the middle just walked past as fast as I could to go home. (Yorkshire, five participants: all male, BB, BA, AAO).

Some threats were not simply spatial however but were also *temporal*, and some times of the day were more dangerous than others, with the journey home from school and being out in the evenings being of particular concern.

> It also depends on like time of day and stuff like that because obviously if it's night-time, obviously women are going to feel a lot more scared...the night and people taking advantage...obviously the kids within the area, I wouldn't describe as violent but have potential to grow up to become violent people. I don't know whether they'd...knife crime or anything like that. But I wouldn't say that, obviously you're always aware of danger

around you any time of day so obviously you're never going to feel completely safe in your area. (Yorkshire, 24 participants: 11 male, 13 female, mixed ethnicity including WB, BB, BA, and Arabic).

Offenders, overall, seemed more attuned to risk outside of their own areas. Non-offenders seemed more attuned to risk *within* their own areas. The map in Figure 7.1., below illustrates the spatial perceptions of one of the non-offending knife carriers. The smiley faces show where he felt safe: his home and the youth club, and, where he felt less safe, including public areas in his neighbourhood and his school. Specific streets were regarded as dangerous because of the presence of groups and individuals who had or were likely to victimise him and it was whilst going to or through these places that he was most likely to carry a knife.

Figure 7.1. Spatial map: non-offending knife carriers

Lee, Yorkshire, white British, aged nine.

Many of the offenders who took part in the study were able to draw on social support from fellow gang members. Gangs have been shown to be an important source of protection but also a source of violence, and in this gang membership can become counter-productive, and can provide an important crucible in which offending can occur and group

conflicts be generated and escalated (Hallsworth, 2005). Focus group participants were very aware of this paradox.

> They're just for them to feel safe because like, if you see all around us there's always gangs. And then if you're by yourself, you get most of the time picked on by the gangs. The ones that intend to do something wrong. And then because you have a couple of friends they feel the same, you start getting together with them, and then you classify yourself as a gang because you feel protected with them and they feel protected by you, but you're not intending to do anything wrong. And then something wrong just goes when someone tries to attack one of your friends and then you try to protect them. As I see some of the gangs. (Yorkshire, seven participants: 4 male, 3 female, all WB).

Many focus group participants nonetheless questioned and challenged some of the dominant conceptions of gangs, or rather, and, like some of the young people who took part in the interviews, they frequently made a distinction between different types of grouping, and tried to distance their own group activities from those of violent gangs. Research has shown that dominant conceptions of gangs often differ to the ways in which young people themselves view their collective activities, and the definition of a gang is frequently contested by young people themselves (see for instance Bannister *et al.,* 2010; Firmin, *et al.*, 2007; Aldridge and Medina, 2007). This is illustrated in the quote below.

> *Are gangs always violent?*
> Not always... But I'm thinking that we are giving the word 'gang' the wrong meaning as in whenever someone says gang now, people generally think of – a group of people who do bad things. But a gang for me I, just simply see a group of people and they're going to do a certain thing. It doesn't have to be bad, it doesn't have to be good. It's like this [youth group]. That can be classed as a gang, too. I can call this a gang with a good intention. It just depends on how you look at it (Yorkshire, seven participants: 4 male, 3 female, all WB).

If young people sought to make a distinction between different kinds of gang, this was often because of a failure of formal regulatory orders to do this. As Lemos (2004) has noted in a review of knife crime issues, the police are not viewed by young people as

always taking their concerns seriously, and this can foster a sense of alienation even among non-offending young people. The quote below illustrates this.

> … people in the community tend to inform the police that there is a certain gang stood in the street…and then the police send a patrol car…[on one such occasion]…I went past, I made sure that I was at the middle just walked past as fast as I could to go home… I was walking by myself and they were in a group…Because I knew a couple of them, they live right on my street. I just walked past and talked to them and because I was by myself, [the police] came and searched me… then the next day they came again to my house knocking at my door…I was surprised because I didn't know they would come to my door. Because they saw me walking past and talking to a couple of them and just they thought I was with them…(Yorkshire, five participants: all male, BB, BA, AAO).

Gangs have been shown to impact negatively on young people who are not in gangs however, and to increase anxiety about victimisation and the threat of actual victimisation (Bannister and Fraser, 2008). Gangs then were a cause of concern for young people, but so were police responses to gangs, and an apparent lack of sensitivity sometimes when it came to relationships between the police and non-offending young people. Young people who were not offending were also able to draw on sources of social support, and talked about the importance of friends and family in helping them to negotiate daily life. Whilst offending individuals frequently referred to friends and family in terms of 'back up', non-offenders spoke more generally about the importance of close attachments. These not only provided companionship and emotional support but also, as Collins (2008: 37) notes, bullies are more likely to target the socially isolated and 'emotionally weak' than simply the physically weak, and in demonstrating collective strength, young people were able to resist some of the more visceral aspects of violence. Some of those non-offenders who had carried a knife defensively had also articulated this, but as was illustrated in the previous chapter, it was often where these sources broke down that they had recourse to carrying a knife.

Despite the concerns highlighted above, overall, a strength of not being in a gang, or of being a member of a non-offending gang, appeared to be the retention of a connection with the wider population of young people and formal sources of control and safety. This provided young people with some sense of security and some alternative 'tools' with which to confront violence and the problems of a 'security gap'. Some of the young people who took part in the focus groups did not seem to just avoid gangs and violent youths however, but in their own ways confronted them more actively. This is considered below.

Constructing the 'other' and a 'civic code'

Research explored in Chapter Three examined the concepts of a violent street code and a 'civic code' as contrasting 'normative orders' which were utilized at different times by young people as a means of avoiding or confronting violence, and trying to integrate with peers at a time of transition. It was suggested that some individuals were heavily committed to a violent street code, with implications for both their status among peers (high), their relations with the police (poor) and their long-term prospects (negative). Other individuals might have invested in the 'civic code', with implications for their management of safety (poor), risk of victimization (medium) and long term prospects for integration with formal and informal regulatory orders (good). The young people who took part in the focus groups were sometimes able to draw on informal regulatory orders as a means of coping with violence and violent peers. Certainly, participants demonstrated an awareness of some aspects of a street code, but they were also able to articulate an alternative value system. As one participant, quoted at the start of this thesis, remarked:

> We can be inspirational and clever, but they [young people who carry knives] don't want to [be], because they think they're hard…
> …*so why do you think young people carry knives?*
> Because they think they're big, hard, protective, all of that. (Yorkshire, seven participants: 4 male, 3 female, all WB).

Whilst avoidance and management of risk were certainly part of this, participants also demonstrated an ability to articulate some kind of resistance to knife carrying and to violence more broadly. What the findings explored in this chapter suggest is that there is

some interaction between a street code and a civic code, and part of the mechanics of this can be explained through the concept of 'othering'. Much scholarship has highlighted the power of social exclusion, or 'othering' and the ways in which social groups can objectify other individuals and groups (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 2006). Research has consistently demonstrated that violent young people are often excluded formally, but they can be excluded *informally*, with negative consequences for their ongoing development and engagement in offending activities (McAra and McVie, 2012; Barry, 2006; Bannister *et al.*, 2012; Phillips, 2003). McAra and McVie (2012) have highlighted the implications of exclusion for young people, including a greater risk of victimisation by their peers. Research has also shown that excluded young people were more likely to carry a knife (Roe and Ashe, 2008; Marfleet, 2008; Eades *et al.*, 2007). McAra and McVie (2012) and Phillips (2003) have highlighted some of the mechanics of exclusion, including physical and verbal violence.

> …*So why do you think you carried [the knife]?*
> I don't know…I just, these two lads called [names] they just kicked some stones at the windows.
> *...Just your windows?*
> Just mine.
> *Why did they throw stones at your windows?*
> I don't know.
> …*And did you get into trouble?*
> (Paul, Yorkshire, white British, aged ten).

Much is made in the literature of the importance of a street code and the way that 'street oriented' individuals are able to differentiate themselves from their peers, through the adoption of a street code, specific attitudes and postures, not to mention clothing. However, less attention has been paid to individuals who do not offend and generally conform to mainstream normative values (Bannister *et al.*, 2012). As is discussed further in the next chapter, this lack of academic interest in non-offending young people could be read as a significant failing in the criminological enterprise. What the data suggest is that some adherence to something like a civic code can provide a resource for some participants, and a means of differentiation. Something that was frequently referred to in

the focus groups, for instance was the idea of giving violent individuals 'a wide berth'. Violent individuals were labelled as 'crazies' 'idiots' and both derided and feared.

> Depends who it were
> I'd just stay away
> Depends what they were like with you
> Personality means a lot as well…if there's someone who's sound, you wouldn't be as frightened by it but if it were someone a bit dodgy. Someone who can just flip like that. While you look at them. (Yorkshire, seven participants: 4 male, 3 female, all WB).

What has been less explored in the context of the informal exclusion of violent young people are the normative mechanics of these processes, although research has explored more widely the concept of 'othering' with reference to race, gender and class, and the social implications of this (see, for instance, Young, 2007). The focus group data suggest that a civic code provides a mechanism for 'othering'. Responses to gangs in part emerged from wider societal responses to gangs in which young people who were not in offending gangs drew on their own languages of justification as a means of minimalizing the negative impact of gangs, both psychologically and socially. Offending gangs were both feared and reviled by many of the participants. Gang members were not just dangerous and threatening but were also 'stupid', 'idiots', 'nasty' and 'silly', and to be avoided. These individual and collective narratives served to reduce the power of gangs even if it did not reduce their ability to inflict fear and violence.

> I know this is really stereotypical and stuff, but you always do it. You walk down, if you see someone in hoodies, hat on, covering their face, trackies, trainers and just hunched over, just hanging around, the fear is that they could potentially attack you. Because obviously as kids you're taught to stay away from strangers that you don't know and obviously, growing up that fear then increases because you've been told that people attack you, rape you and stuff like that. So the fear intensifies as you walk past them. (Yorkshire, five participants: all male, BB, BA, AAO).

The approach highlighted above was also employed as a means of framing those who carried knives. The focus groups seem to provide a space for young people to make

explicit, framings that had previously been only implicit, and to express, examine and discuss issues they had not discussed in another forum. Nonetheless, there were some signs of durable forms of 'othering' among the social groups with respect to knife carrying, in the same way that gangs were 'othered' as described above:

> *And do you know people in your school who might have carried knives*
> and what do you think about those kind of people?
> I do, it gives you an impression of them doesn't it.
> *What kind of impression?*
> You can't trust them and things like that
> You can't let them round you or 'owt like that
> A bit dodgy
> If they say hi to you, you…[try to move away] (Yorkshire, nine participants: 10 male, 9 female, mixed ethnicity including WB, BB, BA).

Avoidance of offending peers was described above as a means of avoiding offending more generally, but it was also advocated as a means of managing risk and avoiding the need to carry a knife. The presence of a violent street code and its emphasis on aggression was very strongly felt. Similarly, the operation of masculine hegemony has been shown to structure perceptions of space for both women and non-aggressive males (Stanko, and Hobdell, 1993; Stanko, 1990). Young womens' engagement in 'bedroom cultures' (Nayak and Kahily, 2008: 54) and adolescent interest in crafts (Mizen and Morris, 2007) at home represent conscious and unconscious strategies to avoid the risks of verbal and physical aggression from males in the public sphere. The findings of this thesis suggest that participants not only feel threatened in their home areas, as suggested in Chapter Five, but that non-offenders acknowledged that carrying a knife *was* a way of responding to these fears. The quote below illustrates the stark choices facing participants: go out and face possible victimization, or 'stay in' and avoid the need to take such drastic protective measures.

> I still wouldn't carry one, I'd just stay in. (Yorkshire, nine participants: 10 male, 9 female, mixed ethnicity including WB, BB, BA).

Even when there was a clear risk of victimisation, focus group participants still maintained that they would not carry a knife. Instead, they would face victimisation unarmed.

> The thing is...as a matter of fact I would never carry a weapon outside
> I will fight with my own fists, I would never fight with a weapon
> Is that because you're confident?
> No because I've got sense. (Yorkshire, six participants: 4 male, 3 female, all WB).

Responses were however quite nuanced when participants were asked about why young people carry a knife. As noted in the previous chapter, not all young people who carried knives were offenders, and some knife carriers had experienced significant and ongoing bullying. Focus group participants, on the whole, displayed a grasp of this distinction and were able to differentiate between different forms of knife carrying and the varied reasons why a person mighty carry a knife. Just as importantly, participants articulated a range of reasons for why someone might carry a knife. These were similar to some of the explanations offered by knife carriers. This is explored below.

Policing peers and knife carrying

Focus group participants articulated an ability to 'police' knife carrying, at least among their friends. As discussed above, violent young people were sometimes excluded by their peers. Knife carrying was more complex, as sometimes individuals within participants' own social groups could carry knives. Participants largely avoided offending knife carriers but engaged with non-offending knife carriers. Whilst deterrent approaches were shown to be largely ineffective for those young people who were engaged in an offending lifestyle, they seem to have been more effective for those who did not carry a knife. The literature on desistence has highlighted the issue of 'absorbing' deterrent messages (McNeill *et al.*, 2012). The findings here suggest that non-offending participants were on the whole better able to absorb messages around the dangers of knife carrying. Those that ignored those messages did so often in response to a crisis related to experience of a 'security gap'. Indeed, both offenders and non-offenders were

reasonably aware of the legal risks of carrying a knife, and certainly the influence of legal deterrents seemed stronger for the latter group.

> *Why wouldn't you carry a knife then?*
> In case you got pulled over, you can get a life sentence – well not a life sentence, like prison sentence…because you want a good job when you're older don't you. (Yorkshire, nine participants: 10 male, 9 female, mixed ethnicity including WB, BB, BA).

Offenders seemed to have invested in discouraging knife carrying *after* they had stopped carrying a knife, often but not always as a result of a related conviction. The focus group participants promoted and articulated deterrent messages without having carried a knife or been caught carrying one.

> I'd tell him straight away that it's not a good idea to carry a knife. I'll tell him about the consequences that he might be facing because – none of us have ever ever carried a knife before, and never will. Because it's how we've been brought up. (Yorkshire, five participants: all male, BB, BA, AAO).

Many participants nonetheless were sympathetic towards those who carried knives, and acknowledged the restricted choices that young people had when trying to defend themselves. Indeed, whilst not enmeshed in a violent street culture, many focus group participants were nonetheless reasonably street-wise and displayed some understanding of why knife carrying might appear to be a good idea.

> *…so you think sometimes it's a good idea to carry a knife?*
> Yes.
> *In what circumstances?*
> Say if you're going to get jumped or something.
> They're kicking your head in, yeah – but you just take it and just not ….
> Yes, but if you're getting the fuck kicked out of you
> I'd rather get a beating than a pull a knife out
> I would actually bomb it if someone pulled a blade out on me and if I could run away, I would. I wouldn't try and fight back. I've had one pulled out

on me. (Yorkshire, nine participants: 10 male, 9 female, mixed ethnicity including WB, BB, BA).

Participants in the group interviews talked a lot about the problem of being bullied and the carrying of a knife as one possible response. Participants expressed sympathy with victims of bullying and some had been a victim of bullying themselves. Participants also seemed quite familiar with knives and the problem of knife carrying. Male and female participants talked about these problems and seemed equally able to articulate a response to this. Several related stories of friends and associates who had carried knives in a moment of madness or in response to bullying and gangs. At the same time, the power to exclude, even temporarily, was drawn on in these circumstances as a means of self-policing and a means of responding to an extant 'security gap' that did not necessarily involve violence. There were several incidents relayed whereby young people had carried knives and had been actively excluded from a group until they had stopped carrying. The quote below is from a female participant in one of the focus groups, who demonstrates very strongly her capacity for confronting violence.

I fell out with her, and I asked her to come and meet me because I wanted to talk to her and she got her knife out thinking that I were gonna batter her. But like...
So you were arguing out with her and she pulled the knife out?
Yeah.
And then what happened?
I said...What have you got a knife for? She were like, because you're gonna batter me…[then] she put it back in her pocket!
And have you seen her since?
Yeah.
And has she done it again?
No. (Yorkshire, nine participants: 10 male, 9 female, mixed ethnicity including WB, BB, BA).

The quote above suggests a well-developed response to knives, at least among some participants, and says much about young people's agency in the face of adversity. This agency was illustrated in different forms – as personal strength in facing up to bullying, and in collective strength when confronting knife carriers. This approach was also

evidenced in the interviews with non-offending knife carriers. As was noted in Chapter Six, one non-offending knife carrier was reported by one of his friends for carrying a knife on school premises, ostensibly for his own good, and another had had his knife ceremoniously burnt by his friends.

> One day when I stopped playing with them, I said to [I'm]… going down to my mates and they'd burnt it
> *Your mate burnt your knife? Oh, you asked them to burn it? How did you feel after it had burnt it?*
> [We were]...having a bonfire and then put petrol on it
> *So when was the last time do you think you carried a knife?*
> That time. (Lee, Yorkshire, white British, aged nine).

As noted already, participants were able to articulate strong messages against carrying knives embracing legal, moral and normative rationales.

> And then if one of your friends is carrying a knife, always the first thing I would tell him is like, first thing I would tell him is that I don't want to be caught with him when he has a knife because I feel I'll be guilty as well. I will pay for a crime that I didn't commit. And I will try to get far away from him, but I will tell him to stop carrying a knife or we will go our different ways because I don't want to be caught with him. (Yorkshire, six participants: 4 male, 3 female, all WB).

Focus group participants also stressed some of the 'extra-legal' (Nagin and Pogarsky, 2001) consequences of carrying a knife and these went hand in hand with formal punishments. These were sometimes seen as life-long consequences for perpetrators, that participants were keen to avoid. There were also some allusions in these comments to the natural process of maturation highlighted in the previous chapter.

> In 4 or 5 years they won't be laughing because they've done something really bad
> They'll realise
> Are some of them doing life sentences
> Yeah, a few of them were

> When you speak to some people who...ten years ago, it's not funny for
> them any more
> They'll regret it won't they as well
> I could never do 'owt like that PLFG1
> It would mess up your future. If [you] got sent down for murder (London,
> six participants: 4 male, 2 female, WB, BB, BA, AAO).

This section has explored the relationships between young people and the ways in which young people are able to challenge and confront those who are especially violent and those who carry knives. It is clear, that young people are aware of and familiar with the risks posed by gangs and violent individuals, but they also were at pains to point out that young people as a whole are judged on the basis of a few, and that this sometimes has real implications for relations with formal orders and for safety on the street. If young people acknowledged that sometimes 'gangs' could be dangerous, they could also provide a source of support and collective strength in a hostile environment. Young people were also able to both draw on, and subvert stereotypes, as a means of confronting conflict. They were also, within reason, able to police friends and peers as a means of reducing and constraining violence, even if this meant sometimes using exclusionary tactics.

In addition to having to negotiate space and place with offending young people and gangs, non-offender participants also had to negotiate in regular interactions with formal regulatory orders. This is explored in the next section below.

Formal regulatory orders: avoidance and support

This section examines young people's relationships with formal regulatory orders. The conceptual chapter introduced the theory of 'negotiated orders' as a means of understanding the relationship between offending, identity formation, and relationships with formal 'regulatory orders', especially the police and teachers. These were found to be central to both the onset of offending and to efforts to desist for offenders. Chapter Six found that many of the interview participants felt that having been identified as a

'troublemaker' not only had implications for their treatment at the hands of the police, but also for the police's commitment to providing them protection as a citizen. It was not necessarily that this led directly to the carrying of a knife in *lieu* of such protection, but was rather a more complex set of processes in which a young person increasingly came to identity with an outlaw identity, part of which could involve taking on responsibility for their own safety in a hostile environment. This provided a rationale or justification for carrying a knife rooted in a defensive ethos, even when a knife was also used for offensive means. In contrast, by avoiding offending and offending peers the young people who took part in the focus groups were able to avoid at least some of this violence. This is explored below.

Relations with the police and teachers

The majority of the young people who took part in the focus groups shared similar spaces and place to those who took part in the interviews: they attended similar schools, and walked through similar streets. They were also exposed to violence, witnessing and sometimes experiencing violence and were able to draw on a rich range of experiences and stories both personal and collective.

It was argued in Chapter Six that offending could be viewed in part as a strategy of engagement with an environment in which offending and violence were commonplace. One of the implications of this strategy was an escalation in violence that necessitated far greater attention to already extant concerns around risk. Different strategies were employed by those young people who did not offend, and these involved both passive and more active approaches. Avoidance was a commonplace strategy employed and described by the young people in relation to offending individuals and groups and this is explored further below. As a result of avoiding engagement in offending and gangs, young people seemed to be able to avoid the kinds of severe and frequent violence highlighted in the previous chapter. At the same time, non-offenders were also able to draw on and were more prepared to seek formal support in the shape of formal regulatory orders, especially the police, and especially when events escalated. They were also better able

to engage with parents and families in a constructive way, and their lack of engagement in offending meant that they were at least more likely to receive a satisfactory response.

> ...go to the fucking police, definitely. They'll get in trouble and then making a threat, they can get - … if you make a threat...how many years you can get? (Yorkshire, five participants: all male, BB, BA, AAO).

This engagement should not be overplayed. Lemos (2004), found mistrust of the police among many young people, who reported a belief that they are viewed as offenders rather than victims. The non-offending participants in this research expressed criticism of the police and described specific incidents in which the police had not been helpful. Moreover, whist young people might have been more prepared to go the police, this did not always translate into effective action.

> Actually, sometimes I don't feel safer when the police are around because – sometimes the police they don't actually listen to what you have to say, they'll be like – if they say you've done something wrong then they listen to what they have to say rather than what we have to say. (Yorkshire, six participants: four male, three female, all WB).

