



BUILDING BRIDGES PROJECT

Empowering young people through human rights values: Fighting the knife culture

RACE ON THE AGENDA

July 2007

Carlene Firmin, Richard Turner and Dr. Theo Gavrielides

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2006, the Home Affairs Committee – House of Commons announced their intention to inquire into the relationship between young black people and the criminal justice system. This is the first sustained inquiry into the overrepresentation of young black people in the criminal justice system in more than a quarter of a century – the latest being that of Lord Scarman in 1981. In May 2007, the Committee announced its findings. Paragraph 211 of its recommendations states