Whilst the police were regarded as especially important with respect to street violence, school based violence is a significant problem. Not only does a great deal of bullying occur in schools, but sometimes and increasingly, street related violence is manifesting in schools (Gaskell, 2008). That the schools visited during the empirical research were strictly guarded, and had segregated areas for different ages of children, was testament to these concerns. Likewise, the increasing use of metal detectors in schools and the legal emphasis on punishing knife carrying in or near schools suggests that, even without clear statistics, these problems are common. As one participant noted, however, such measures were sometimes only adopted after a serious incident had occurred:

> ...things are only put into place after it's happened.   Like with the school, near where I live in [area] and they had an issue with knife crime a few years ago. Before there was a stabbing in that school, nothing was done

> about it. And then after that, now they've got the scanners on the entrances and they do a lot more education but it's only after. But more needs to be put in place before it actually happens instead of just as an afterthought. (London, six participants: four male, two female, WB, BB, BA, AAO).

It might be expected that teachers would take on some role in terms of preventing violence. Focus group participants, like the interviewees, were however fairly scathing about teachers, who were regarded not in adversarial terms, but rather as lacking the will or competence to address issues of violence in school.

> Teachers, are useless…I think they'd laugh...(Yorkshire, seven participants: four male, three female, all WB).

In the absence of these sources of support, participants often fell back on family members, but they were also able to draw on the support of sympathetic support workers in a range of roles. This is described below.

Relations with parents and other adults

The previous chapter discussed the sense that young people who subscribed to an outlaw identity expressed an exaggerated sense of independence or self-reliance (Brookman and Maguire, 2004). Whilst some knife carriers described their families in positive terms, it seemed that it was only as they desisted that their families began to have some kind of influence on them. Non-offenders, on the whole, described warm relations with their families. Parents were regarded by non-offenders as significantly more important than either the police or teachers, and they were more prepared to go to their parents with problems. Their ability to do this seemed, in part, because their identity was not rooted in a sense of isolation and independence but rather mutual inter-dependence.

> *So what would you do then?*
> You'd tell your mum or your parents
> You'd tell your mum and you'd get your parents to do it
> Or your dad and get him to keep it quiet...

> …Friends and family because they're looking out for you...because you live with them the most. (Yorkshire, seven participants: four male, three female, all WB).

Focus group participants also made nuanced connections between parents and the police in terms of a spectrum of protective functions, suggesting a wider range of sources of protection than offenders.

> I would go to the police… Sometimes it is good to get the police on board if it's too far and they want to beat you up and stuff. If its weapons and stuff and they want to beat you up, then it's time to get the police involved. But if they're saying stuff to you, you get your parents involved because with your parents, they can try and tell other people so they're not going to attack you. But if it gets to weapons and stuff, you don't want to hurt yourself so that's the time to get them. (Yorkshire, six participants: four male, three female, all WB).

Aside from parents, a significant and positive factor in many participants' lives appeared to be the varied array of support workers who engaged with them through youth groups, charities and schools. Many of these assisted in the fieldwork and appeared to enjoy warm and genuine relationships with the young people. They were able to talk about knives and knife carrying with participants in ways that seemed appropriate and effective – in other words, they are were able to encourage the young people to talk about their concerns and experiences, and to suggest non-violent responses to these. This is in sharp contrast to the gruff but well-meaning police officer with a box of knives, offering dire warnings about the risks of carrying knives. As one young person commented:

> And also it's about role models. Going back to the whole city centre [issue], it's about role models and all young people, and even adults, we all have role models. And if they're your role model because if you can relate...because you had a similar background because you grew up in poverty and you grew up in disaffected areas of [location] or Los Angeles or wherever, they're going to be your role models because they're the only people that you can relate to. And then it's breaking out of that cycle. (Yorkshire, nine participants: ten male, nine female, mixed ethnicity including WB, BB, BA).

Support workers were also able to bring the young people together in ways that helped them to bridge any differences between them, that otherwise might fester into conflict. Below is an excerpt from the diary which illustrates these points.

> The session was in a pretty squalid old building, but the kids were baking muffins and playing on their computers and seemed happy and safe there…After the tape was switched off, I asked them what it was like living around [the area]. They said that it was much better now than it used to be. "now we're all together, friends, we come here and hang out together, and all know each other. We used to fight but not now". (Research diary, 4.10.2012).

The points made above raise important questions about the durable presence of significant adults in the lives of young people and the ways in which resilience is fostered and rooted in social networks. The peripatetic nature of youth work, however, means that effective pastoral relationships with some very vulnerable young people last only as long as the worker stays there. Indeed, several of the gatekeepers who assisted in the research moved on before the fieldwork had finished, whilst one of the charities withdrew the work it was doing in a school because of budget cuts. A potential consequence of this is a reduction in places of safety for young people living with marginality, and a reduction in sympathetic adults with the right backgrounds and social skills to engage with them. These problems were encountered at most of the fieldwork sites and had implications for how young people managed difficult circumstances. Indeed, in the perceived or real absence of competent and sympathetic regulatory orders, young people drew on their own forms of self-policing orders around violence but also around knives, as already discussed. In this, and in their general attitude towards gangs and knives, young people demonstrated significant resilience. The notion of 'resilience' was introduced in the conceptual chapter and the next section develops this with reference to the overall conceptual framework.

Discussion: Resilience - a civic code?

This chapter has examined knife carrying from the perspective of those who had not carried a knife, the majority of whom were not offending to any significant degree. It was found that young people resisted knife carrying in a number of ways and for a number of reasons. These were as much about avoiding offending as avoiding knife carrying *per se*. First, by not becoming offenders, participants were not exposed to the same levels of violence. They generally avoided becoming offenders by drawing on and mobilising normative and exclusionary orders and drawing on wider sources of social support and resilience, conceived of as a 'civic code'. Second, even when confronted by violence and knives, participants were able to mobilise these same resources and by constructing knife carriers in certain ways they were able to effectively police them and, where appropriate, seek other sources of support.

A small number of those who had carried knives were not offenders. This was a response to bullying rather than gang violence and was partly a result of an inability to effectively utilise some of these sources of resilience. Non-offenders were also, overall, able to better absorb anti-knife messages and deterrents as a result of a general lack of estrangement and some level of investment in wider norms and values. Whilst avoidance and management of risk were certainly part of this, they also showed an ability to articulate resistance to knife carrying and to violence more broadly, which fits in the framework of informal orders outlined earlier. As was noted, one of the strengths of non-gang membership was retaining a connection with the wider population of young people and other sources of control and safety. This provided young people with some sense of security and some 'tools' with which to confront violence. This suggests a well-developed response to knives among the wider population of young people and says much about young people's agency and also resilience in the face of adversity. It also speaks to the pervasiveness of violence and the salience of knives in deprived communities. Whilst the existence of gangs had significant implications for most of the young people who took part in this research, there were also spaces in which this heterogeneity could be challenged.

The previous two chapters both touched on the problems young people who decided to engage directly with violence. By engaging with and in violence and especially with gangs they were essentially stepping out of the dominant normative order. Whilst for a time this meant that they enjoyed a certain status among both offending and non-offending peers, it also meant that they were a stage removed from some of the sources of protection enjoyed by the majority, both formal sources of protection like schools, and the police, and more informal exclusionary orders. The impact of this was that the knife became a proxy for these and a source of protection in the absence of these other sources. It would be wrong to say that these young people lacked resilience however, but they did appear to lack some sources of capital that would assist in being 'resilient' to the lure of an offending lifestyle. Though the majority of the offenders seemed to have entered the 'desistence' phase, their relations with formal orders did not necessarily improve. By contrast young people who did not generally engage in violence were also less likely to engage in knife carrying or need to engage in knife carrying. The normative order they subscribed to was demonstrated in the focus groups in the ways that they described knife carriers, gangs and violent young people, and the ways in which they responded to these.

It was argued in the last chapter that offending and desistence from offending are part of an active process, here it is argued that *not-offending* is also a process of active engagement with the social environment. Crucially this involved drawing on 'collective resilience' and the mobilisation of both social and normative frameworks that assist in both responding to violence and responding to knife carrying and knife carriers. In demonstrating collective strength, young people could resist some of the more visceral aspects of violence and of a violent street culture. By forming their own groups, they were also able to avoid the kinds of situational weakness described by Collins (2008), a point that has implications for perceptions of young people, given the negativity directed at all groups of young people. Knives *were* associated with gangs in the minds of the young people who participated. There were however several incidents outlined in which a member of a non-offending peer group had carried a knife and it was interesting to see the uniformity of responses. Importantly though, the power to exclude was itself a form of

self-policing, and several incidents were relayed whereby young people had carried knives and been actively excluded from a group until they had stopped carrying.

This suggests a nuanced response to knives and says much about young people's agency and resilience in the face of adversity. These kinds of resilience were rooted in social networks and social integration – and young people demonstrated that even during a period of transition and reduced economic and social capital, they were able to look out for and support each other, often drawing on complex mechanics of inclusion and exclusion. The findings here challenge some of the bleaker conclusions about the dominance of gangs and violent street cultures. Whilst the existence of gangs had significant implications for most of the young people who took part in this research, there were also spaces in which this heterogeneity could be challenged. One of the strengths of non-gang membership was the fact that they were part of a larger group than gang members, that is, 'everybody else'. Some individuals and groups articulated a collective response to violent individuals that was not based on shared gang membership but rather on non-offending group membership. The power to exclude was a valuable resource that was employed towards friends and peers however as much as towards violent individuals. These findings also add weight to the suggestion in Chapters Six and Seven that whilst subcultures of violence were central to knife carrying, exclusion from and by peers and hostile relations with the police were also important. This is an important point: peer exclusion is often framed in negative terms by scholars, and indeed it can have a range of negative implications for those young people who are excluded by their peers. At the same time, and in the absence of competent or sympathetic formal sources of support, the power to exclude can be a useful way for non-offending young people to protect themselves against their more aggressive peers. This resilience should not be overplayed, however, as it is partly dependent on the support of sympathetic adults.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined knife carrying from the perspective of non-offenders. It explored resistance to offending and resistance to knives and has developed the concept of 'collective resilience'. The young people who took part in the focus groups resisted knife carrying in a number of ways, and for a number of reasons. These were as much about avoiding offending as avoiding knife carrying *per se*. Firstly, by not offending they were not exposed to the same levels of violence. They generally avoided offending by drawing on and mobilising normative and exclusionary orders and drawing on wider sources of social support and resilience. They were also able to better absorb anti-knife messages and deterrents because of a general lack of estrangement and some level of investment in a civic code. Second, even when confronted by violence and knives, they could mobilise these same resources, and by constructing knife carriers in certain ways they could effectively police themselves, and where appropriate seek other sources of support. In this way, largely passive approaches to the punitive and deterrent aspects of knife policy were juxtaposed with more active approaches in which young people can be seen to actively resist the kind of forces that were described in the earlier chapter that can lead to knife carrying. The next chapter draws together the findings from Chapters Five, Six and Seven, and develops theoretically some of the points made in these chapters about 'integrational difficulties', 'security gap', and 'collective resilience'.

Chapter Eight: Discussion

Bridging the security gap: knife carrying, integration and collective resilience

In every insecure person with whom the writer has worked he has always found a continual, never dying longing for security (Maslow, 1942: 336)

Well with my experience, of why some people would carry knives, like it was only recently I've had a proper understanding of why people would carry knives because before that, I just thought people either do it for reputation, [or] they would do it to make themselves feel big about themselves. But…over the last year or so I've actually realised a lot more about why people carry knives, it's more because they feel, because they feel a lot safer when they carry it. Because some of the situations that these young people are put in, they feel like they've got no other [option]…it's really there for to help them if you understand? So like if you know that someone, if you know that there's a group of people out there to get you and you know that when you see them it's gonna be a life or death situation, how do you go about that knowing that your life is at risk every single day. You can't really go to the police about it because you will get classed as a snitch…and that makes the situation just ten times worse when you actually do see the people.

And is that something that happens round here?

Yeah. It happens near enough every day. (Klint, London, black British, aged seventeen).

The two quotes presented on the previous page provide contrasting viewpoints from which to try and understand why some young people choose to carry a knife. The first quote offers a psychological assessment of 'insecure' individuals, and their ongoing search for security, including physical security, as conceived in Maslow's (1942) famous 'hierarchy of needs'. The second quote illustrates some of the points made in this chapter, and this thesis as whole: that the need for security, at least as it has been described in this thesis, is rooted not in individual deficit but in external, localised and fundamentally social circumstances. Rather than a 'never dying longing for security' as described above, for many participants this desire was temporal, and relatively short lived. The young man in the second quote is articulating this need, and is not only describing the evolution of his own perspective on why young people carry knives, but he could also be said to have captured the evolution of thought that occurred over the course of this thesis.

Introduction

This chapter brings together the arguments made in the previous three chapters, and presents a theory of resilience that can incorporate and explain, to some extent at least, pathways into and out of knife carrying as it was described by participants in the research. The chapter reiterates and develops some of the concepts introduced in the previous chapters, especially the concept of the 'security gap' – that is, experiences of and anxieties about, violent victimisation, and the variable responses to this demonstrated by participants. The chapter links this to integrational difficulties during a period of transition; forms of social and collective resilience; and, the idea of a 'civic code'. It then develops the idea that knife carrying forms a *proxy* for collective resilience for some young people where such resilience is otherwise absent. This response is misguided and dangerous, but it can be understood ultimately as an attempt to close, or at least bridge, the 'security gap'. This not done only to preserve physical safety but also to maintain resilience through *social integration* at a time of transition. The chapter presents some data from both the interviews and focus groups, but does not introduce new data *per se*, rather it re-presents data that has already been seen so as to reiterate some points, or presents excerpts that have not previously seen where they support points that have already been made in

previous chapters. The chapter is in four parts. The first section returns to the concept of 'street life' and considers the implications of the findings for the concept as it was sketched out in Chapter Three, especially as it concerns the 'security gap'. The second section returns to the concepts of social and collective resilience and the nature of social identity. This is done with reference to the concept of youth transitions as a way of illustrating the importance of social integration. Finally, the chapter returns to the issue of the knife, and considers the *temporal* nature of both knife carrying and offending more widely.

'Street life' and the 'security gap'

The concept of 'street life' formed a central pillar of the conceptual framework by which the empirical research was approached and analysed. There was an emphasis on the role of street codes, 'respect', masculine hegemonies and gangs in both shaping and responding to social constructions of space and place. 'Street life' was framed as a normative street code in which masculine hegemony and the search for 'respect' had implications for the ways in which people responded to each other. In this context, a street code shapes and constrains the conduct of people living in an area where it can be shown to have an influence. Gangs have been shown to be central to the formation and reproduction of 'street life' and can heighten levels of violence in the local ecology. Chapters Two and Three considered gangs in some depth and the complex links between gangs, violence and knives. Chapter Five explored pathways into knife carrying and linked these for many participants to experiences of 'street life'. It was argued that pervasive violence and the existence of a violent street code contributed to a 'security gap' in the communities in which participants lived. This 'security gap' was multi-dimensional and included both perceptions and anxieties of risk and threat, and real experiences of violent victimisation. The presence of a violent street code had an impact on participants' perceptions of space, place and the attendant risks of going through or to different places and spaces, and this varied according to time and context. Walking through a particular area at night for instance was regarded as dangerous, but specific streets were regarded as particularly dangerous, and the visible presence of a gang could further heighten the perception of risk and the threat of victimisation. These concerns

were resonant for both offenders and non-offenders, but especially for offenders, and this was bound up in collective violence and gangs. Violence and offending then were conceived of as both a response to the presence of 'street life' in the local ecology and constitutive *of* 'street life'.

It was clear that there is more than one kind of gang, and that knife carrying was not entirely coterminous with gang membership – some gangs carried knives whilst others did not, and some individuals in gangs carried knives whilst others in the same gang did not. Gang membership was also found to be somewhat more fluid than some formal definitions might allow, although this confirms the findings of existing research (Bannister *et al.*, 2010; McVie; 2010; Firmin, *et al.*, 2007; Aldridge and Medina, 2007). Gang membership was shown to provide many things, including: a collective response to structural marginalisation and inequality; thrills and excitement and a way of alleviating boredom; a sense of protection, community; and, a means of expressing belonging and territoriality in the context of restricted geographies and contested spaces (Bannister *et al.*, 2010; McVie; 2010). More negatively, gangs can also help to create and constitute a public dynamic in which street codes and masculinity are negotiated and enforced, and in doing so they can generate and sustain significant levels of violence: pre-emptive violence, spontaneous violence, organised violence and retaliatory violence; violence that humiliates or causes physical and psychological damage. In this respect, the presence of gangs also impacts on those young people who are not in gangs, and on perceptions and negotiations of public space more widely.

It is important not to over-play the homogeneity of young people living in deprived areas. Whilst they are subject to similar influences and challenges, not all young people growing up in working class communities are members of an offending gang, and neither do they all have an equal investment in a street code. Critically however, young people with different orientations interact daily. As Anderson (1999) has shown, people oriented towards the 'street' and towards 'respectability' must cohabit. One implication of this is that whilst some young people may choose not to engage directly in a violent street

culture, they nonetheless must negotiate with it to some degree. An offending gang provides a space in which street codes and masculine hegemony can be enforced and negotiated. Some of the non-offending participants in the empirical research for this thesis could be said to gather around a 'civic code', which also had implications for their conduct and wider normative behaviour including facilitating both shared identity and exclusionary practices. Non-offending individuals sometimes formed their own groups, sometimes as a result of concerns about gangs in their area. This blurring of boundaries had real consequences for participants, and highlights the role of regulatory orders in shaping gangs and responses to gangs. In this context, it is difficult to perceive just where a *real* gang ends and the *concept* of a gang begins - this fluid boundary is often to a large extent determined by policing and regulatory responses to young people's transgression.

The riots that broke out across the United Kingdom in 2011 have highlighted the complexity of the relationship between police and young people in poor communities. The riots were shown to be a *direct* response to the shooting by police of a young man, Mark Duggan, believed at the time to be armed, in the context of harsh and intrusive policing practices. Whilst tensions between the police and black communities remain problematic, young people from many different communities took part in the riots. Research conducted with young people who had taken part in the riots (Lewis *et al.*, 2011:13) found that out of 270 interviews, 85 *per cent* said policing was an 'important' or 'very important' factor in starting the riots. The report quotes a teenager who said 'I don't hate the policing system, I hate the police on the street. I hate them from the bottom of my heart' (2011: 14). These sentiments were articulated by many of the interview participants in the empirical research:

> And I think that's why, one of the reasons why youth nowadays don't have any respect for the police because the police are – they promote the worst thing ever. We're the biggest gang in London like. What's that? That's what they think, we are the biggest gang, right, and it's like the word 'gang' itself you're promoting a gang because you're saying you're the biggest gang (Ris, London, aged 16).

The concerns described above were experienced to a greater or lesser extent by most of the young people who took part in the research. There were variations by age, gender and ethnicity in terms of the kinds of experiences that young people described. Young black males in London, for instance, seemed to describe more intense and frequent experiences than their white counterparts, or those of any ethnicity in Yorkshire. The two young women who took part in the interviews were also London based, and described some extreme violence. They also articulated some quite different experiences. One of the young women emphasised her own masculine qualities, or at least, emphasised a prior adherence to a particular form of masculine behaviour, in line with findings cited in Chapter Three by Miller (2001), and Miller and Brunson (2000). The other young woman, by contrast, emphasised her femininity, but at the same time challenged the notion that this made her vulnerable or a passive recipient of masculine prerogatives. Both young women felt very strongly about the issues covered by this thesis, as the quote below, by the second young women, attests:

> I just think it's because they're trying to protect something but they don't understand that what they're protecting ain't really protecting them. Like if you get – like when I sit down and listen to some of the boys that are in the gangs and stuff, they're arguing over something stupid, stupid things…I've had so many friends taken because of knife stuff and it's just like – actually I need to speak out because in the black community it's like you're all killing each other. My little brother, he's 16 and he left home, I'm so scared that he's gonna get involved with a gang, and he's gonna go round stabbing people. (Charlie, London, aged 17).

The young women in the focus groups also sought to stress their agency and capacity, and presented themselves very much as equal partners in confronting violence – sometimes committed by other women. An important difference though, and one which was not specific to any ethnicity or either gender, was how participants responded to the 'security gap', and the consequences of this response for ongoing experiences of security. Security was in turn linked to social integration although the direction of the causal relationship between *in*security and *lack of* integration was complex, multi-dimensional, and mutually reinforcing. A 'security gap' was not simply *caused* by the presence of

violence but could be prompted by, and also significantly exacerbate, 'integrational difficulties' that were common for participants at a period of transition in their lives. Offending participants may have engaged with street life in the first place because of integrational difficulties, but these difficulties were significantly worsened as a result of participation in 'street life'. Research and scholarship over thirty years has highlighted the role of police relations in the formation of young people's identities (see for instance Hall *et al.*, 1978; Newburn, 2002) and as was suggested in Chapter Six, negative policing can exacerbate the 'security gap' felt by some young people and push them further towards an 'outlaw identity'. This is especially the case for those already engaged in and with 'street life' as it was described above, and can be seen to have had consequences for knife carrying. It also had consequences for social integration and resilience, and this is considered below.

Resilience and social integration

The concept of resilience was introduced in Chapter Three, and was developed further in the empirical chapters. This concept emerged as important during the analysis of the empirical research and it was suggested that resilience is multi-dimensional and can be applied to both young people who offend and those who do not offend. Resilience in this definition is not indicative of a moral *surplus* but rather as a variable and fluid phenomena that can generate violence as much as limit it. Young people can be seen to draw on various sources of resilience, and some of these can heighten their engagement in offending. It was argued in Chapter Five that engagement in offending and participation in street life increased participants' experiences of violence, and that this was bound up in collective conflict and offending. Offending and gang membership can be conceived of as both a response to street life, and constitutive *of* street life. It was argued in Chapter Six that desistence from carrying a knife for the majority of participants was promoted and supported by two interrelated factors: experiences of formal punishment; and, a complex set of largely social processes referred to as 'growing up', which entailed among other things disengagement with street life and a consequent reduction in victimisation. Participation in gangs was found in part to be an attempt to integrate with peers and a

search for security in a hostile environment. This section links these issues together as being bound up in *social* relationships.

Matters of desistence and deterrence were defined previously as a complex process that involved both individual and social factors. The idea of resilience was found to be crucial to developmental understandings of why some young people offended whilst others, in similar circumstances did not. Resilience was defined as 'individual variations in response to risk factors' (Born *et al.*, 1997:680) including educational and residential climate; relationship with a reference person; cognitive abilities, self-esteem; and, an active rather than passive approach to problems. There are various problems with this conceptualisation of resilience. It is not clear, for example, how an individual who lacked the resilience to avoid offending then goes on to develop this resilience so as to stop offending. Indeed, the complexity of an individual's life is often lost in these explanations (Maruna, 1999).

An answer to the conundrum of 'resilience' posed above can perhaps be found in the data from the focus groups. Chapter Seven explored the experiences of focus group participants, the majority of whom might be described as 'resilient', according to the definition given above. Certainly, they seemed better able to absorb anti-knife messages and deterrents than those who took part in the interviews. This appeared to be, in part, as a result of a general lack of estrangement from mainstream society, but also because of some level of investment in what was described in the conceptual chapter as a 'civic' code. This was equally the case for the young men and young women who took part. Moreover, it was argued in Chapters Six and Seven that offending and desistence from offending were part of an active process. It was also argued that not-offending is also a process of active engagement with the social environment. This involved building *social* resilience and the mobilisation of both social and normative frameworks that assist in both responding to violence and responding to knife carrying. A small number of non-offenders had also carried knives. This was a response to bullying rather than gang violence and was partly as a result of an inability to effectively utilise some of these sources of

resilience – as McVie (2010) has noted, non-offending knife carriers are often socially isolated, as are victims of bullying more generally.

In demonstrating collective strength, non-offending participants were able to resist some of the more visceral aspects of violence and of a violent street culture. By forming their own groups, they were better able to avoid being targeted for victimisation (Collins, 2008) a point that has implications for perceptions of young people, given the negativity directed at all groups of young people and the blurred perceptions between offending and non-offending gangs. It is clear, that knives *were* associated with gangs in the minds of the young people who participated. There were however several incidents in which a member of a non-offending peer group had carried a knife. In these instances, the power to exclude was used as a form of self-policing, and young people who had carried knives had been actively excluded from a group until they had stopped carrying. This suggests well-developed responses to knives at least among some of the participants and says much about young people's agency in the face of adversity. These strengths should not be over-stated. The kinds of social capital illustrated by young people in Chapter Seven can have negative consequences, and it would be unfair and misleading to paint the participants in too bold a light. They were ordinary young people coping with difficult circumstances and demonstrated anxiety and vulnerability as well as strength and humour. Moreover, their resilience was supported by sympathetic adults and the importance of this should not be under-estimated. The relative absence of such figures can be seen in the small group of non-offenders who had resorted to carrying knives, most of whom had tried unsuccessfully to mobilise the kinds of support demonstrated above.

If resilience is conceived of as social, then it is equally conceivable that young people can possess more or less of it at any given time. It might be better to say then that instead of resilience *per se*, offending participants, many of whom had experienced significant violence and a stressful lifestyle, lacked some of the touchpoints necessary to build the kind of social resilience required to build and sustain an identity that is not founded on

offending. These touchpoints can be conceived of as social rather than intrinsic, and therefore fluid. In this context, young people's offending behaviour can be seen as an attempt to foster resilience at a time of transition. The literature on youth transitions was introduced in Chapter Three. Barry (2006; 2004) has argued is that offending for young people represents an attempt to build and maintain social integration during the transitional period from youth to adult. In the contexts described above, Barry argues that offending can be viewed as a *process* of change for an individual in the transition from childhood to adulthood in which both offending and non-offending actions are orientated towards achieving recognition among peers, which in turn enhances integration and importantly, a sense of security. Importantly, this sense of security, though transient and sometimes counter-productive, does offer a sense of *durability* and *legitimacy*, at a time when other sources of security appear neither durable nor legitimate.

It is suggested here then, that social integration represents a relatively durable form of resilience for young people, and that offending and gang membership can be conceived of as an attempt to build *resilience* at a critical juncture in young people's lives. Violence for young people can be a tool, like offending, for furthering integration at a time of transition. Both engagement and disengagement from street life can be viewed not *just* as subcultural responses *per se*, but rather attempts to foster integration. Integration however, though important, is not necessarily the final intent, rather, integration provides a crucial source of resilience. As Barry (2006) and Gaskell (2008) have argued, many young people offend as a means of gaining recognition or 'respect' among peers. A problem with strategy though, as already noted, is that it often has the opposite effect to what is intended. If offending and gang membership can be seen as attempts to maintain integration during a period of transition, this proved to be an often fragile and counter-productive response. Engagement in street life can actually lead to *dis*-integration and the *erosion* of sources of collective resilience, with consequences for security and safety. Gangs did not provide the resilience that many participants anticipated, and the realisation of this prompted a reorientation towards more durable forms of collective resilience – a 'civic code', as described earlier. As participants disengaged with street life

they sometimes became more integrated with wider society, and as a consequence, their levels of victimisation declined, or, to use the concepts introduced in the previous chapters, as 'integrational difficulties' reduced, the 'security gap' they had experienced also reduced. As soon as these problems started to resolve, the majority of participants gave up carrying a knife, albeit sometimes with a significant push from criminal justice agencies.

If integration can be seen as a way of building resilience, then the behaviour of individuals in these contexts becomes more understandable. Crucially, like the shift from childhood to adulthood, the shift from offender to non-offender, from socially isolated to integrated, are not smooth transitions but are rather complex, fragmented and erratic. The next section argues that understanding this can help to understand why knives take on such importance for young people during adolescence.

Time and change: the knife as a proxy for collective resilience

The previous sections, and indeed the findings chapters as a whole, have focused primarily on the differences *between* offenders and non-offenders in the sample. This section in contrast aims to demonstrate some of the fundamental *similarities* between offenders and non-offenders, and, argues that a knife can form a *proxy* of resilience.in the absence of other forms of resilience for mainly offending participants. Offenders were not pathological 'monsters', nor were non-offenders always entirely innocent. The truth is the young people who took part in this thesis shared many similarities, despite the various differences between them that have formed the core of this thesis. The key difference that explains this similarity/difference is one of *time*. None of the young men who took part appeared to fit some of the hyper-masculine stereotypes attached to gangs. The two female offenders did acknowledge some of the risks associate with proximity to young men. At the same time, many adhered to a form of *social pressure* that obliged them to pay excessive attention to how they presented and responded to others, in the context of 'street life'. For many this was only temporary. Non-offenders 'got there first' as it were,

whilst offenders experimented with alternative attempts to foster resilience. This is not a novel observation, as has been shown, the majority of offenders do desist – and as Matza (1967) has demonstrated, young people can hold contradictory views. What these findings suggest is that integrational difficulties and the increased 'security gap' were to a significant extent responsible for this social delay. As soon as these started to resolve, the majority of participants gave up carrying a knife.

The previous sections highlighted the problems that young people who decided to engage with violence faced as a result of these actions. By engaging with, and in, violence and especially with gangs, they were essentially stepping out of the dominant normative order. Whilst for a time this meant that they enjoyed a certain status among both offending and non-offending peers, it also meant that they were a stage removed from some of the sources of protection enjoyed by the majority, both formal sources of protection like schools and the police and more informal exclusionary orders. It would be wrong to say that these young people lacked resilience however, but they did appear to lack some sources of capital that would assist in being 'resilient' to the lure of an offending lifestyle. Though the majority of offenders seemed to have entered or to have been entering the 'desistence' phase their relations with formal orders did not necessarily improve. By contrast young people who did not generally engage in violence were also less likely to engage in knife carrying or need to engage in knife carrying. The normative order to which they subscribed (a civic code) was demonstrated in the focus groups in the ways that they described knife carriers, gangs and violent young people and the ways in which they responded to these.

Gang membership can be seen as an attempt to build collective resilience and a response to the 'security gap'. Integration fosters resilience, whilst lack of integration exposes individuals to victimisation. Respect and the idea of masculine hegemony can be understood within this. If integration and resilience are coterminous, at a period of transition, then the need to maintain integration takes on heightened significance for young people. The need to maintain a credible street presence increases, rather than

reduces, the likelihood of being victimised, and the impact of victimisation goes beyond physical injury and threatened for some participants the foundations of their social identity at a transitional stage. In response to these same challenges, some participants could be said to have demonstrated a collective resilience to violence that could be expressed in different ways, through informal exclusionary orders and recourse to wider normative values and a rejection of violent values and people, through recourse to formal orders and sources of support. These kinds of resilience were rooted in social networks and social integration – and young people demonstrated that even during a period of transition and reduced economic and social capital, they were able to look out for, and support each other, often drawing on complex mechanics of inclusion and exclusion.

Regardless of whether young people subscribed to a 'street' or 'civic' code, it is clear, that adherence to either normative framework provided, or appeared to provide, some sense of integration, and 'collective resilience', whereas failure to adhere to a code threatened exclusion and possible victimisation. This provides a pointer as to why street codes generate such extreme violence – loss of 'respect' as it was conceptualised could lead to loss of integration, which in turn could lead to loss of resilience with significant consequences.

The importance of social identity has been central to this thesis. Participants frequently articulated the importance of both collective and individual identity, expressed through gangs, friendship groups, communities and families. It was also clear that these identities were vulnerable and fragile, and were so in part because of the transitional period, but also because of the deprivation and difficult circumstances that this fostered. Attention to the 'code of the street' can provide insight into how identity is constructed through narrative. Maruna (1999) has highlighted the role of self-narratives in the construction of identity – the story, he claims, brings coherence in a fragmented contemporary society, especially for young people, and even more so for young people who experience problems in their lives. Likewise, Barry (2006), drawing on Bourdieu, has shown how young people experience a form of 'bounded' rationality (Weininger, 2005: 125) which

254

limits their ability to objectively view their behaviour. Maruna (1999: 8) argues that adolescents go through a 'psychosocial moratorium' where they 'try on' various possible selves 'for size'. This transitory identity nonetheless shapes how young people see the world, how they understand themselves and how they behave and respond to others. These identities are not created in isolation however, but are, according to Maruna (1999) shaped and constrained by the social world and social relationships.

It was argued above that some young people construct an identity around a street code which places particular emphasis on the maintenance of respect and the performance of masculinity. This identity takes on heightened importance when a young person is experiencing integrational difficulties and a security gap, and becomes the way in which they project and maintain self-esteem (Gaskell, 2008). At the same time, a street identity locates young people who subscribe to it in a fragile collective upon which they are, for a time, dependent for acceptance and positive feedback so as to sustain identity and resilience. This identity is further shaped by ongoing and fraught relations with regulatory orders. Rooted as it is in a form of fragile integration, it is easy to see just how critical the protection of identity becomes. The 'security gap' can be conceived of as posing a threat not just to physical security but to young people's personal and social identities at a time when they are fragile and vulnerable. As Bannister *et al.*, (2010) have noted, the young people who took part in their research appeared unconcerned about the physical risks they were exposed to. The young people who took part in this thesis similarly were more concerned with protecting their identity, and in particular, resisting a victim identity, than they were about loss of physical integrity. In these contexts, a knife becomes not just a way of protecting the body, but of protecting the complex chain of inter-dependent and interlocking phenomena described in this chapter: identity, integration and resilience. Maruna (1999) illustrates this point with a story about a murder with committed with a knife. The text below is part of an account given by a prison inmate of his response to the theft of a piece of jewellery (Maruna, 1999: 9):

> I said, 'Give me the fucking chain back,' and he pulled a knife out at me and his friend had got this baseball bat... I went home, and I couldn't sleep. I kept waking up at 2 a.m. saying, 'I can't deal with this.' My girl was telling me to calm down, let it go. But I kept thinking to myself, 'This is going to have to be something big.' This isn't going to be just a fist fight. This is going to be big...Everybody in the scene knew I was looking for him...Then eventually I met him at the pub. I brought this knife and I stabbed him...Unless you actually grew up in that situation, you wouldn't understand what I was going through. Common sense is just different in that situation… I had little choice really. Either you do it, or you do nothing and you get written off the scene altogether. Street-wise, that's suicide - you're back to the bottom of the ladder, you're nobody.

Maruna (1999) challenges the rational choice theories of change that have been shown to underpin many attempts to reduce knife carrying and crime. Whilst offending behaviour might have an 'internal logic' (Maruna, 1999: 15) this is shaped through a narrow, bounded lens rather than an objective reality. Responding to an insult with violence might seem disproportionate to onlookers, but it can be shown to be rational if viewed from the perspective of the violent individual. As Maruna says of the incident cited above (1999: 16): 'Only by understanding the way this man understood himself, his actions, and the 'common sense' of the streets, can one begin to understand why he attempted murder'. This can also explain some of the tragic situations that lead to murder, and also many of the more common but less reported incidents of injury, robbery and mutual victimisation, some of which were described by participants in this thesis. A similar dynamic can be seen in a newspaper report of a recent murder trial presented below (Cambridge, 2016). The article describes an incident in which a young man is stabbed to death after an altercation with a group of youths. A segment from this article was also presented in Chapter One.

> What he couldn't take was losing face, better to stab Tom Webb than walk away." Mr Auty said in the aftermath the defendant said something to the effect of 'what have I done?' and was "plainly shaking"….He said the knife was placed inside a McDonald's cup in a planter, which police later recovered and the teen was arrested at 11.25am the following day.The 16-year-old, from Allenton, Derby, denies murder.

The excerpt presented above is particularly interesting because it goes against the grain of a lot of reporting of knife crime, which tends to emphasise the monstrousness of the perpetrator against the innocence of the victim (see for example McShane, 2010). The text above introduces an element of doubt into this narrative, at least as it related to the perpetrator, by including the line 'what have I done?' This suggests that far from being a monster, the young man acted impulsively and spontaneously in an attempt to preserve 'respect' among his peers, and in doing so committed a terrible crime. The limited choices facing young people in these kinds of situations were acknowledged by many of the participants in the empirical research for this thesis:

> …I don't want someone's fucking death on my conscience, never.
> *So does that mean…if you were carrying a knife…[you might use it]?*
> I think I would use it, yeah. If I had to, I would, yeah, so I don't [carry any more]. (Lenny, Yorkshire, white British, aged 17).

A knife then offers an immediate and especially visceral response to a perceived or real attack on social identity. The individual described in the newspaper report above is not protecting his bodily and physical wellbeing, but rather his action represents one of a series of ongoing attempts to control how significant others perceive him to be. If these efforts are in vain, and he loses control of the perceptions of others, this threatens the social foundation of his being. This leads to a loss of respect, which engenders a loss of integration, and his resilience, or his ability to 'bounce back' becomes compromised. Applied to young people, the knife can be seen as a *proxy* form of resilience. In a milieu of heightened concerns about, and experiences of, violence, a knife is sometimes carried, as a means of both repelling attacks and reducing anxieties about being attacked. The findings then allow something to be said about the relationship between 'street life' or violent subcultures, and knife carrying. There was no clear evidence of a 'culture' of knife carrying. Rather, a wider culture of violence existed, alongside a general awareness about knives and an ease of acquiring them, which meant that sometimes a knife was both an easily accessible symbolic and practical source of protection.

In overview, this chapter has argued that a principal difference between offenders and non-offenders in this research was temporal. That carrying a knife is misguided was accepted by the majority of those participants who had carried a knife. The significant guilt and shame they experienced, and their framing of knives as 'childish', demonstrated how attitudes towards problematic behaviour can change among those who display this behaviour. Participants' changing sense of identity and experiences of integration and resilience further demonstrated this. Those who had carried a knife shared many of the same opinions towards preventing knife carrying as those who had not carried knives. The difference was one of time, and the majority of offenders who took part in this research arrived at similar attitudes to the non-offenders, only somewhat later, and generally when their need to carry a knife had reduced.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the implications of the findings for the conceptual framework as it was sketched out in Chapter Three. It has explored the concepts of integration and social and collective resilience in the context of 'street life' and the 'security gap'. It has argued that social identity, rooted in social integration, is central to understanding how young people respond with resilience to fear and insecurity, and that an important difference between offenders and non-offenders in this respect was *temporal*. Drawing on the works and concepts already cited, the argument is made that integration was key to understanding attempts to build resilience for participants. Offenders and some non-offenders lacked key sources of integration at this time, and therefore lacked social resilience during the transitional stage. In the context of 'street life', the knife represented for many of the offending participants a *proxy* form of resilience during a period of transition. This importance was symbolic, but, more importantly, it was also pragmatic, rooted in actual experience and a general recognition among participants that a knife could sometimes be effective in preventing victimisation, and reducing anxiety about victimisation. This is very much in line with Marfleet's (2008: 35) 'fear and victimisation' hypothesis. The novel concept of a 'security gap', introduced in this study, can augment this hypothesis, and demonstrates that neither fear, nor victimisation, are fixed or static,

but rather occur in specific contexts, at a specific period in young people's lives. Many participants were, as they aged, able to cultivate more effective forms of integration and social resilience. As they did so, the knife became increasingly redundant. In this sense, this chapter is not really about knives, and nor is the thesis as a whole, rather, it is about how young people create and sustain identities, integration and resilience in extremely difficult circumstances, and the sometimes misguided and self-defeating ways in which they seek to do this.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

A clearer view of knife carrying?

They're monsters because they killed someone's life, yeah. But there's always a background to someone, there's always a background. You just need to sit down and listen to – that's all these young people need, they need someone to sit down and actually listen. (Charlie, London, aged 17).

The quote presented on the previous page is the final quote to be presented in this thesis. It speaks to some of the contradictions expressed and addressed in the thesis, in terms of the contrasts between how the young people who took part presented themselves as they had been, and how they would like to be, and in terms of some of the representations of these young people in wider society. It also encapsulates the ultimate aim of this thesis, which was to listen to young people's stories, and to try to present them in ways which are both illuminating, and, accurate.

Overview

This thesis has explored pathways into and out of knife carrying, and the social meanings applied to knives by those who carry them, and those who share the same streets and schools as those who carry knives. Drawing on interviews and focus groups with young people living in difficult circumstances, the thesis has explored the roles of, and meanings attached to, knives. It has situated these within the broader context of 'street life', youth transitions, and relationships with formal and informal regulatory orders. In doing this, the thesis has added novel empirical and conceptual contributions to understandings of why some young carry knives, and how young people living in deprived areas respond to this.

This chapter concludes and summarises the thesis, and distils the key findings and recommendations to emerge from the empirical research. It does this in four sections. The first section below revisits the objectives of the research. It outlines the main findings and arguments of the thesis and highlights the novel empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions of the research. The second section describes the main limitations of the research, and considers some of the implications of these. The third and fourth sections describe, in turn, the key recommendations to emerge from the research, first for policy-makers, and second, for further research. The final section briefly reflects on the process of conducting the thesis.

Empirical and theoretical contributions of the thesis

This thesis had four objectives. To achieve these objectives the research interviewed 23 young people who had carried knives and conducted six focus groups with a total of 64 young people who were not known to have carried a knife but who lived in areas with high rates of violence and/or knife crime. These objectives were both empirical and conceptual, and it is hard in summarising the findings to make a distinction between them, given their interrelatedness. For instance, the thesis adds empirically to understandings of 'why' young people carry knives, but does this through developing several concepts related to security and social integration. As a consequence, the discussion below address both empirical and theoretical contributions, where appropriate, for each of the objectives in turn.

The first objective of the study was to explore the experiences and processes that lead young people to start carrying a knife. This was linked empirically to experiences of, and concerns about, violent victimisation, in young people's schools and neighbourhoods. This was explained conceptually with reference to three concepts: 'street life', 'security gap' and 'integrational' difficulties. The findings of this research suggest that violence was a common occurrence in the schools and neighbourhoods of the young people who took part. Most participants were able to share some stories about violence and violent people, whether this was direct violence, threats of violence, having witnessed violence or heard about it from others. A distinction was made in the research between offending and non-offending participants, and knife carrying was not restricted to offenders. This had implications for conduct, self-presentation and engagement with 'street life'. For both offenders and non-offenders, knife carrying could be seen, in part, as an attempt to *close* or at least bridge the 'security gap' during a period of transition between adolescence and adulthood.

Most participants were engaged in what was described as an offending lifestyle at the time that they first carried a knife. They were often exposed to increasing risk and

severity of victimization as a result of an offending lifestyle and participation in 'street life'. Engagement in 'street life' was in part prompted by, but also accelerated, what were called 'integrational difficulties' and the erosion of potentially supportive relationships with peers, families and the police, at an already difficult period of transition. This seemed to increase the need to adopt and exaggerate an aggressive 'outlaw' persona to feel safe. This appeared to be the case for both the young men, and, the two young women who took part in the interviews. These issues combined, or collided, to create a 'security gap', to which the carrying of a knife can provide offer an effective response. The other, more offensive 'uses' of a knife, including the commission of street robbery, were more likely to be realised once a knife was already being carried. A smaller number of participants were classified as 'non-offenders' at the point they started to carry a knife. These claimed to have carried a knife because of anxieties over being victimized, especially about being bullied. This was often done after other sources of protection, such as parents and teachers, had failed to provide the requisite level of support. Non-offenders carried for shorter periods and were less likely to 'use' the knife offensively.

The second objective of the study was to explore the experiences and processes that lead young people to *stop* carrying a knife. Desistence from knife carrying was a complex process that both required, and helped to foster, an improvement in supportive relationships. Getting caught and 'growing up' were significant prompts for many, although not all, participants. 'Growing up' included various significant changes in participants' lives including settling into a stable relationship and finding a job. The young men and women who had carried knives both appeared to go through this process, although for the young women, it was more about disengaging with offending males than it was necessarily engaging with non-offending males. In contrast, the young men who took part seemed to be more likely to benefit from relations with the opposite sex. Regardless, these changes prompted a disengagement in 'street life'. This in turn contributed to reduced exposure to victimization and meant that the 'security gap' identified above became narrower or even closed. This was part of a wider 'virtuous circle'

in which offending participants started to develop a different identity based more on conventional and mainstream values, even where some of them continued to offend. As a consequence, the majority of participants came to see knife carrying as foolish, dangerous and childish. In retrospect, they were often very thankful that they had not hurt someone, although several had received significant injuries as a result of being attacked with a knife themselves.

The third objective of the study was to explore the broader meanings applied to knife carrying; the relationship between carrying a knife and 'street life', and, more broadly, whether or not there was a culture or 'subculture' of knife carrying. The findings do not support the supposition that there is a *culture* of knife carrying. It was clear, however, that concerns about victimisation were for the majority bound up in an *offending* subculture in which mutual victimisation was routine: this broadly fitted with the concept of 'street life' introduced in Chapter Three, and encompassed offending, engaging in collective violence and some adherence to a street code. Clearly street codes and 'street life' played an important part in the young people's lives, and there were normative rules proscribing how people should respond to provocation, but this did not necessarily extend to carrying a knife.

Adherence to a street code was a common phenomenon across both sites, despite the greater prominence of offending gangs in the London sites. Participation was not restricted to any ethnic group, but the violence did appear more severe in London, in areas with a higher population (in a smaller area), a greater concentration of deprivation, more young people, and a larger proportion of ethnic minorities. There were differences by gender, but these were not necessarily predictable. Aldridge and Medina (2007) have stated in their research that they expected to find 'macho' young men, but on the whole did not. The same could be said of this research – none of the young men particularly fitted that stereotype and several sought to actively subvert or satirise it. At the same time, they were bound, for a time, to a street code that encouraged violence. Similarly, the two young women who took part seems also, for the period in which they were offending,

264

bound to some articulation of a street code. That they were able to desist relatively quickly might suggest, as research has, that young women are better able to disengage with offending than young men. It would be hard, given the low numbers, to make any broader claims about this, however.

The findings also challenge the common view that young people who carry knives are feral and out of control. Many of the participants were thoughtful, funny, intelligent, and, concerned about their own futures and the welfare of other people. Carrying a knife was something that they did for a relatively short period, and something that, by their own admission, the majority came to view as foolish, dangerous and stupid. Sometimes it was a matter of luck that no-one was hurt, or more seriously hurt than they were, in some of the incidents they described.

The fourth objective of the study was to explore how young people who did not offend, or carry knives, perceived and responded to knife carrying in their neighborhoods. They did this through both avoidance and confrontation. Confrontation sometimes involved or required the articulation of a 'civic code' which used exclusion and 'othering' as a means of policing both offenders and non-offending peers who carried knives. This was done in the context of a transitional period of heightened sensitivity towards integration with peers, for both offenders and non-offenders. Perhaps in part because of the greater representation of young women in the focus groups, the data suggest that females play a critical role in the articulation of a civic code, and are not reduced to simply passive bystanders or victims. At the same time, non-offenders were supported by ongoing relationships with sympathetic adults. In some cases, non-offending young people did carry knives, but this was often in the context of a breakdown in other sources of support that would have better enabled avoidance or confrontation. The articulation of a civic code did also pose some problems. One potentially negative consequence was a reduction in levels of integration for peers who displayed problematic behaviour. This in itself, by increasing some young people's experiences of a 'security gap', could potentially, encourage knife carrying among excluded young people.

265

The research then has made four principal empirical contributions. First, the findings contribute to knowledge on the social contexts in which knives are carried – the where and when of knife carrying. Second, the findings contribute to understandings of why young people carry knives. To do this the research gave voice to young people who had carried knives. It provided a space in which to express their own thoughts and explanations as to why they carried a knife, and to tell stories about their lives which illuminated these processes. Third, the findings contribute to an understanding of some of the processes that lead to the cessation of knife carrying. The finding that knife carrying is short-term behaviour and driven by social context supports findings made by analysis of data on knife carrying, and can thereby inform policies designed to prevent knife carrying. Fourth, by engaging with young people more broadly, the research has contributed to understandings of why some young people, despite living in violent contexts, do not carry a knife, and how they respond to knife carrying. In doing so, the research has also given voice to a cohort of young people who are usually excluded from discussions about offending and knife crime.

The thesis has also made four novel theoretical contributions. The concepts of 'integrational difficulties' and 'security gap' can enhance the literature on knife crime and the literature more broadly on violent street codes, youth transitions and negotiated orders. As was suggested at the outset, knife carrying can be linked to 'street life' and an offending life-style, but in a more complex way than was anticipated, and the findings have challenged some of the dominant pre-conceptions, not just of those who carry knives but of the ways in which their individual and collective youth identities evolve in deprived areas. Through these concepts the thesis enhances understanding of the use of 'self-defence' as a rationale for carrying a knife, through illustrating the complexity of knife carrying. In doing this it augments and extends Marfleets' (2008) 'fear and victimisation' hypothesis. The idea of a 'security gap', shows that experiences of fear and victimisation are fluid, temporal and contextual. This also explains more fully the temporal nature of much knife carrying, occurring as it does, largely between the ages of 12 and 16. Further, in grounding the analysis in the concept of 'street life', the

research has added to the empirical and conceptual literature on the operation of 'street codes' through exploring how young, street-oriented participants both understand and interpret these codes, and the relationship between these processes and knife carrying.

The findings also add to the literature on the onset and desistence from offending and help to develop important insights into resilience and desistence. This adds to the literature on how best to prevent knife carrying and to foster desistence from knife carrying. It is suggested that offending and engagement in 'street life' can represent a form of resilience, albeit one that sometimes necessitates attention to self-defence. It becomes problematic however, not just because it escalates levels of risk and significantly increases the chances of someone being harmed, but it can also lead to an erosion of supportive relationships and a downward spiral of offending. In developing the concept of a 'civic code' that is nascent in the theory of 'negotiated orders' developed by McAra and McVie (2012) the thesis adds to understandings of how young people who are not street oriented can demonstrate collective resilience and confront 'street life' both passively and actively. In doing so the thesis also adds to theoretical understandings of knife carrying and offending more broadly, by exploring the ways in which young people's identities both shape and are shaped by their relationships with formal and informal regulatory orders and the implications of these for knife carrying.

Offending was shown to be in part a response to, and constitutive of, a 'security gap' in the context of ongoing 'integrational difficulties'. These were experienced to a greater or lesser extent by most of the young people who took part in the research. The crucial difference was how participants responded to this gap, and the consequences of this response for ongoing experiences of security and safety. It is argued that the key difference between offenders and non-offenders was *temporal*, in two senses. On the one hand, knife carrying was done in anticipation of engagement with 'street life' at specific times and in specific places. On the other hand, knife carrying was for the most part, short-term behaviour that lasted for a few years at most. Drawing on the empirical data and concepts cited above, the argument is made that social integration provided a crucial

form of resilience for participants. Whilst some participants adhered to a street code that failed to deliver resilience and exposed them to high levels of violence, non-offending young people were able to draw on a civic code as a means of sustaining collective resilience. In the absence of sources of collective resilience, the knife represented for many participants a *proxy* form of resilience. Many participants were able to cultivate more effective forms of integration and social resilience as they aged and disengaged with street life. As they did so, the knife became increasingly redundant. In this sense, the thesis is about how young people create and sustain identities, integration and resilience in difficult circumstances, and the sometimes misguided and self-defeating ways in which they seek to do this, including by sometimes carrying knives.

In addition to the theoretical and empirical contributions described above, the thesis has also made some methodological contributions. Innovative methods, including vignettes and spatial mapping, were used to give voice to hidden groups in research: those who carry knives, and those who live in areas with high levels of violence but do not offend. In this, the idea was not to generalise or make claims about whole populations, but rather to listen to the experiences of those involved. Importantly, the research demonstrated that such research *can* be done, despite significant procedural, ethical and methodological challenges. In doing so, the research adds to the methodological literature on working with 'hard to reach' groups. There were nonetheless some limitations of the research. These are considered below.

Limitations of the research

There were some potentially significant limitations to the research. Contacting, recruiting and engaging with those who took part in the study presented various challenges. Conducting research with young people can be challenging generally, and especially so if they are also offenders (Stanko and Lee, 2003). Young offenders represent an especially 'hard to reach' (Taylor and Kearney, 2005) group and those who carry or have carried knives as a specific sub-set are even harder to reach. As a result, some key

cohorts were noticeably absent from the research, especially young women, and those at the more extreme end of the spectrum in terms of knife crime and offending. At the same time, the novel use of focus groups with non-offenders living in deprived areas has contributed significantly to an understanding of how young people more broadly perceive and respond to knife carrying, and young women formed a significant proportion of the focus group participants (and two of the interview participants).

The targeted cohorts, and the methodology adopted in the research, also raise concerns that the research would not meet accepted criteria of truth, reliability and generalisability. The data were generated through a qualitative study based largely on eliciting narratives from young people, some of whom were also offenders, neither of which are regarded as reliable witnesses. However, an alternative criteria based on plausibility and authenticity was argued for. The research might, like the examples given earlier, contribute concepts and findings that are generalizable to a wider population, but this was not the express intention of the research. Indeed, because of the use of purposive sampling, and a reliance on gatekeepers, no attempt has been made to claim generalisability. Rather, in line with a qualitative, narrative based study, the study aimed to provide explanations rooted in individual experience that would illuminate certain aspects of behaviour. At the least the research might augment existing quantitative explanations of knife crime and generate data that was both plausible and reflective of the reality of participants' lives. As it happens, the research *has* generated novel concepts with the potential to add to empirical and theoretical understanding, not just of knife crime, but of the various related matters touched on in this thesis. These concepts are also potentially generalizable to a wider population. As was argued in Chapter Four, small scale studies have been shown to have produced concepts that are generalizable above and beyond a relatively small number of cohorts and away from the areas in which the research was conducted.

The limitations described above also have implications for the reception of the research. Indeed, whilst qualitative research is generally well received in academia, large-scale quantitative research is increasingly the benchmark for policy makers and practitioners.

Given the novel contributions this thesis makes to understanding knife carrying, it is essential that it reaches a wider audience than academia. Convincing policy makers of the value of this contribution might be difficult however. These issues are considered further in the next two sections. These describe, in turn, the recommendations for future policy, and recommendations for dissemination of the findings and for further research.

Implications of the findings for policy: building security and resilience

This thesis sought to add to existing knowledge about knives and knife carrying, by prefacing the voices of young people, especially those who carry knives, and, those who live with and share the same spaces and places, especially the street and the school. Understanding the relationship between knife carrying and 'street life' provides insight into both the *causes* of, and possible *solutions* to, knife carrying, and knife crime more widely. In highlighting young people's own experiences against a backdrop of 'street life' and pervasive violence, the thesis argues for an understanding of knife carrying that goes beyond a focus on the most extreme cases to a more nuanced comprehension of how young people's identities are shaped by, and shaping of, their relations with formal and informal regulatory orders, and, how knife carrying can emerge from these configurations. An attendance to these matters might improve young people's sense of security, (helping to close the 'security gap'), and would therefore potentially reduce their need to carry a knife. This might also be more cost efficient and effective than present activities aimed at 'tackling' knife crime.

A central finding from the empirical research is that more work needs to be done to make young people safer. The police should play a significant role in this. It was clear, during the course of this research, that there was a high level of commitment among individual police officers to tackling knife crime, and that strategically it was, and to a lesser extent remains, a priority. This project has raised questions though, about the police's ability to adequately meet the needs of young people, especially, but not exclusively, those who display challenging behaviour. This will not come as a surprise to many practitioners who

work with young people, but it is nonetheless a problem that requires further attention. The police are in many important ways best placed to offer protection to young people, given their presence on the street and their significant capacities for dealing with violence. Unfortunately, however, as has been demonstrated by this research, they appear to offer at present very little real protection to young people. At the same time, negative policing was shown to have real consequences for young people's knife carrying, and several participants went so far as to link their offending to experiences of being 'over-policed'. What the findings from this thesis suggest is that negative interaction with the police could exacerbate not just the 'security gap' but also the 'integrational difficulties' with which this gap is bound up in. This had important consequences for knife carrying behaviour.

The presence or existence of 'gangs' was shown to provide both a justification for harsh policing and a collective response to harsh policing. This in turn could act as a barrier to both desistence and deterrence, and, as a consequence, could be said to negatively impact on a young person's resilience. Non-offending young people in this research often complained that the police treated them as if they were in an offending gang, whilst offending gang members complained that the treatment they received from the police was unjustly or disproportionately harsh, even taking into consideration their offending. The riots that occurred across the UK in 2011 were in part a backlash against the police, and demonstrated how the police can ignore young people's need for respect, safety and protection, and indeed significantly aggravate and alienate young people in the process. This was especially the case for the offenders. The majority of offenders will no longer be offending by the age of about 25. Indeed, the police need to recognise that many of the young people they deal with, though offending and presenting difficult and challenging behaviour, are the non-offenders and 'fathers' of the future (LeBel, *et al.*, 2008) and that excessively aggressive policing can actually hamper attempts to resist or desist from offending and create significant alienation and insecurity. This requires effort to build on work already done to improve relations between communities and the police, and work to ensure individual officers (and police culture more generally) are able to work better with challenging young people.

There is also a need for a more comprehensive and sympathetic approach to adolescence as a transitional and difficult period for young people. If 'integrational difficulties' contribute to a 'security gap', which in turn contributes to knife carrying, more needs to be done to support young people during a period of transition, and especially to support young people at risk of formal and informal social exclusion. The thesis highlights some of the specific and complex challenges faced by all young people living in deprived areas. The findings also challenge some of the bleaker conclusions about the dominance of gangs and violent street cultures. Non-offending youths are often presented as simply vulnerable victims or potential victims in debates about street violence, but they can employ a range of strategies to negotiate violence which limits their exposure to it. Similarly, offenders are often cast as simply predators and perpetrators of violence, rather than victims of violence. In both cases, young women were shown to play active roles.

More also needs to be done to support young people's critical efforts to confront and restrict violence. This requires greater acknowledgement of the conventionality of many young people and their desire to contribute positively to society. Recognising the strength and reach of 'street life' and its impact on young people is essential. Many of the offending participants in this research demonstrated a desire to disengage with 'street life' and some had successfully done so. Likewise, the majority had moved, or were moving away from, carrying a knife. Young people require support however: young offenders need support and adult guidance to help them to desist from offending and from carrying knives, non-offenders need help and support to be able to resist, confront and 'police' their peers. That many participants' resilience was rooted in the support of sympathetic adults should not be under-estimated. Significant adults, including parents, teachers and youth workers, need greater support and encouragement to understand and provide the kinds of support young people non-offending need to make positive choices. Practitioners, and sympathetic police officers did much important work in reducing knife carrying among both offenders and non-offenders. However, many practitioners who supported this project were coping with stringent budget cuts and were seeing the services they provided being reduced. The absence of effective support can be seen in the small group of non-

offenders who had resorted to carrying knives, most of whom had tried unsuccessfully to mobilise the kinds of support demonstrated by the wider group.

There was considerable debate about the effectiveness of anti-knife crime initiatives in the discussions with young people in this study. This was touched on only briefly however, and there is more empirical data to be presented on this subject. It was not simply a lack of awareness that presented a barrier to deterrence, or a focus on more immediate concerns at the expense of longer-term issues. Most of the interventions that offenders had experienced *prior* to carrying a knife had clearly failed to prevent them from subsequently carrying a knife. The problem with many of the schemes is that their execution has been highly variable and their evaluation almost non-existent, so very little is known about their effectiveness beyond a few surveys and some anecdotal data. A further problem is that the *medium* is as important as the message. That some of the principal providers of many of these schemes are schools and the police. This is problematic given the points raised already about legitimacy, and the failure of schools and the police to ensure young people's safety. This point seems to go largely unnoticed in discussions about prevention, or indeed deterrence. This raises important questions about the legitimacy of deterrent messages in the context of negative and mutually reinforcing relations between police and young people. Some of the participants did suggest that interventions conducted *post*-conviction were effective, but more research needs to be done on this (see below).

In terms of specific recommendations: from a governmental perspective, primary and secondary initiatives to reduce the negative effects of deprivation, disadvantage and marginality need to be more comprehensive, more durable and better coordinated. A public health approach as used in other countries would also seem to be an effective way of reducing violence among young people, but this at present remains an aspiration in England and Wales. Conversely, an over-emphasis on punitive measures imported from the United States might produce some short-term gains, but are unlikely to reduce the 'security gap' in the longer-term. At the same time, positive initiatives to increase young

people's sense of safety and security in schools and streets should be central to any youth policy, education policy and policing policy. Greater attention paid to reducing fear and insecurity will repay its costs in the long run.

From a policing perspective, the findings of the research suggest that greater attention be paid to young people's daily experiences of violence. Taking these experiences seriously would help to reduce the security gap. Treating young offenders with more respect, and paying greater attention to their concerns, might also yield results. A visible presence, supported by a sympathetic approach, is what many of the young people who took part in this research said that they would like from the police. A clearly articulated commitment to the safety and security of all young people would also be helpful. In highlighting the centrality of risk and victimization in the decision to carry a knife, this thesis has problematized existing punitive approaches to knife carrying. Instead, the thesis suggests that a comprehensive commitment to ensuring that young people feel safe in their schools, streets and communities would do much to reduce knife carrying.

From the perspective of other 'sympathetic' and significant adults, it is clear that much important work is being done. Stringent cuts to services do nothing to help young people however, especially those living in the most deprived circumstances. That many practitioners managed to achieve much with very little is testament to their commitment. At the same time, it was clear that parents were able to provide some support to their children, but where this broke down, the chances of a young person carried a knife increased. This should be a pointer for governments who wish to reduce youth violence and knife carrying: much vital work is done by practitioners, volunteers and parents, without which young people would find it harder to resist targeting by offenders or even becoming offenders themselves.

Policy recommendations on their own are unlikely to have much impact. It is necessary to follow up the research with significant efforts at dissemination of the findings and

recommendations. This will not necessarily be easy. There is some criticism of the police in this thesis, yet the police are one of the key audiences for this research. It will be especially difficult to make a convincing argument of the link between harsh policing and knife carrying. That said, and as already noted, during the course of conducting the research I encountered many police officers who were very passionate about helping young people, and, had significant depth of experience in working with young people. That this commitment and experience is to be found at all levels of the police service, not to mention among politicians, civil servants and practitioners is grounds for optimism. Of course, it is not just some of the findings that might be problematic, there are also issues with the chosen methodology and sample. As already noted, qualitative research is generally less well regarded than quantitative research, in policy circles, where policy makers like to be able to talk about large numbers – this can add legitimacy to research in the context of sometime misplaced concerns about generalisability. At the same time, narrative based research with offenders does pose problems of truth and validity. These challenges are not insurmountable however, as some of the research cited in this thesis has proved – robust, well written and interesting research can generate interest, even if only a small-scale study. Moreover, such research can also be generalizable to a wider population. This can be supported and demonstrated by further research which seeks to extend, empirically and theoretically, some of the findings of the research, and to develop new findings from the data that were generated. These issues are discussed below.

Implications of the findings for further research: building consensus and enhancing data

Key recommendations for research to emerge from this thesis relate to several conceptual and methodological levels. From the perspective of data on knife crime, it is clear that much existing data is either out of date, badly presented or incoherent. It is crucial then to *generate new data on knife crime*. At the same time, better use can also be made of *existing data sources* and to improve systems for presenting and analysing the data. The study has highlighted some primary issues that would benefit from further research, for example relating to young people's attempts to build security and resilience,

and the operation of a 'civic code'. There were also several secondary issues highlighted by this thesis that require further research, including research examining in more depth young women's experiences of knives and other weapons, and to explore their roles as knife carriers, instigators of violence, and their influence on desistence. These could be approached in different ways, as discussed below.

The empirical research conducted for this thesis was only a small, qualitative study, based on a relatively small number of interviews with knife carriers (23), and focus groups with a larger number of young people (64), in two locations in England. Given this, as noted already, the expectation that this research would contribute significantly to the existing literature was modest at best. Nonetheless, it has been argued that the research has made novel theoretical and conceptual contributions to the literature, some of which might be generalizable to a wider population of both young offenders, and young people more generally who live in areas with high rates of violence. It has also been argued the study has added to the methodological literature by engaging with cohorts that are often neglected in the research, and having done so using innovative methods.

Given what was said in the previous section about the problems of convincing policy makers and other parties with an interest in the subject – the police for example, one potentially useful route for further research would be to expand the research so as to test some of the concepts that have been derived – such as 'security gap', 'civic code' and 'integrational difficulties', among a larger population. This could be done in a number of ways. First, the research could serve as an initial exploratory study for a larger study, which replicates the original qualitative methodology on a much larger scale. Bannister *et al.*, (2010) have demonstrated the potential for large scale qualitative research to influence and inform policy making – in this case by working productively with the Scottish government. With greater resources, the empirical study for this thesis could be replicated across a wider area in the United Kingdom. This would allow the research to cover a wider range of area types – i.e. urban/suburban/rural, and to focus on some of the populations that were absent or under-represented in this research, such as young women. Whilst the

approach would remain broadly the same, additional questions/instruments could be integrated into the research to test out the concepts that emerged from the original data, and to refine understandings of these.

In addition to extending the research qualitatively, as described above, the concepts derived from the data could be tested using other methodologies and approaches. Just as Anderson's (1999/1990) ground-breaking work on street codes has been subjected to quantitative analysis (see Chapter Three for a discussion of this), the same could be done for the research for this thesis. This could be done in a number of ways. First, a quantitative study could be developed to accompany an expanded qualitative study. Interviews and focus groups would test existing assumptions qualitatively, whilst a survey questionnaire sent out to schools, for example, might be used to gather data on a larger scale, albeit less detailed data. Second, a stand-alone quantitative study could be conducted, at least initially, and this might be followed up with a qualitative study. Third, analysis of existing large scale data-sets could be conducted in ways which might test some of the concepts and empirical findings of the research. This might involve analysis of the Crime Survey for England and Wales data for example, of which a significant amount at present appear to have been neglected, at least with respect to knife crime. As already noted, there are also still substantial amounts of interview and focus group data collected for this thesis that could be subject to further analysis.

It would be especially useful to conduct research with police officers, youth workers and others who work with young people generally, and also those who have carried knives, including gang members. Whilst the various approaches already suggested above focused on the main findings of the research, and extending the research to cover existing cohorts, there is also significant scope for extending the research to explore more specific findings, and to work with other populations. As already discussed, initially the intention was to conduct interviews with practitioners working with young people – especially but not exclusively the police and youth workers. This was subsequently dropped for reasons of resources. Many such individuals were spoken to informally however, especially in their

capacity as 'gatekeepers'. These discussions revealed significant depths of knowledge and experience about knives and knife crime which at present is untapped and under-utilised. There was also a great deal of goodwill shown towards this project, and it would have been possible to have spoken to a great many more practitioners and professionals (not to mention policy-makers) had there been the necessary time and resources.

Despite some of the challenges encountered in conducting the research for this thesis, it was, overall, a positive experience and some important lessons were learnt. Not least among these was that recruiting and engaging with challenging groups and individuals is difficult, but not impossible. It is crucial to engage children and young people in 'sensitive research' (Barter and Renold, 2003: 90/91). As Marfleet (2008) has argued, young people's experiences of victimisation *must* be recognised if crime and violence among the young are to be dealt with effectively. Sieber and Stanley (1988: 55) have noted however that researchers sometimes 'opt out' of this kind research of research, rather than confront some of these difficulties. Nonetheless, this project has demonstrated that sensitive research of this kind can be done, and can thus encourage others to explore the issues of knife crime and youth violence in greater depth, and in ways that give voice to those who lack voice.

Final words

This project was in many ways an uplifting project to work on. Some of the places that were visited over the course of the research were depressing and threatening, but the young people who took part rarely were. There was hope and humour to be found in all the focus groups and most of the interviews. The majority of young people who had carried knives expressed the hope that they would one day transcend the kinds of activities they were, or had been, involved in, and some were actively involved in a process of change. The young people who did not carry knives demonstrated resilience and humour in the face of pervasive violence.

There were also some troubling aspects to the research, in terms of some of the things some of the participants described doing, and experiencing. This included some harrowing descriptions of violence/ Several young people had been very gravely harmed, whilst others admitted to having harmed others. The research also raises questions that never quite go away, about how the police treat those regarded as 'police property' (Reiner, 2010: 274) and the generally limited concern shown for young people's security and wellbeing by the authorities. The legislation on knife carrying expresses both punitive and preventative logics, and some of the major initiatives around knives aim to stop young people carrying a knife by persuasion as much as by threat. Nonetheless, for the majority of participants in this research, the law was regarded as a largely malign presence, and could be both inappropriately distant and inappropriately close: slow to respond to young people's concerns and fears, but swift and harsh in responding to their misdemeanours. This ignore 'fundamental concerns about young people's safety and security' (Squires, 2009: 127).

As stated at the outset of this thesis, knives are sometimes used to threaten, inflict injury, and to kill. When such events happen, they resonate through the collective consciousness of the nation, often via media and political commentary and the agendas that accompany these representations. The majority of incidences of knife carrying do not result in severe injury. Moreover, a graphic focus on the most extreme cases can serve to obscure the kinds of daily violence that many young people are exposed to, especially those living in deprived areas – defined in this thesis as a 'security gap'. This gap is spatially and temporally specific according to the social context of the individual and the community. An emphasis on the most extreme manifestations of knife crime ignores the ways in which young people respond to this 'security gap'; how they can resist street life and knife carrying; and, the forms and sources of their resilience.

References

Association of Chiefs of Police Officers/Home Office. (2007) *Knife Crime Best Practice Guidelines*, London: ACPO and Home Office.

Agnew, J. A. (2011) Space and Place, in Agnew, J. A. and Livingstone, D. N. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, London: Sage, pp. 316-330.

Aldridge, J. and Medina, J. (2007) *Youth Gangs in an English City: Social Exclusion, Drugs and Violence: Full Research Report ESRC End of Award Report, RES-000-23-0615*, Swindon: ESRC.

Anderson, E. (1999) *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City,* New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Anderson, E. (1990) *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Anderson, F., Worsley, R., Nunney, F., Maybanks, N. and Dawes, W. (2010) *Youth Survey 2009*, London: Youth Justice Board.

Bachman, R. and Schutt, R. K. (2014) *The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 5th Ed. California: Sage.

Ball-Rokeach, S, J. (1973) 'Values and violence: A test of the subculture of violence thesis', *American Sociological Review,* 38(6), pp. 736-749.

Bannister, J., Pickering, J. and Kintrea, K. (2012) 'Young people and violent territorial conflict: exclusion culture and the search for identity', *Journal of Youth Studies*. 16 (4), pp. 474-90.

Bannister, J. and Kearns, A. (2012) Overcoming Intolerance to Young People's Conduct: Implications from the Unintended Consequences of Policy in the UK, *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, Vol 13, Issue 4. pp. 380 - 397.

Bannister, J., Pickering, J., Bachelor, S., Burman, M., McVie, S. and Kintrea, K. (2010) *Troublesome Youth Groups, Gangs and Knife Carrying in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Bannister, J. and Fraser, A. (2008) *Youth gang identification: learning and social development in restricted geographies,* Scottish Journal of Criminal Justice Studies, 14. pp. 96-114.

Barbour, R. S. and Kitzinger, J. (1999) *Developing Focus Group Research*, London: Sage.

Barlas, V. and Egan, J. (2006) 'Weapons carrying in British teenagers: The role of personality, delinquency, sensational interests, and mating effort', *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*. 17(1), pp. 53-72.

Barry, M. (2006) *Youth Offending in Transition: the search for social recognition*, Oxford: Open University Press.

Barry, M. (2004) *Understanding Youth Offending: in search of social recognition*, Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Stirling.

Barter, C. and Renold, E. (2003) 'Dilemnas of Control: Methodological implications and reflections of foregrounding children's perspectives on violence', in Lee, R. M. and Stanko E. A. (eds.) *Researching Violence*, London, Routledge, pp. 88-106.

Batchelor, S. (2009) 'Girls, gangs and violence: assessing the evidence', *Probation Journal*, 56 (4), pp. 399-414.

Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, New Delhi: Sage.

Becker, H. (1973) *Outsiders*, New York: Free Press.

Becker, H. (1967) 'Whose side are we on?' *Social Problems*, vol. 14 (3), pp. 234-47.

Becker, H. (1986) *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Beinhardt, S., Anderson, B., Lee, S. and Utting, D. (2002) *Youth at risk? A national survey of risk factors, protective factors and problem behaviour among young people in England, Scotland and Wales*, London: Communities that Care.

Berg, B, L. (2001) *Qualitative Research Methods*, Massachusetts: Alley and Bacon.

Berman, G. (2012) *Standard Note: Knife crime statistics*, House of Commons Library [Online]. [Accessed 12th January 2013]. Available from: http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04304/SN04304.pdf

Black, K. (2010) *Business Statistics: Contemporary Decision Making*, 6th ed. London: John Wiley & Sons.

Blackburn, R. (1993) *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct: Theory, Research and Practice*, Chichester, England: Wiley Press.

Bondy, J., Ogilvie, A. and Astbury, A. (2005) *Living on edge: Understanding the social context of knife carriage among young people*, Melbourne: RMIT University Press.

Booth, C., Black, L., Dear, L., John, G., Johnson, M., Levy, I., Selvan, F. and Williamson, H. (2008) *The Street Weapons Commission Report.* Channel Four [Online]. [Accessed 7th June 2010]. Available from: http://www.channel4.com/news/microsites/S/street_weapons_commission/index.html

Born, M., Chevalier, V. and Humblet, I. (1997) 'Resilience, desistance and delinquent career of adolescent offenders' (sic), *Journal of Adolescence*, 20 (6), pp. 679-94.

Bottoms, A., Shapland, J., Costello, A., Holmes, D. and Muir, G. (2004) 'Towards Desistance: Theoretical Underpinnings for an Empirical Study', *The Howard Journal.* 43 (4), pp. 368–389.

Bottrell, D., Armstrong, D. and France, A. (2010) 'Young people's relations to crime: Pathways across ecologies', *Youth justice*, 10 (1), pp. 56-72. [Online]. [Accessed 17th May 2012]. Available from: http://yjj.sagepub.com/content/10/1/56.full.pdf+html

Bourdieu, P. (2004) *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, [Trans. Nice, R.]. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'Forms of Economic Capital', in Richardson, J. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education,* New York: Greenwood, pp. 241-258.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction', in Karabet, J. and Halsey, A. (eds.) *Power and Ideology in Education,* New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 487-510.

Bourgois, P. (1995) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio,* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bradshaw, P. (2005) 'Terrors and Young Teams: Youth Gangs and Delinquency in Edinburgh', in Decker, S. H. and Weerman, F. M. (eds.) *European street gangs and troublesome youth groups*, AltaMira Press: Oxford.

Breen, L. (2007) 'The researcher 'in the middle': Negotiating the insider/outsider dichotomy', *The Australian Community Psychologist.* vol. 19 (1), pp. 163-174.

Breines, I., Connell R. and Eide, I. (2000) 'Introduction', in Breines, I., Connell R. and Eide, I. (eds.) *Male roles, masculinities and violence: A culture of peace perspective*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Brennan, I. R., Shepherd, J.P. and Moore, S.C. (2010) 'Aggression and attitudes to time and risk in weapon using violent offenders', *Psychiatry Research*, 178, pp. 536-539.

Brennan, I. R. and Moore, S. C. (2009) 'Weapons and violence: A review of theory and research', *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 14, pp. 215-225.

Brezina, T., Agnew, R., Cullen, F. and Wright, J. P. (2004) 'The code of the street: a quantitative assessment of Elijah Anderson's subculture of violence thesis and its contribution to youth violence research', *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice,* 2(4): pp. 303-328.

British Broadcasting Corporation. (2008) *Mapping UK's teen murder toll*, BBC News [Online]. [Accessed 15th December 2008]. Available from: www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7777963.stm

British Society of Criminology. (2006) *Code of Ethics for Researchers in the Field of Criminology,* [Online]. [Accessed 12th June 2012]. Available from: http://www.britsoccrim.org/codeofethics.htm

British Sociological Association. (2002) *Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association*, [Online]. [Accessed 20th February 2010]. Available from: http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm

Broadhead, R. S. and Rist, R.C. (1976) Gatekeepers and the Social Control of Social Research, *Society for the Study of Social Problems*, Vol. 23, No. 3. pp. 325-336. [Online]. [Accessed 16th June 2012]. Available from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/799778

Brookman, F., Bennett, T., Hochstetler, A. and Copes, H. (2011) 'The "Code of the Street" and the Generation of Street Violence in the UK', *European Journal of Criminology*, 8/1, pp. 17-31.

Brookman, F. and Maguire, M. (2003) *Reducing Homicide: A Review of the Possibilities*, London: Home Office.

Brown, S. (1995) Crime and safety in whose community? Age, every day life, and problems for youth policy, *Youth and Policy*, 48, pp. 27-48.

Brunson, R. and Stewart, E. A. (2006) 'Young African American women, the street code, and violence: an exploratory analysis', *Journal of Crime and Justice* 29, pp. 1-19.

Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods*, 2nd Ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. (2001) *Social Research Methods,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. (1998) 'Quantitative and Qualitative Research Strategies in Knowing the Social World', in T. May and M. Williams. (eds.) *Knowing the Social World*, Buckingham: Open University Press. 138-157.

Bullock, K. and Tilley, B. (2002) *Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester: Developing a crime reduction strategy*, London: Home Office.

Bulmer, M. (1982) *The Uses of Social Research: Social Investigation in Public Policy-Making*, London: Allen & Unwin.

Burman, M., Batchelor, S. and Brown, J. (2001) 'Researching Girls and Violence: Facing the Dilemmas of Fieldwork', *British Journal of Criminology*. vol. 41 (3), pp. 443-459.

Burney, E. (2005) *Making People Behave, Anti-social Behaviour, Politics and Policy*. London: Cullompton Willan.

Cambridge, E. (2016) 'Teen Stabbing: Teenage Boy, 16, 'Stabbed 22-Year-Old Man To Death After One Of His Friends Called Young Woman "Fit"', *The Sun* [Online]. [Accessed July 1st 2016]. Available from: www.Thesun.Co.Uk/News/1368759/Teenage-Boy-16-Stabbed-22-Year-Old-Man-To-Death-After-One-Of-His-Friends-Called-Young-Woman-Fit/

Charmaz, K. (2000) 'Grounded Theory Methodology: Objectivist and Constructivist Qualitative Methods', in Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. E. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd ed.*, Los Angeles: Sage, pp. 509-535.

Chriss, J. J. (2000) 'Alvin W. Gouldner And The Tragic Vision in Sociology', *Social Thought & Research*. 2000. 23 (1&2) Cleveland State University [Online]. [Accessed May 21st 2015]. Available from: www.researchgate.net/profile/James_Chriss/publication/29445553_Alvin_W._Gouldner_and_the_Tragic_Vision_in_Sociology/links/0c96052124a0e8f833000000.pdf

Clarke, R. (1983) 'Situational crime prevention: Its theoretical basis and practical scope', in Tonry, M. and Morris, N. (eds.) *Crime and justice: An annual review of research.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 4, pp. 225-256.

Clarke, R. (1980) 'Situational Crime Prevention: Theory and Practice', *British Journal of Criminology,* 20, pp. 136-47.

Cobbina, J. E., Miller, J. and Brunson, R. K. (2008) 'Gender, Neighborhood Danger and Risk-Avoidance Strategies Among Urban African-American Youths', *Criminology*, 46: pp. 673-709.

Cohen, A. K. (1955) *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*, Illinois: Free Press.

Cohen, P. and Ainley, P. (2000) 'In the Country of the Blind? Youth Studies and Cultural Studies in Britain', *Journal of Youth Studies*. Volume 3, Number 1, pp. 79-95.

Cohen, L. E. and Felson, M. (1979) 'Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach', *American Sociological Review*. 44, pp. 588-605.

Cohen, S. (1973) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, St Albans: Paladin.

Coleman, J. (1988) 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', *American Journal of Sociology* (9) 4: pp. 95-120.

Coleman, C. (2008) Homicide, in Povery, D. (ed.) *Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence, Supplementary Volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales*, Home Office Statistical Bulletin 03/08. London: Home Office.

Coles, B., Cusworth, L., Bradshaw, J., Keung, A. and Chzhen, Y. (2009) *Understanding Social Exclusion Across the Life Course: Youth and Young Adulthood*, London: The Cabinet Office.

Collins, R. (2009) Micro and Macro Causes of Violence, *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* (3) 1, pp. 9-22.

Collins, R. (2008) *Violence. A micro-sociological Theory*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

ComRes. (2008) *London gun and Knife Crime Survey by the BBC*. BBC [Online]. [Accessed 15th December 2008]. Available from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/27_07_08_crimesurvey.pdf

Connell, R, W. and Meshersmidt, J, W. (2005) 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society*, (19) 6, pp. 829-859.

Connell, R. W. (1995) *Masculinities*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Cooper, C. (2012) 'Understanding the English 'riots' of 2011: 'mindless criminality' or youth 'Mekin Histri' in austerity Britain?', *Youth and Policy*. 109, pp. 6-26. [Online]. [Accessed 12th June 2014]. Available from: http://www.youthandpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/cooper_riots_2011.pdf

Cooper, C. and Roe, S. (2012) *An estimate of youth crime in England and Wales: Police recorded crime committed by young people in 2009/10*, London: Home Office.

Cornish, D. and Clarke, R.V. (eds.) (1986) *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending*, New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Coyne, I. (1997) Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling; merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Advanced Nursing.* 26, pp. 623-30.

Crawford, A. (2009) 'Restorative Justice and Anti-Social Behaviour Interventions as Contractual Governance: Constructing the Citizen-Consumer', in Knepper, P., Doak, J. and Shapland, J. (eds.) *Urban Crime Prevention. Surveillance and Restorative Justice: Effects of Social Technologies.* Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press, pp. 167-194.

Crawford, A. (2008) 'Dispersal Powers and the Symbolic Role of Anti-Social Behaviour Legislation', *Modern Law Review.* 71.5, pp. 753-784.

Crawford, A., Lewis, S. and Traynor, P. (2016) "It ain't (just) what you do, it's (also) the way that you do it": Role of Procedural Justice in the Implementation of Anti-social Behaviour Interventions with Young People, *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research.* 22, pp. 1-18.

Crawford, A. and Traynor, P. (2012) 'La Prévention de la Délinquance chez les Anglais: From community-based strategies to early interventions with young people', *Social Crime Prevention in Late Modern Europe,* Baillergeau, E. and Hebberecht, P. (eds.) Brussels: VUB Press, pp. 63-101.

Crewe, B. (2011) 'Depth, weight, tightness: Revisiting the pains of imprisonment', *Punishment & Society,* 13, pp. 509.

Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (2003) 'The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research', in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) *The landscape of qualitative research: theories and issues, 2nd ed.,* Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 1-44.

Department for Communities and Local Government. (2011) *English indices of deprivation 2010.* [Online]. [Accessed 7th October 2011]. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6871/1871208.pdf

Diez Roux, A.V., Merkin, S.S., Arnett, D., et al. (2001) Neighborhood of residence and the incidence of coronary heart disease. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 345, 99-106.

Duncan, N. (1996) *Body Space: destabilising geographies of gender and sexuality*, New York: Routledge.

Eades, C., Grimshaw, R., Silvestri, A. and Solomon, R. (2007) *'Knife crime': A review of evidence and policy'*, 2nd Ed. London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. [Online]. [Accessed 12th May 2012]. Available from: http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/opus439/ccjs_knife_report.pdf.

Earle, R. (2011) *'Boy's Zone Stories: Perspectives from a Young Man's Prison'*, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 11. 2, pp.129-143.

Edgar, K., O' Donnel, I, and Martin, C. (2003) 'Tracking the pathways to violence in prison', in Lee, R. M. and Stanko E. A. (eds.) *Researching Violence*, London: Routledge. 69-87.

Emsley, C. (1994) 'The history of crime and crime control institutions, c.1770-c.1945', in Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, Oxford: Oxford Universty Press.

Emmel, N.D, and Clark, A. (2009) *The methods used in Connected Lives: investigating networks, neighbourhoods, and communities*, ESRC National Centre for Research Methods. NCRM Working Paper Series 06/09.

Erlanger, H, S. (1974) 'The empirical status of the subculture of violence thesis', *Social Problems,* 22(2), pp. 280-292.

Evening Standard online. (2008) *100 stabbings in London this year.* [Online]. [Accessed 15th December 2008]. Available from: www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23484511-revealed-100-stabbings-in-london-this-year.doc

Fagan, J. and Wilkinson, D. L. (1998) 'The Social Contexts and Developmental Functions of Adolescent Violence', in Elliott, D.S., Hamburg, B.A. and Williams, K.R. (eds.) *Violence in American Schools*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 89-113.

Farrall, S. and Calverley, A. (2006) Understanding desistance from crime, *Crime and Justice Series*, Open University Press: London.

Farrington, D. P. (2005) 'Childhood origins of antisocial behaviour', *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 12, pp. 177-190.

Farrington, D. P. (2000) *Adolescent violence: Findings and implications from the Cambridge Study. Violent Children and Adolescents: Asking the Question Why*. London: Whurr Publishers.

Farrington, D.P. (1996) *Understanding and Preventing Youth Crime*, York: York Public Services.

Farrington, D, P. (1986) 'Situational crime prevention: Its theoretical basis and practical scope', in Tonry, M. and Morris, N. (eds.) *Crime and justice: An annual review of research.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 7, pp. 189-250.

Felson, R., Liska, A. E., South, S.J. and McNulty, T.L. (1994) 'The subculture of violence and delinquency: Individual vs. school context effects', *Social Forces, 73(1)*, pp. 155−173.

Ferrell, J., Hayward, K. J., and Young, J. (2008) *Cultural Criminology: An Invitation*, London: Sage.

Ferrell, J. (1995) 'Culture, Crime, and Cultural Criminology', *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*. 3(2), pp. 25-42.

Ferrell, J. (Undated) Cultural criminology, in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. [Online]. [Accessed 15th December 2008]. Available from: http://www.culturalcriminology.org/papers/cult-crim-blackwell-ency-soc.pdf

Fielding, N, G. (1990) 'Mediating the Message: Affinity and Hostility in Research on Sensitive Topics', *American Behavioral Scientist*. 33: 608-620.

Firmin, C. (2012) "*This is it, this is my life": Female Voice in Violence, Final Report on the Impact of Serious Youth Violence and Criminal Gangs on Women and Girls across the country*, London: Race on the Agenda.

Firmin, C. Turner, R. and Gavrielides, T. (2007) *Empowering Young People Through Human Rights Values: Fighting the Knife Culture*. London: Esmee Fairburn Foundation.

Flatley, J., Kershaw, C., Smith, K., Chaplin, R. and Moon, D. (eds.) (2010) *Crime in England and Wales 2009/10. Findings from the British Crime Survey and police recorded Crime.* Home Office: London.

Fleschler-Peskin, M., Tortolero, S.R., Addy, R.C. and Weller, N. (2009) 'Weapon carrying prevention: Should adults spend more time with youth?', *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. 7, pp. 32-43.

Fonagy, P. (2003) 'The development of psychopathology from infancy to adulthood: The mysterious unfolding of disturbance in time', *Infant Mental Health Journal*. 24, pp. 212-239.

France, A., Bottrell, D., and Armstrong, A. (2012) *A political ecology of youth and crime*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

France, A. and Homel, R. (2007) *Pathways and Crime Prevention: Theory, Policy and Practice*, Devon: Cullompton Willan Publishing.

Franklin, B. (1995) *The Handbook of Children's Rights: Comparative Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge

Fraser, R. (2011) *Gangs and Global Exchange: Confronting the Glasgow Gang Complex*, SCCJR Conference Report No.02/2011.

Fraser, S. (2004) 'Situating empirical research', in Fraser, S., Lewis, V., Ding, S., Kellet, M. and Robinson, C. (eds.) *Doing Research with Children and Young People,* London: Sage in association with Open University Press, pp. 15-16.

Fyfe, N.R. and Bannister, J. (1998). "The eyes upon the street": closed-circuit television surveillance and the city. In N.R. Fyfe (ed.) *Images of the Street: Representation, Experience and Control in Public Space*, London: Routledge.

Gadd, D. (2012) 'In depth Interviewing and Psychological Case Study Analysis', in Gadd, D., Karstedt, S. and Messner, S, F. *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Research.* London: Sage, pp, 36-48.

Garland, D. (1994) 'Of Crimes and Criminals: The Development of Criminology in Britain', in Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gaskell, C. (2008) *Fighting for Respect: Youth, Violence and Citizenship in East London*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Department of Geography, University of London. [This

document is no longer available online but a short précis is]. [Accessed 12th June 2012]. Available from: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/PTA-026-27-0970/read

Glassner, B. and Loughlin, J. (1987) *Drugs in Adolescent Worlds*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Glaser, B, G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* Chicago: Aldine.

Glueck, S. and Glueck, E. (1937) *Later criminal careers,* New York: Krauss.

Golding, B., McClory, J. and Lockhart, D. (2008) *Getting to the point. Reducing gun and knife crime in Britain: lessons from abroad*, London: Policy Exchange.

Gouldner, A. (1971) *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Gov.co.uk. (2016) *Young people and the law,* [Online]. [Accessed 20th June 2016]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/browse/justice/young-people.

Graham, J. and Bowling, B. (1995) *Young people and crime: Home Office Research Study 145*, London: Her Majesties' Stationery Office.

Grimwood, G, G. and Berman, G. (2012) *Reducing Reoffending: The "What Works" Debate Research Paper 12/71*. London: House of Commons Library. [Online]. [Accessed 20th August 2014]. Available from: http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/RP12-71/reducing-reoffending-the-what-works-debate

Guillemin, M. and Gillam, L (2004) 'Ethics, Reflexivity and 'Ethically Important Moments', in Research', in *Qualitative Enquiry*. 10, pp. 261-280.

Gunter, A. (2008) 'Growing up bad: Black youth, 'road' culture and badness in an East London neighbourhood', *Crime Media Culture.* 4(3) pp. 349–365.

Hagedorn, J. (2008) *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture*, University of Minnesota Press: Minnesota.

Hale, C., Hayward, K., Wahidin, A. and Wincup, E. (2013) *Criminology. 3rd ed.*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall, P. and Innes, J. (2010) 'Violent and sexual crime', in Flatley, J., Kershaw, C., Smith, K., Chaplin, R. and Moon, D. (eds.) *Crime in England and Wales 2009/10. Findings from the British Crime Survey and police recorded Crime.* Home Office: London, pp. 46-60.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. and Roberts, B. (1978) *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, London: Macmillan.

Hallsworth, S. (2005) *Street Crime*, London: Willan.

Hallsworth, S. and Young, T. (2008) 'Gang talk and gang talkers: a critique', *Crime Media Culture*, 4, pp. 175-195.

Hallsworth, S. and Young, T. (2004) 'Getting Real About Gangs', *Criminal Justice Matters* 55, pp. 12-13.

Hammersley, M. (1995) *The Politics of Social Research*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Hartless, J, M., Ditton, J., Nair, G. and Phillips, S. (1995) 'More Sinned Against Than Sinning: A Study of Young Teenagers' Experience of Crime', *British Journal of Criminology*, 35 (1): 114-133.

Hayden, D., Hales, G., Lewis, C. and Silverstone, D. (2007) 'Young men convicted of firearms offences in England and Wales: an exploration of family and educational background as opportunities for prevention', *Policy Studies*, 29, (2), pp. 163-178.

Hayward, K, and Morrison, W. (2013) 'Theoretical Criminology: a starting Point', in Hale, C., Hayward, K., Wahidin, A. and Wincup, E. (eds.) *Criminology. 3rd ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hayward, K. (2004) *City limits: Crime, consumer culture and the urban experience*, London: Glasshouse Press.

Hayward, K. (2002) 'The vilification and pleasures of youthful transgression', in Muncie, J., Hughes, G., and McLaughlin, E. (eds.) *Youth justice: Critical readings*, pp. 80-94. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Heale, J. (2008) *One Blood, Inside Britain's New Street Gangs*, London: Simon & Schuster.

Hebdige, D. (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Routledge.

Her Majesty's Government. (2015) *Ending Gang and Youth Violence Programme: Annual Report*. [Online]. [Accessed on 17th October 2015]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412233/Ending_gang_and_youth_violence_2_.pdf

Her Majesty's Government. (2011) *Ending Gang and Youth Violence: A cross-government report including further evidence and good practice case studies*. [Online]. [Accessed 9th September 2014]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97861/gang-violence-summary.pdf

Herlitz, L. and Hough, M. (2016) *Youth anti-social behaviour and crime in England: an overview*, London: Institute for Criminal Policy Research. [Online]. [Accessed 12th October 2016]. Available from: http://www.icpr.org.uk/media/42111/england_yjs_paper_9.2.16.pdf

Her Majesty's Government. (2010) *The Coalition: our programme for government*. [Online]. [Accessed 8th August 2012]. Available from: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/coalition-documents

Her Majesty's Government. (2008) *Youth Crime Action Plan.* [Online]. [Accessed 8th August 2012]. Available from: http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/youth-crime-action-plan.pdf

Hester, S. and Eglin, P. (1992) *A Sociology of Crime*, London: Routledge.

Hill, D. (2011) *Boris Johnson: Met records big increase in young people injured by knives on his watch*. The Guardian Online. [Accessed July 12th 2011]. Available from: http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/davehillblog/2011/jul/12/boris-johnson-rise-knife-crime-injuries-of-young-people?CMP=twt_gu

Hindelang, M., Gottfredson, M. and Garofalo, J. (1978) *Victims of personal crime: An empirical foundation for a theory of personal victimization*, Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Hirschi, T. (1969) *Causes of Delinquency*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hobbs, D. (1988) *Doing the Business Entrepreneurship, the Working Class, and Detectives in the East End of London*, London: Clarendon Press.

Holstein, J. and Gubrium, J. (1997) 'Active Interviewing', in Silverman, D. (ed.) *Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 8, pp. 113-129.

Home Office. (2015) *Policy paper 2010 to 2015 government policy: knife, gun and gang crime*. [Online]. [Accessed on 17th October 2015]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-knife-gun-and-gang-crime/2010-to-2015-government-policy-knife-gun-and-gang-crime

Home Office. (2011) *What we're doing to tackle knife crime*. [Online]. [Accessed 8th August 2012]. Available from: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/knife-gun-gang-youth-violence/

Homel, R., Freiberg, K., Lamb, C., Leech, M., Batchelor, S., Carr, A., Hay, I., Teague R. and Elias, G. (2006) 'The Pathways to Prevention project: doing developmental prevention in a disadvantaged community', *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice. 323*, Australian Institute of Criminology. [Online]. [Accessed 12th October 2015]. Available from: http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/tandi/321-340/tandi323.html

House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee. (2009) *Knife Crime-Seventh Report of Session 2008-09,* London: The Stationery Office.

House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee. (2007) *Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System - Second report of session 2006-7*, London: The Stationery Office.

Hughes, J, A., Martin, P, J., Sharrock, W, W. (1995) *Understanding Classical Sociology: Marx, Weber, Durkheim*, London: Sage Publications.

Israel, M. and Hay, M. (2012) 'Research Ethics in Criminology', in Gadd, D., Karstedt, S., Messner, S. F. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Research Methods*, London: Sage.

Jackson-Jacobs, C. (2004) 'Taking a beating: The narrative gratifications of fighting as an underdog', in *Cultural criminology unleashed*. Ferrell, J., Hayward, K., Morrison, W. and Presdee, M. (eds.) London: Glass House, pp. 231-244.

James, A. and Prout, A. (eds.) (1997) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, London: Falmer.

Jenkins, R. (2002) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Sociologists,* London: Routledge.

Katz, J. (1988) *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil*, New York: Basic Books.

Kershaw, C., Nicholas, S. and Walker, A. (eds.) (2008) *Crime in England and Wales. 2007/08. Home Office Statistical Bulletin*. London: Home Office.

Kinsella, B. (2011) *Tackling knife crime together: a review of local anti-knife crime projects.* [Online]. [Accessed 8th January 2013]. Available from: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/tackling-knife-crime-together

Kintrea, K., Bannister, J., Pickering, J., Reid, M. and Suzuki, N. (2008) *Young people and territoriality in British cities*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Kirby, P. (2004) *A Guide to Actively Involving Young People in Research: For researchers, research commissioners, and managers*, Hampshire: Involve/PK Consulting, [Online]. [Accessed 5th August 2013]. Available from: http://www.conres.co.uk/pdfs/Involving_Young_People_in_Research_151104_FINAL.pdf

Kitzinger, S. and Wilkinson, C. (1996) 'Theorizing Representing the Other,' in Wilkinson, C. and Kitzinger, S (eds.) *Representing the Other: a Feminism & Psychology Reader*, London: Sage, pp. 132.

Klein, M., Weerman, F. and Thornberry, T. (2006) 'Street Gang Violence in Europe', *European Journal of Criminology* 3(4) pp. 413-437

Knowles, L. L. and Prewitt, K. (1969) *Institutional Racism in America*. Englewoods Cliff, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Kohn, A. (2004) *Shooters: Myths and realities of America's gun cultures*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Kubrin C, E. (2005) Gangstas, thugs, and hustlas: Identity and the code of the street in rap music, *Social Problems*, 52, pp. 360-378.

Layder, D. (1998) *Understanding social theory*, London: Sage.

LeBel, T.P., Burnett, R., Maruna, S. and Bushway, S. (2008) 'The "chicken and egg" of subjective and social factors in desistance from crime', *European Journal of Criminology*, 5(2), pp. 130–58.

Lee, N. (2001) *Childhood and Society*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lee, R. (1993) *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, London: Sage

Lemos, G. (2004) *Fear and Fashion: The Use of Knives and Other Weapons by Young People*, London: Lemos and Crane.

Lewis, M. (1992) *Shame: the exposed self*, New York: Free Press.

Lewis, P., Newburn, T., Taylor, M., Mcgillivray, C., Greenhill, A., Frayman, H. and Proctor, R. (2011) *Reading the riots: investigating England's summer of disorder*, London: The London School of Economics and Political Science.

Lewis, R. Dobash., R, E. Dobash, R, P. and Cavanagh, K. (2003) 'Researching Homicide: Methodological issues in the exploration of lethal violence', in *Researching Violence*. R. M. Lee and E. A. Stanko. London, Routledge, pp. 49 - 65.

Liazos, A. (1972) 'The poverty of the sociology of deviance: nuts, sluts, and perverts', *Society for the Study of Social Problems*, 20, pp. 103-120.

Liebling, A. (2001) Whose side are we on? Theory, practice and allegiances in prisons research [Special issue], *British Journal of Criminology*, 41, pp. 472-484.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.S. (1989) Ethics: 'The failure of positivist science', *Review of Higher Education*, 12(2) pp. 221-241.

Lipsey, M. W. and Wilson, D. B. (1998) 'Effective interventions for serious juvenile offenders: A synthesis of research', in Loeber, R. and Farrington, D. P. (eds.) *Serious & Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions*' Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications. pp. 313-345.

Lofland, J. (1971) *Analyzing social settings: a guide to qualitative observation and analysis*, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Lund Research. (2012) *Convenience sampling*. [Online]. [Accessed 20th August 2015]. Available from: http://dissertation.laerd.com/convenience-sampling.php

Lyng, S. (1990) 'Edgework: A Social Psychological Analysis of Voluntary Risk Taking', *American Journal of Sociology*. 36 (2) pp. 851-886.

Mac an Ghaill, M. (1994) *The making of men: masculinities, sexualities and schooling*, Buckingham Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Macdonald, R. (1997) 'Informal working, survival strategies and the idea of an underclass', in Brown, R. (ed.) *The Changing Shape of Work*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Macdonald, W. (2006) *The health needs of Young Offenders*, Manchester: The National Primary Care Research and Development Centre and The University of Manchester.

Macpherson, W. (1999) *Inquiry into the Matters Arising from the Death of Stephen Lawrence: Final Report*, London: The Stationery Office.

Marfleet, N. (2008) *Why carry a weapon? A study of Knife Crime amongst 15-17 year old males in London*, London: The Howard League for Penal Reform.

Marshall, B., Webb, B. and Tilley, N. (2005) *Rationalisation of Current Research on Guns, Gangs and Other Weapons: Phase 1*, London: Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science, University College London.

Maruna, S. (2011) 'Re-entry as a Rite of Passage', *Punishment & Society*, 13(1), pp. 3-27.

Maruna, S. (2004) 'Desistance from Crime and Explanatory Style: A New Direction in the Psychology of Reform', *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice,* (20) 2. pp. 184-200.

Maruna, S. (2001) *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives,* Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Maruna, S. (1999) 'Desistance and Development: The Psychosocial Process of Going Straight', Brogden, M . (ed.) *The British Criminology Conferences: Selected Proceedings. Volume 2. Papers from the British Criminology Conference*. 1-25. [Online]. [Accessed 11th March 2013]. Available from: http://britsoccrim.org/volume2/003.pdf

Maruna, S. (1997) 'Going Straight: Desistance from Crime and Self-Narratives of Reform', in Lieblich, A., Josselson, R. (eds.). (1997) *The narrative study of lives*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications. Vol 5, pp. 59-93.

Maslow, A. H. (1942) 'The Dynamics of Psychological Security-Insecurity', *Journal of Personality*, v. 10 no. 4, pp. 331. [Online]. [Accessed 7th May 2016]. Available from: http://0-onlinelibrary.wiley.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/doi/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1942.tb01911.x/epdf

Matthews, H., Taylor, M. Percy-Smith, B, and Limb, M. (2000) The Unacceptable Flaneur: The shopping mall as a teenage hangout, *Childhood*, 7 (3), pp. 279-294.

Matza, D. (1964) *Delinquency and Drift*, New York: Wiley.

Maxwell, R., Trotter, D., Verne, J., Brown, P. and Gunnel, D. (2007) 'Trends in admissions to hospital involving assault using a knife or other sharp instrument, England, 1997-2005', *Journal of Public Health* 29 (2), pp. 186-190.

May, T. (1993) *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Research*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

McAra, L. and McVie, S. (2012) 'Negotiated order: The groundwork for a theory of offending pathways', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*. September 2012. 12 (4), pp. 347-375.

McVie, S. (2010) *Gang Membership and Knife Carrying: Findings from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime Edinburgh*. The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research: Edinburgh. [Online]. [Accessed 5th July 2013]. Available from: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/324153/0104312.pdf

McCallum, F. (2011) *SPICe Briefing: Knife Crime 11/23*. Scottish Government [Online]. [Accessed 15th October 2015]. Available from: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S3/SB_11-23.pdf

McGaghie, W. C., Bordage, G. and Shea, J. A. (2001) 'Problem Statement, Conceptual Framework, and Research Question', *Academic Medicine.* 76 (9), pp. 923–924 [Online]. [Accessed 7th January 2016]. Available from: http://journals.lww.com/academicmedicine/Fulltext/2001/09000/Problem_Statement,_Conceptual_Framework,_and.21.aspx

McGee, Z. (2003) 'Community violence and adolescent development: An examination of risk and protective factors among African American youth'*, Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 19, pp. 293-314.

McNeill, F., Farrall, S., Lightowler, C., Maruna, S., (2012) *Insights. How and Why People Stop Offending: Discovering Desistence.* Glasgow: Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, [Online]. [accessed 13th April 2016]. Available from: www.iriss.org.uk

McShane, J. (2010) *Underworld UK: Knife Crime: The Law of the Blade*, London: Quercus Publishing Plc.

Merton, R. (1964) 'Anomie, Anomia, and Social Interaction: Contexts of Deviant Behaviour', in *Anomie and Deviant Behaviour*. Clinard, M. (ed.) New York: The Free Press, pp. 213-242.

Merton, R. (1957) *Social Theory and Social Structure. Revised and Enlarged Edition,* New York: The Free Press.

Messerschmidt, J.W. (2000) *Nine Lives: adolescent masculinities, the body and violence*, Oxford: Westview Press.

Metropolitan Police Service Bulletin. (2006) *We launch the next phase of Operation Blunt. MPS.* [Online]. [Accessed 21st August 2012]. Available from: http://cms.met.police.uk/news/major_operational_announcements/we_launch_the_next_phase_of_operation_blunt

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Millard, B. and Flatley, J. (2010) *Experimental statistics on victimisation of children aged 10 to 15: Findings from the British Crime Survey for the year ending 2009.* London: Home Office.

Miller, J. and Brunson, R. K. (2000) Gender Dynamics In Youth Gangs: A comparison of males' and females' accounts, *Justice Quarterly*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 415-448.

Miller, J. (2001) *One of the Guys: Girls, Gangs, and Gender*, New York/Oxford: OUP.

Miller, W. (1982) *Crime by Youth Gangs and Groups in the United States*, 3rd ed. US Department of Justice.

Ministry of Justice. (2015) *Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly: January to March 2015, England and Wales*. [Online]. [Accessed 23rd July, 2015]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly

Ministry of Justice. (2014) Y*outh Justice Statistics 2012/13: England and Wales Youth Justice Board/Ministry of Justice Statistics bulletin*. Ministry of Justice. [Online]. [Accessed 12th June 2014]. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-justice-statistics

Ministry of Justice. (2013) Y*outh Justice Statistics 2011/12 England and Wales Youth Justice Board/Ministry of Justice Statistics bulletin*. Ministry of Justice. [Online]. [Accessed 12th June 2014]. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-justice-statistics

Ministry of Justice. (2010) *Knife Possession Sentencing Quarterly Brief January to March 2010 England and Wales*. [Online]. [Accessed 8th June 2011]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/knife-possession-sentencing-quarterly

Ministry of Justice. (2009a) *Straw: more jailed for knife crime*. [Press release]. [Accessed 5th October 2012]. Available from: www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease120309.htm

Ministry of Justice. (2009b) *Statistics Bulletin: Knife crime sentencing quarterly brief: January to March 2009, England and Wales.* Ministry of Justice. [Online]. [Accessed 5th

October 2012]. Available from: http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/knife-crime-sentencing.htm

Mizzen, R., and Morris, M. (2007) *On aggression & violence: An analytic perspective*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moffitt, T.E. (1993) 'Adolescent-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behaviour: A developmental taxonomy', *Psychological Review,* 100, pp. 674-701.

Morrow, V. (2001) 'Using Qualitative Methods to elicit young people's perspectives on their environments: some ideas for community health initiatives', *Health and Education Research: Theory and Practice*, vol. 16 (3) pp. 225-268.

MORI Scotland. (2003) *Glasgow Youth Survey 2003*, Glasgow City Council, Strathclyde Police and Glasgow Alliance: Glasgow.

Muncie, J. (2009) *Youth and Crime.* 3rd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Muncie, J. (2006) 'Governing young people: coherence and contradiction in contemporary youth justice', in *Critical Social Policy*. 26, (4), pp. 770-793.

Murray, C. (2012) 'Young people's perspectives: The trials and tribulations of going straight', *Criminology and Criminal Justice.* 12 (1), pp. 25-40.

Nagin, D., and Pogarsky, G. (2001) 'Integrating Celerity, Impulsivity, and Extra-legal Sanction Threats into a Model of General Deterrence: Theory and Evidence', *Criminology*, 39(4), pp. 865-892.

National Audit Office. (2008) *The Home Office: Reducing the risk of violent crime*, London: The Stationery Office. [Online]. [Accessed 8th July 2011]. Available from: https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-home-office-reducing-the-risk-of-violent-crime/

Nayak, A., and Kelly, M J. (2008) Gender, Youth and Culture: Young masculinities and femininities, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Newburn, T. (2007) *Criminology*, Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing.

Newburn, T. (2002) 'Young people, crime and justice', in Maguire, M., Morgan, R., and Reiner, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology, 3rd Ed.*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 531-578.

Newburn, T. and Stanko, B. (1994) *Just Boys doing business: Men Masculinities and Crime*, London: Routledge.

Nice, R. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice: Pierre Bourdieu*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nicolaas, G., and Lynn, P. (1998) *The use of respondent incentives in surveys. Survey Methods Centre Newsletter*, vol. 18 (2), pp. 3-8, London: NatCen.

Noaks, L. and Wincup, E. (2004) *Criminological Research: Understanding Qualitative Methods*. London: Sage Publications.

Office for National Statistics. (2015) *Crime in England and Wales, Year Ending December 2013, Statistical Bulletin*, Office for National Statistics. [Online]. [Accessed 24th August 2015]. Available from: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-june-2015/stb-crime--ye-june-2015.html

Office for National Statistics. (2014a) *Crime in England and Wales, Year Ending December 2013, Statistical Bulletin*, Office for National Statistics. [Online]. [Accessed 17th August 2014]. Available from: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/period-ending-december-2013/stb-crime-stats-dec-2013.html

Office for National Statistics. (2014b) *Chapter 3 – Recorded Offences Involving the use of Weapons in England and Wales*, [Online]. [Accessed 17th August 2014]. Available from: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/focus-on-violent-crime-and-sexual-offences--2012-13/rpt---chapter-3---weapons.html

Olweus, D. (1993) *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do,* Oxford: Blackwell.

One9. (2014) *Time is Illmatic*, United States: Tribeca Films.

Oppenheim, A. (1992) *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement,* London: Pinter.

Oxford English Dictionary. [Online]. www.oed.com

Padley, M. and Hirsch, D. **(**2013**)** *The child poverty map of the UK 2013*. Campaign to End Child Poverty. [Online]. [Accessed 8th October 2014]. Available from: http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/images/ecp/130212%20ECP%20local%20report%20final(2)pdf

Park, R. and Burgess, E. (1925) *The City,* Chicago: University of Chicago.

Patchin, J. W., Huebner, B. M., McCluskey, J. D., Varano, S. P. and Bynum, T. S. (2006) Exposure to Community Violence and Childhood Delinquency, in *Crime and Delinquency*. 52. (2), pp. 307-332.

Patrick, J. (1973) *A Glasgow Gang Observed*, Wiltshire: Redwood Press.

Pearson, G. (1983) *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*, London: Macmillan.

Phillips, A. and Chamberlain, V. (2006) *MORI Five Year Report: An analysis of Youth Survey Data*, Youth Justice Board: London.

Phillips, C. (2008) Negotiating identities: ethnicity and social relations in a young offenders' institution*, Theoretical Criminology*, 12 (3), pp. 313-331.

Phillips, C. (2003) 'Who's Who in the Pecking Order? Aggression and 'Normal Violence' in the Lives of Girls and Boys', *British Journal of Criminology*, 43 (71), pp. 710-728.

Pitts, J. (2007) *Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest*, Bedfordshire: University of Bedfordshire.

Polsky, N. (1998) *Hustlers, beats and others,* Great Britain: Pelican Books.

Prior, D., and Paris, A. (2005) *Preventing children's involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour: a literature review. A paper produced for the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund*, London: Department for Education and Skills.

Ray, L. (2013) Violent Crime, in Hale, C., Hayward, K., Wahidin, A. and Wincup, E. (2013) *Criminology. 3rd ed.*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 187-209.

Ray, L. (2011) *Violence and Society*, London: Sage.

Read, D, W. (2001) Anthropological Theory "Formal analysis of kinship terminologies and its relationship to what constitutes kinship", *Anthropological Theory,* 1 (2): 239–267.

Regoniel, P, A. (2015) 'Conceptual Framework: A Step by Step Guide on How to Make One', In *SimplyEducate.Me*. [Online]. [Accessed 4th January, 2016]. Available from: http://simplyeducate.me/2015/01/05/conceptual-framework-a-step-by-step-guide-on-how-to-make-one/

Relph, E. (1976) *Place and Placelessness*, London: Pion.

Rich, J. A. and Grey, C, M. (2005) Pathways to recurrent trauma among young Black men: Traumatic stress, substance use, and the "code of the street", *American Journal of Public Health*, 95, pp. 816-24.

Robins, D. and Cohen, P. (1978) *Knuckle Sandwich: Growing up in the working class city*, Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Roe, S. and Ashe, J. (2008) *Young people and crime: findings from the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey*, Home Office: London.

Rose, N. (1989) *Governing the Soul,* London: Routledge.

Royal Armouries Museum. (2007) *Tackling Knife Crime: A Review of Literature on Knife Crime in the UK. A Report for the Royal Armouries Museum,* Leicester: Royal Armouries and the Perpetuity Group.

Rubin, J., Federico, G. and Coutts, A. (2008) *Violent crime: Risk models, effective interventions and risk management,* Cambridge: Rand Corporation Europe.

Sabates, R. (2008) 'Educational Attainment and Juvenile Crime: Area-Level Evidence Using Three Cohorts of Young People', *British Journal of Criminology*, 48 (3), pp. 395-409.

Sampson, R. J. and Laub, J. H. (2001) 'Understanding desistance from crime', *Crime and Justice*, 28, pp. 1-69.

Sampson, R. J. and Laub, J. H. (1993) *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sampson, R. J. and Laub, J. H. (1992) 'Crime and deviance in the life course', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18, pp. 63-84.

Sampson, R.J., and J. Lauritsen. (1990) 'Deviant lifestyles, proximity to crime, and the offender-victim link in personal violence', *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 27, pp. 110-139.

Sampson, R. J., & Lauritsen, J. L. (1994) Violent victimization and offending: Individual, situational, and community-level risk factors, in A. J. Reiss & J. A. Roth (eds.) *Understanding and preventing violence,* Washington, DC: National Academy Press, (Vol. 3), pp. 1-114.

Sandberg, S. (2008) 'Street capital: Ethnicity and violence on the streets of Oslo', *Theoretical Criminology*. 2008. 12, pp. 153. [Online]. [Accessed 3rd May 2012]. Available from: http://tcr.sagepub.com

Sanchez-Jankowski, M. (1991) *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*, California: University of California Press.

Saunders, M.N.K. (2006) 'Gatekeepe*rs',* in Jupp, V. (ed.) *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods*, London: Sage Publications Limited, pp. 126-127. [Online]. [Accessed January 20th 2013]. Available from http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/the-sage-dictionary-of-social-research-methods/n85.xml

Sarbin, T.R. (1986) Preface, in Sarbin, T.R. (ed.) *Narrative psychology: the storied nature of human conduct.* London: Praeger.

Scottish Government. (2011) *Thematic report on knife crime*, [Online]. [Accessed 12th October 2015]. Available from: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/07/05130225/9

Seddon, T (2005) 'Paying drug users to take part in research: Justice, human rights and business perspectives on the use of incentive payments', *Addiction Research and Theory*, vol. 13 (2), pp. 101-109.

Seidel, J, V. (1998) 'Qualitative Data Analysis', in *The Ethnograph v5.0: A Users Guide, Appendix E,* Qualis Research [Online]. [Accessed 8th September 2013]. Available from: www.qualisresearch.com

Sieber, J, E. and Stanley, B. (1988) 'Ethical and professional dimensions of socially sensitive research', *American Psychologist*, 43(1), pp. 49-55. [Online]. [Accessed 23rd January 2013]. Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.43.1.49

Sethi, D., Hughes, K., Bellis, M., Mitis, F. and Racioppi, F. (eds.) (2010) *European Report on preventing violence and knife crime among young people*, Geneva: World Health Organisation.

Sharp, C., Aldridge, J. and Medina, J. (2006) '*Delinquent Youth Groups and Offending Behaviour: Findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey', Home Office Report 14/06*, London: Crown Copyright.

Shaw, C., Brady, L.M., and Davey, C. (2011) *Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People,* London: National Children's Bureau Research Centre. [Online]. [Accessed 5th June 2013]. Available from: http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/434791/guidelines_for_research_with_cyp.pdf

Shaw, C. R. and McKay, H. D. (1942) *Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shepherd, J. (2007) *Effective NHS Contributions To Violence Prevention: The Cardiff Model*, Cardiff: Cardiff University.

Shuttleworth, M. (2008) *Operationalization*. [Online]. [Accessed 4th March 2016]. Available from: https://explorable.com/operationalization.

Silverman, D. (2004) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Silverman, D. (1993) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, London: Sage Publications.

Silvestri, A., Oldfield, M., Squires, P. and Grimshaw, R. (2009) *Young people, knives and guns. A comprehensive review, analysis and critique of gun and knife crime strategies,* London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.

Sivarajasingam, V., Wells, J, P., Moore, S. and Shepherd, J, P. (2014) *Violence in England and Wales 2013*, *an Accident and Emergency Perspective*, Violence and Society

Research Group. [Online]. [Accessed May 13th 2014]. Available from: http://www.vrg.cf.ac.uk/nvit/NVIT_2013.pdf

Sivarajasingam, V., Wells, J, P., Moore, S., Shepherd, J, P. (2009) *Violence in England and Wales 2009: an Accident and Emergency Perspective*, Violence and Society Research Group. [Online]. [Accessed October 12th 2010]. Available from: http://www.vrg.cf.ac.uk/nvit/NVIT_2009.pdf

Smart, C. (1976). *Women, Crime and Criminology*, London: Routledge.

Smith, D. (2004) *The links between victimisation and offending, The Edinburgh Youth Transitions Survey*, Number 5. Edinburgh: Centre for Law and Society, University of Edinburgh. [Online]. [Accessed May 12th 2011]. Available from: http://www2.law.ed.ac.uk/cls/esytc/findings/digest5.pdf

Smith, P, K. and Sharp, S. (1994) *School Bullying, Insights and Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Smithson, H. and Ralphs, R. (2016) "Youth in the UK: 99 problems but the gang ain't one?", *Safer Communities*, Vol. 15 Iss: 1, pp.11 – 23.

Spergel, I. (1990) '*Youth gangs: continuity and change'*, Crime and Justice, 12: 171-275.

Squires, P. and Kennison, P. (2010) *Shooting to Kill? Policing Firearms and Armed Response*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Squires, P. (2009) 'The knife crime `epidemic' and British politics', *British Politics*, 4 (1), pp. 127-157.

Stanko, E, A. and Lee, R, M. (2003) 'Introduction: Methodological reflections on researching violence', in Lee, R, M. and Stanko E, A. (eds.) *Researching Violence'* London: Routledge, pp. 1-12.

Stanko, E. (1990) *Everyday Violence: how women and men experience sexual and physical danger,* London: Pandora.

Stanko, E. and Hobdell, K. (1993) Assault on Men: Masculinity and Male Victimisation, *British Journal of Criminology*, 33/3, pp. 400-415.

Stephen, D. E. and Squires, P. (2004) 'They're Still Children and Entitled to be Children': Problematising the Institutionalised Mistrust of Marginalised Youth in Britain, *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol 7, no. 3, pp. 351-369.

Sutherland, E. (1947) *Principles of criminology*, 4th ed. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott.

Sykes, G. and Matza, D. (1957) 'Techniques of neutralization: a theory of delinquency', *American Sociological Review*, 22, pp. 664-70.

Taylor, I., Walton, P. and Young, J. (1973) *The New Criminology*, London: Routledge.

Taylor, N.J. and Kearney, J. (2005) 'Reaching hard-to-reach populations: privileged access interviews and drug using parents', in *Sociological Research Online.* 10 (2). [Online]. Available from: http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/2/taylor.html [Accessed 12th June 2012].

Teddlie, C. and Yu, F. (2007) 'Mixed Methods Sampling: A Typology With Examples', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1 (1), pp. 77-100.

Thornberry, T., Krohn, M., Lizotte, A. & Smith, C. (2003) *Gangs and Delinquency in a Developmental Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thrasher, F. (1927/1963) *The Gang*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tierney, J. (1996) *Criminology: Theory and Context*, Essex: Prentice Hall.

Tonry, M. (1997) Ethnicity, Crime, and Immigration, in Tonry, M. (ed.) Ethnicity, Crime, and Immigration: Comparative and Cross-National Perspectives, London: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-29.

Tuan, Y. (1977) *Space and Place: the perspective of experience*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

United States Department of Justice National Youth Gang Centre. (2008) *Best practices to Address Community Gang Problems: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model*. Washington D.C: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. [Online]. [Accessed 8th June 2012]. Available from: https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/AlphaList.aspx?alpha=B&Agency=All

United States Department of Justice National Youth Gang Centre. (2010) *Best practices to Address Community Gang Problems: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model*. Washington D.C: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 2nd ed. [Online]. [Accessed 8th June 2012]. Available from: https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/AlphaList.aspx?alpha=B&Agency=All

University Of Leeds. (2013) *Research Ethics Policy*, [Online]. [Accessed 18th June 2012]. Available from: http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/file/1157/research_ethics_policy,

Valentine, G. (1996) 'Angels and Devils: Moral Landscapes of Childhood', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, Vol.* 14, pp. 581-599.

Valentine, G. (1997) 'Oh Yes I Can." Oh No You Can't": Children and Parents' Understandings of Kids' Competence to Negotiate Public Space Safely', *Antipode. Vol.* 29, No. 1, pp. 65-89.

Violence and Society Research Group. [Online]. [Accessed 8th August 2015]. Available from: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/research/explore/research-units/violence-research-group

Violence Reduction Unit. [Online]. [Accessed 8th August 2015]. Available from: http://www.actiononviolence.org.uk/

Von Hirsch, A., Bottoms, A., Burney, E., and Wikstrom, P- O. (1999) *Criminal Deterrence and Sentence Severity: An Analysis of Recent Research*, Oxford: Hart Publishing.

Walklate, S. (2003) *Understanding Criminology: Current theoretical debates*, 2nd ed., Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Wacquant, L. (2002) 'Scrutinizing the street: Poverty, morality, and the pitfalls of urban ethnography', *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(6), pp. 1468-1532.

Wacquant, L. (2006) *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ward, L. and Diamond, A. (2009) *Research Report 18. Key Findings Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) Phase 1: Overview of key trends from a monitoring programme*. Home Office. [Online]. [Accessed 12th May 2012]. Available from:

http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/research-and-analysis/yjb/knife-crime-prevention-programme.pdf

Ward, L., Nicholas, S., Willoughby, M. (2011) *An assessment of the Tackling Knives and Serious Youth Violence Action Programme (TKAP) – Phase II,* London: Home Office. [Online]. [Accessed 23rd May 2012]. Available from: http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/research-and-analysis/yjb/knife-crime-prevention-programme.pdf

Ward, P. (2010) *Knives and offensive weapons,* House of Commons Library. [Online]. [Accessed 23rd May 2012]. Available from: http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN00330

Weininger, E, B. (2005) 'Foundations of Pierre Bourdieu's class analysis', in *Approaches to Class Analysis.* Ed. Erik Olin Wright, pp. 82-118. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. [Online]. Available from: http://www.brockport.edu/sociology/faculty/weininger.html [accessed 13th November, 2012].

Wexler, S. (1990) 'Ethical Obligations and Social Research', in Kempf, K. (ed.) (2004) *Measurement Issues in Criminology*, New York: Springer Verlag New York Inc, pp. 78-107.

Whitney, I. and Smith, P.K. (1993) 'A Survey of the Nature and Extent of Bullying in Junior/Middle and Secondary Schools'. *Educational Research*, 35/1, Spring, pp. 3-25.

Whyte, W. F. (1943) *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum,* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Wilkinson, D. L. and Fagan, J. A. (2000) 'Theory of Violent Events', in Beier, R. and Kennedy, L. (eds.) *The Process and Structure of Crime Advances in Criminological Theory*' 9, pp. 169–97.

Wilson, D. B. (2009) *Lessons Learned about Reducing Recidivism from Research on Correctional and Juvenile Delinquency Programs*, Center for Evidence-Based Crime

Policy, George Mason University. [Online]. [Accessed 7th September 2014]. Available from: http://cebcp.org/wp-content/CB20092/Wilson

Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs,* Farnborough: Saxon House.

Wikström, P-O., and Loeber, R. (2000) 'Do disadvantaged neighborhoods cause well-adjusted children to become adolescent delinquents? A study of male juvenile serious offending, risk and protective factors', and neighborhood context, *Criminology*, 38, pp. 1109-1142.

Wikström, P.O., and Treiber, K. (2009) 'Violence as Situational Action', in Eisner, M. and Karstedt, S. [eds.] *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, Vol. 3 (1) 2009, pp. 75-96.

Wincup, E. (2013) 'Researching Crime and Criminal Justice', in Hale, C., Hayward, K., Wahidin, A. and Wincup, E. *Criminology. 3rd ed.*, Oxford: Oxford University. Criminology 3rd Ed, pp. 98-116.

Witterbrood, K., and Nieuwbeerta, P. (1999) 'Wages of Sin? The Link Between Offending, Lifestyle and Violent Victimisation', *European Journal of Criminal Policy Research* 7, pp. 63-80. [Online]. Available from: http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023%2FA%3A1008736114804 [accessed 14th October 2012].

Wright, V. (2010) *Deterrence in Criminal Justice: Evaluating Certainty vs. Severity of Punishment, Washington, D.C.* The Sentencing Project. [Online]. [Accessed 12th August 2014]. Available from: http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/Deterrence%20Briefing%20.pdf

Wright, R.T., Decker, S.H. (1997) *Armed Robbers on the Job: Stickups and Street Culture*, Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Wolfgang, M.E. and Ferracuti, F. (1967) *The Subculture of Violence: Towards An Integrated Theory in Criminology*, Beverly Hills: Sage.

Wood, R. (2010) UK: the reality behind the 'knife crime' debate, in *Race & Class*. Institute of Race Relations, 52(2), pp. 97–103. [Online]. [Accessed 3rd May 2011]. Available from: http://rac.sagepub.com/content/52/2/97.full.pdf

World Health Organization. (2002) *World report on violence and health*. [Online]. [Accessed 23rd May 2012]. Available from: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/

Wyn, J. and White, R. (1997) *Rethinking Youth Studies in society*, London: SAGE Publications.

Young, J. (ed.) (1994) *The Exclusive Society: Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity*, London: Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Young, J., Fitzgerald, M., Hallsworth, S. and Josepth, I. (2007) *Groups Gangs and Weapons*, London: The Youth Justice Board.

Appendices

Appendix A: Anonymised information about participants and gatekeepers

A.1: Age of interview participants (categories) (where recorded)

	Age	Age started to carry knife
8	0	1
9-10	2	1
11-12	0	0
13-14	0	5
15-16	12	5
17-18	7	1
19	1	0
Not stated	1	10

A.2: Ethnicity of interview participants (where recorded)

	Ethnicity
White British	5
Black British	6
Black African	2
British Asian	1
Other	1
Not stated	7

A3: Ethic Group Categories and acronyms used to describe ethnicity of Focus Group participants

> **White**
> WB: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
> WI.   Irish   WG/IT. Gypsy or Irish Traveller
> WBAO.   Any other White background, *please describe*
> **Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups**
> WBC.   White and Black Caribbean   WBA. White and Black African
> WA.   White and Asian   MAO. Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background,
> **Asian / Asian British**
> I. Indian   P. Pakistani   B. Bangladeshi   C. Chinese
> AAO.   Any other Asian background, *please describe*
> **Black / African / Caribbean / Black British**
> BA.   African   BC. Caribbean
> BAO.   Any other Black / African / Caribbean background, *please describe*
> **Other ethnic group**
> A.   Arab
> EGAO.   Any other ethnic group, *please describe*

Source: Office for National Statistics (2015) Harmonised Concepts and Questions for Social Data: Primary Principles, Ethnic Group, Office for National Statistics. [Online]. [Accessed 13th May 2016].

A.4: Offences engaged in as described by interview participants

Offence		Sanction	
Carried knife but not caught	5	NA	
Possession of knife	10	Fine	2
Possession of knife		Non-custodial disposal	6
Possession of knife		Prison	2
Street robbery with knife	4	Non-custodial disposal	2
Street robbery with knife		Prison	2
Street robbery with bottle	1	Non-custodial disposal	1
Burglary (in possession of knife)	1	Prison	1
Burglary (without knife)	2	Prison	1
		Non-custodial disposal	1
Drug dealing	2	Not stated	

A.5: Table of practitioners and others who spoke informally to the researcher

London	Yorkshire
YOT practitioner	YOT practitioner
YOT practitioner	Youth Intervention Project office
YOT practitioner	Police Schools Liaison Officer
Police YOT/Gangs liaison Officer	Youth worker for a statutory agency
Youth worker for a young people's charity	Youth worker for a charity
Youth worker for a youth action group	Administrator for a knife crime awareness campaign

Appendix B: Research instruments

B.1: Full list of themes and sub-themes identified in operationalisation of the research

The role of normative codes

'Respect'

Gang life

Perceptions of space and place

Engagement with street cultures/youth transgressions

Engagement in offending from ASB to low level offending through to more serious crime

Engagement with troublesome/offending peer groups groups

Experiences of or concern about victimisation

Experience of perpetrating victimisation

Experiences of social exclusion

The thrill of offending

Encounters with street cultures

Experiences of or concern about victimisation

Experience of perpetrating victimisation

Experiences of social exclusion

Perceptions of place and space

Youth transitions/negotiated orders

Attendance to peer perceptions

Emotional/cognitive needs

Relationships with family/friends

School/work situation

Local neighborhood

Media portrayals of youth

Knife crime

Carrying a knife

Using a knife to commit crime – threat/assault/mugging

Media portrayals of knife crime

Experiences of knife crime reduction programs – formal/informal

B.2: Interview schedule

Talk about the research, confidentiality, payment, time etc

Read and ask them to sign consent form

Explain that the research is interesting mainly in their carrying of a knife, their reasons for this, the events leading up to this but also interested in them and their lives. Stress the importance of the research as their opportunity to have a say and influence policy.

Start off

Start slowly, general conversation

Ask about age, ethnicity etc.

Peers and neighbourhood

Mapping exercise

- How do you feel about your neighbourhood – safe/dangerous etc?
- Where and in what areas do you generally hang out?
- How do you get on with peers, adults, neighbours?
- Where do you feel safest?
- Where do you feel most threatened?
- Who is most important to you?
- Do many people carry knives? Where?

Knife carrying

Could you tell me a bit about your knife carrying…

- Can you remember the first time you picked up a knife?

What were your thoughts in the time leading up to this?

- Where were you, where did you get the knife from?
- What kind of knife was it?
- Whose knife was it?
- How did you carry it?
- Where did you go?
- Who were you with?
- How did it feel to carry the knife – scared, excited etc?
- How long did you carry it for?

- How many times have you carried a knife since?
- How often, in what situations?
- Do you still carry a knife?
- If not, when did you stop, and why?
- How do you feel when you are not carrying the knife?

Gangs and knives

- Do any of your friends carry a knife?
- What do your friends think of you carrying a knife?
- Do any of your family members know?
- What do they think about it

- Do you consider yourself to be a member of a gang?
- What does this involve – what kind of things do you do?
- Do people in your gang carry knives/and or other weapons?

Offending and knives

- Have you ever been convicted of an offence?
- Have you ever been caught with a knife?
- What happened?
- How often?
- In what situations?
- Do you know what the punishment is for carrying a knife?
- Do you think that this is fair/too harsh/too soft?
- Probe experience of local initiatives around knives/violence
- Are you currently on any kind of court order?
- Do any of your family offend?

Closing questions

- Could you please tell me a bit about yourself…
- Who do you live with?
- What do they (mum/dad/guardians) do?
- Do you have brothers and sisters?
- How do you get on with your family?
- Do/did you enjoy school?
- Probe attitudes toward /accomplishments in school, education, work, progress and future
- Are you working/studying at the moment?
- What's your best quality?
- What are your hopes for the future?

Thank participants for taking part and give vouchers/ask to sign form to confirm receipt of vouchers

B.3: Focus Group activities

Focus Group Stage 1: Presentation

Knife crime

March 2013

Peter Traynor

Structure of session

1. Knife crime: slide presentation

2. Group task

3. Focus group, discussion, and questions

Knives and the law

Can you be found guilty of knife crime if you?
- Carry a knife in pubic
- Buy a knife under the age of 18
- Hide or keep a knife for someone else
- Sell a knife to somebody under 18
- Threaten someone with a knife
- Stab or slash someone with a knife

Sentencing
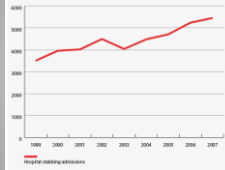
What is the punishment for carrying a knife?

Some trends
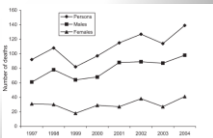
- Use of knife in crimes between 5 and 8% of all crimes: 33,000 offences in 2009/10
- Serious injuries and fatalities increasing
- Knives account for around 30% of all murders
- Knife deaths concentrated in large urban areas: London, Manchester, Yorkshire, Merseyside
- Annual convictions for carrying a knife doubled over last ten years

---

Knife crime

Numbers going to hospital after being stabbed

Hospital stabbing admissions

Deaths from knife injuries

Knives and young people

- Numbers of young people as perpetrators /victims is increasing
- Perpetrators and victims are getting younger
- 60% of victims of knife crime in London between 2008 and 2011 were under 20 years old
- Research suggests as many as 2 in 5 young people have carried a knife (Barlas and Egan, 2006)
- The peak age for knife carrying between 14 and 17

Who uses a knife?

- Most knife offences done by young men against young men.
- A youth Justice Board survey found that 31% of boys and 13% of girls claimed to have carried a knife in 2009
- Knife use highest amongst excluded young people: i.e. those in pupil referral units (PRUs)
- But young people from across the social spectrum are carrying, if not using, knives

Why carry a knife?

- To hurt people
- For self defence
- Status
- Reputation
- Gangs
- Fitting in, being cool/peer pressure
- Other reasons?
- What do you think?

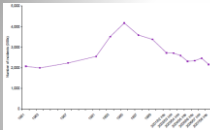## Self defence

- Self-defence main reason given for knife carrying
- Do you agree?
- High levels of bullying among children
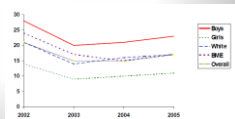
- Low levels of trust in traditional guardians

  'I used to carry a knife but not in school, then I stopped carrying it and I got mugged by someone with a knife' (Marfleet, 2008)

Youth violence

Most crime rates going down

Youth violence going up

Tackling youth violence

New Labour: tackling gangs, knives, guns
- Political construction of youth as 'threat'
The coalition: tough talk
- Mandatory sentencing?
Solutions
- Tend to frame in terms of personal responsibility
- Some investment in early intervention/social prevention but lip service paid to structural sources of violence
- Some initiatives have been successful: Boston Gangs project, Matrix in Liverpool and Say no to knives in Scotland

Media representations

Media hype?

- Most young people not violent
- Moral panic?
- Naming and framing: the media can cement or enhance a gang's sense of identity
- Excessive coverage of knife crime can increase fear amongst young people
- The 2011 riots: the role of the media?

Stage 2: Group activity

Please split into 3 groups. Read the stories on the other side of this sheet.

A.   Young people/youth workers

B.   Conservative political party

C.   Victims' and families' group

Discuss in your group and answer the following questions:

- What should happen to Marcel?
- What should happen to Tina?
- What should happen to Claire?
- Should they be treated differently?
- Whose fault is it?

Marcel's story

- Marcel is 16 and carries a flick knife.
- Some of his friends do it and he thinks it is fun. He bought it from a local shop.
- He is with his friends one day in town, when he remembers he has to go and help his mum do the shopping.
- On his way home, he bumps into a gang of young people he knows who he had some problems with at school.
- They corner him and he panics, and stabs one of them.
- The others run away, the police come. The boy is taken to hospital where he later dies. Marcel is arrested.

Tina's story

- Tina is at the cinema with a group of friends.
- On their way home they see a young woman, Amy, who they know but had a falling out with.
- Tina's friend Claire starts arguing with Amy and they fight. Claire pulls a knife out of her bag and stabs Amy.
- They run away, but somebody recognises Tina. The police come.
- Amy is taken to hospital with serious injuries. Tina is arrested

Focus Group Stage 3: Group discussion

Topic List

Talk about the research, confidentiality, etc

Read and ask them to sign consent form

Explain that the research is interesting mainly in their attitudes towards knife carrying

- Experiences of knives: at school/on street etc
- Experiences of safety and security/anxiety and insecurity
- Thoughts on the kinds of people who carry knives
- Thoughts on why people carry knives
- Attitudes towards knives – cool/stupid/dangerous etc
- Experiences of and attitudes towards anti-knife initiatives
- Understanding of knives and legal issues
- Knives in the media – helpful, unhelpful

Appendix C: Consent forms and ethical approval form

C.1: Interview consent form

Study of knife carrying by young people: interviews

My name is Peter. I work at the University of Leeds. I am doing a study on the carrying of knives by young people. The research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and is completely independent from the police, the local council and the government.

I would like to talk to young people who have some experience of carrying a knife. I am only interested in why you have carried a knife, and will not discuss anything that you may have done with the knife. Anything you tell me will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be passed on to your group leader or any other individual or organisation unless you tell me that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

You do not have to agree to be interviewed. If you would prefer not to answer a particular question, please let me know, and you are free to stop the interview at any time. The interview should last no more than 45 minutes. As a thank you, you will be given high street vouchers worth £15 on completion of the interview. Your name will not be used in anyway in the research produced. You are welcome to ask any questions about the research.

If you agree to take part, I would be grateful if you would sign this consent form to confirm that that I have explained the interview process to you fully and that you understand what is expected of you.

****

I agree to participate in the above research.

Signature …………………………………………………………………………..

Name ………………………………………………………………………

Date …………………………………………………………………………...

Receipt of payment

I acknowledge receipt of vouchers to the sum of £15 as a thank you for my participation.

Signature …………………………………………………………………………

Name …………………………………………Date ………………………………………

C.2: Focus group consent form

Study of knife carrying by young people: focus groups

My name is Peter. I work at the University of Leeds. I am doing a study on the carrying of knives by young people. The research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and is completely independent from the police, the local council and the government.

I would like to talk to young people in (site) about knives – what they think about knives, how they feel about knives and knife crime. I will be conducting a focus group with the help of Envision and would like you to take part. Anything you say during the session will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be passed on to your group leader or any other individual or organisation unless you tell me that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

You do not have to take part in the focus group and you are free to leave at any time. The session should last no more than one hour. Your name will not be used in any way in the research produced. You are welcome to ask any questions about the research.

If you agree to take part, I would be grateful if you would sign this consent form to confirm that that I have explained the interview process to you fully and that you understand what is expected of you.

****

I agree to participate in the above research.

Signature …………………………………………………………………………..

Name …………………………………………………………………………….

Date ……………………………………………………………………

C. 3: Ethical approval form (abridged version)

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPLICATION FORM

PART A: Summary

A.1. Which Faculty Research Ethics Committee do you wish to consider this application? [2]

⦿ Social Sciences/ Environment/ LUBS (AREA)

A.2. Title of the research [3]

Pathways into and out of knife crime

A.3. Main investigator [4]

	Title:	Forename/Initials:	Surname:
	Mr	Peter	Traynor
Department:	Law		
Institution:	University of Leeds		

A.5. Select from the list below to describe your research: (You may select more than one)

- ☑ Research on or with human participants
- ☐ Research involving genetic modification
- ☐ Research with has potential significant environmental impact.[8] If yes, please give details:
- ☑ Research working with data of human participants
  - ☑ New data collected by questionnaires/interviews
  - ☑ New data collected by qualitative methods
  - ☐ New data collected from observing individuals or populations
  - ☑ Research working with aggregated or population data
  - ☑ Research using already published data or data in the public domain
- ☐ Research working with human tissue samples [9]

A.6. Will the research involve any of the following: [10] (You may select more than one)

If your research involves any of the following an application must be made to the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) via IRAS www.myresearchproject.org.uk as NHS ethical approval will be required. There is no need to complete any more of this form. Contact governance-ethics@leeds.ac.uk for advice.

- ☑ A prison or a young offender institution in England and Wales (and is health related) [14]

You must inform the Research Ethics Administrator of your NRES number and approval date once approval has been obtained.

A.7. Will the participants be from any of the following groups? (Tick as appropriate)

☑ Children under 16 [16]

☑ Prisoners or young offenders [14]

☐

☑ Other vulnerable groups

☐

Please justify the inclusion of the above groups, explaining why the research cannot be conducted on non vulnerable groups.

A Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check will be needed for researchers working with children or vulnerable adults (see www.crb.gov.uk)

A.9. What are the main ethical issues with the research? [19]
Summarise the main ethics issues, and say how you propose to address them.
Indicate any issues on which you would welcome advice from the ethics committee.
Potential problems and solutions
Access
The nature of the research presents some potential problems: some participants will be hard 'to reach' including offenders and those using knives who are not known to the authorities. However, the applicant is currently working on a research project (Nuffield ASB study) based in Leeds and London and has worked in Manchester on an earlier research project. Therefore, to varying degrees, good working relations already exist in these cities with individuals in agencies including the police, the youth offending service, children and young people's services and support/prevention agencies. These agencies are important gatekeepers and several of them have already expressed an interest in the research and have provisionally offered assistance in linking with participants.
Ethics
Ethical considerations revolve around notions of harm, consent, confidentiality and deception (Bryman, 2001) and the researcher's obligations to minimise these harms (Wexler, 1990: 92). In the proposed study issues could include a) potential harm to participants: for instance the legal or emotional consequences of discussing illegal activities and b) potential risks to the researcher through contact with participants who may have a history of violent behaviour. These issues will be addressed by: taking the notion of informed consent seriously; explaining the purposes and value of the research to participants and using consent forms; explaining to participants the researcher's ethical responsibility to declare anything they may say about illegal activities if they involve hurting themselves or somebody else in the future; interviewees and sites will be anonymised and stored in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the rules of the British Sociological Association (2002: 36); interviews will be arranged by 'gate keepers' and conducted in a safe setting. The researcher has many years experience of handling sensitive interview topics.
A written information sheet will be provided, setting out the aims and objectives of the research, the reasons for doing it, potential outputs and the reason for selecting the participants. The concept of 'consent' will be explained in clear writing as will the nature of the contribution required. The participant will be asked to sign the document to indicate consent, and the form will be stored in line with data protection rules and kept separately from the research data. Anonymity will be guaranteed in accordance with the methods used, as will safe and appropriate storage of the data and transcript.

Part C: The Research

C.1. What are the aims of the study? [22] (Must be in language comprehensible to a lay person.)
The study has three objectives:
1. To better understand the *internal processes* that lead a young person to carry a knife.
2. To better understand the *external influences* that lead a young person to carry a knife.
3. To explore the *situational contexts* in which knife use occurs or has occurred.

C.2. Describe the design of the research. Qualitative methods as well as quantitative methods should be included. (Must be in language comprehensible to a lay person.)
It is important that the study can provide information about the aims that it intends to address. If a study cannot answer the questions / add to the knowledge base that it intends to, due to the way that it is designed, then wasting participants' time could be an ethical issue.
The research will comprise four main strands. The fieldwork will comprise thirty interviews and five focus groups:

1. *Desk research: interrogation of documentary and statistical data:* on the incidence and location of knife related crime in the case study area (using ARC GIS and SPSS), the availability of local prevention services and the approaches taken to (policing) youth gangs, knife carrying and knife-related crime in the two areas.

2. *Semi-structured interviews with persons involved in knife crime and living in each of the chosen neighbourhoods*. This will primarily be young people (14-18) who have been involved in knife crime.
3. *Focus groups with young people in each neighbourhood*: this will involve young people who live in high 'knife-crime' areas but who have not been convicted of any knife related crime and are not known to associate with such offenders.
4. *Interviews with practitioners and members of the chosen community who are involved in tackling knife crime at each site*: to provide a contrasting perspective to that of the young people.

Research instruments

There are two principal research instruments: semi structured, open ended qualitative interviews and focus groups. The planned interviews with the young people/offenders will allow the researcher to explore through questions and the development of a narrative the motivations for carrying/using knives, the symbolic importance attached to knives, the reflexive rationales employed by participants, as well as the cultural context in which the participants are living and the situations in which they have found themselves. The focus groups will allow the research to explore collective beliefs, norms and values around knives as held by young people who are more representative of the general population and to better explore broader attitudes towards knife use among young people including but not exclusively 'at risk' youths (Beinhardt *et al.*, 2002) The interviews with practitioners will provide a contrasting perspective to that of the young people and allow the researcher to explore any questions or problems that might have arisen.

C.3. What will participants be asked to do in the study? [23] *(e.g. number of visits, time, travel required, interviews etc)*
Take part in one interview or attend one focus group.

C.4. Does the research involve and international collaborator or research conducted overseas: [24]
(Tick as appropriate)

☐ Yes   ☑ No

If yes, describe any ethical review procedures that you will need to comply with in that country:
Describe the measures you have taken to comply with these:
Include copies of any ethical approval letters/ certificates with your application.

C.5. Proposed study dates and duration
Research start date (DD/MMM/YYYY): _____01/01/2011_____
Research end date (DD/MMM/YYYY): _____01/09/2012_____

C.6. Where will the research be undertaken? (i.e. in the street, on UoL premises, in schools) [25]
On the premises of agencies assisting in the research, including potentially police stations; young offenders institutes; youth offending offices; youth clubs and activities providers and schools.

RECRUITMENT & CONSENT PROCESSES

How participants are recruited is important to ensure that they are not induced or coerced into participation. The way participants are identified may have a bearing on whether the results can be generalised. Explain each point and give details for subgroups separately if appropriate.

C.7. How will potential participants in the study be:
(i) identified,
Through the identification of the appropriate research sites and the assistance of various contacts in the agencies outline above.
(ii) approached
Principally through agency staff as indicated above.
(iii) recruited?
Principally through agency staff as indicated above. Various recruitment tools have been tried on previous projects including letters to potential participants homes and posters in appropriate venues, however these have generally proved ineffective. The most effective method has been to depend on 'gatekeeper's at appropriate agencies.

C.8. Will you be excluding any groups of people, and if so what is the rationale for that? 27
Excluding certain groups of people, intentionally or unintentionally may be unethical in some circumstances. It may be wholly appropriate to exclude groups of people in other cases.
No

C.9. How many participants will be recruited and how was the number decided upon? [28]
It is important to ensure that enough participants are recruited to be able to answer the aims of the research.

- 20 semi-structured interviews with young persons (10 at each site)
- 6 focus groups with between 3 and 6 young people (3 in each site)
- 10 interviews with practitioners (5 in each site)

C.10. Will the research involve any element of deception? [29] If yes, please describe why this is necessary and whether participants will be informed at the end of the study. No

C.12. Will informed consent be obtained from the research participants?[30]

☑ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, give details of how it will be done. Give details of any particular steps to provide information (in addition to a written information sheet) e.g. videos, interactive material.

A written information sheet will be provided, setting out the aims and objectives of the research, the reasons for doing it, potential outputs and the reason for selecting the participants. The concept of 'consent' will be explained in clear writing as will the nature of the contribution required.

Anonymity will be guaranteed in accordance with the methods used, as will safe and appropriate storage of the data and transcript.

The participant will be asked to sign the document to indicate consent, and the form will be stored in line with data protection rules and kept separately from the research data.

Describe whether participants will be able to withdraw from the study, and up to what point (eg if data is to be anonymised). If withdrawal is not possible, explain why not.

Yes, they will be able to withdraw from the study at the point of meeting the researcher, prior to and after the interview, or at a later date if so desired. They will be informed that they can do this by contacting the initial gatekeeper and informing them of their decision.

If participants are to be recruited from any of potentially vulnerable groups, give details of extra steps taken to assure their protection. Describe any arrangements to be made for obtaining consent from a legal representative.

Copies of any written consent form, written information and all other explanatory material should accompany this application. *The information sheet should make explicit that participants can withdrawn from the research at any time, if the research design permits. Sample information sheets and consent forms are available from the University ethical review webpage at* http://researchsupport.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/academic_staff/good_practice/ethical_review_process/university_ethical_review-1.

C.13. How long will the participant have to decide whether to take part in the research? [31]
It may be appropriate to recruit participants on the spot for low risk research, however consideration is usually necessary for those projects which involve risks.
As long as required.

C.14. What arrangements have been made for participants who might not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information given in English, or who have special communication needs? [32] *(e.g. translation, use of interpreters etc. It is important that groups of people are not excluded due to language barriers or disabilities, where assistance can be given.)*
An interpreter will be used as and when required. The researcher has prior experience of working with translators in a research context.

C.15. Will individual or group interviews/ questionnaires discuss any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting, or is it possible that criminal or other disclosures requiring action could take place during the study (e.g. during interviews/group discussions, or use of screening tests for drugs)? [33]
If Yes, give details of procedures in place to deal with these issues
See earlier section on ethics.

The Information Sheet should explain under what circumstances action may be taken

C.16. Will individual research participants receive any payments, fees, reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives or benefits for taking part in this research? [34]

☑ Yes   ☐ No

If Yes, please describe the amount, number and size of incentives and on what basis this was decided.
Potentially a small sum, between £15 and £20 will be offered, in the form of gift vouchers. These have proved useful in previous projects the researcher has worked on.

RISKS OF THE STUDY

C.17. What are the potential benefits and/ or risks for research participants? [35]
See earlier section on ethics.

C.18. Does the research involve any risks to the researchers themselves, or people not directly involved in the research? [36]

☑ Yes   ☐ No

C.19. Will the research involve any of the following activities at any stage (including identification of potential research participants)? (Tick as appropriate)

☑ Publication of direct quotations from respondents

☑ FLASH memory or other portable storage devices

Storage of personal data on or including any of the following:

☑ Manual files

☑ Home or other personal computers

C.20. How will the research team ensure confidentiality and security of personal data? E.g. anonymisation procedures, secure storage & coding of data. [37]
See earlier section on ethics
You may wish to refer to the data protection and research webpage.

C.21. For how long will data from the study be stored? Please explain why this length of time has been chosen. [38]

	_____2___ years, ___0_____ months It is not considered that the research will have any clinical or major social, environmental or heritage importance beyond the lifespan of the PhD study.
NB: RCUK guidance states that data should normally be preserved and accessible for ten years, but for some projects it may be 20 years or longer.	

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

C.22. Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above normal salary or the costs of undertaking the research? [39]

☐ Yes   ☑ No

If yes, indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided

C.23. Is there scope for any other conflict of interest? [40] *For example will the research funder have control of publication of research findings?*

☐ Yes   ☑ No   *If yes, please explain _____*

C.24. Does the research involve external funding?   (Tick as appropriate) Yes ESCR

PART D: Declarations

Declaration by Chief Investigators
1.   The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
2.   I undertake to abide by the University's ethical and health & safety guidelines, and the ethical principles underlying good practice guidelines appropriate to my discipline.
3.   If the research is approved I undertake to adhere to the study protocol, the terms of this application and any conditions set out by the Research Ethics Committee.
4.   I undertake to seek an ethical opinion from the REC before implementing substantial amendments to the protocol.
5.   I undertake to submit progress reports if required.
6.   I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of patient or other personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer.
7.   I understand that research records/ data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future.
8.   I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this application will be held by the relevant RECs and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.
9.   I understand that the Ethics Committee may choose to audit this project at any point after approval.

Sharing information for training purposes
Optional – please tick as appropriate:

☑   I would be content for members of other Research Ethics Committees to have access to the information in the application in confidence for training purposes. All personal identifiers and references to researchers, funders and research units would be removed.

Principal Investigator
Signature of Principal Investigator: Peter Traynor
Print name: Peter Traynor
Date: (dd/mm/yyyy): 09/09/2011
Supervisor of student research
I have read, edited and agree with the form above.
Supervisor's signature: ....
Print name: ....
Date: (dd/mm/yyyy) ....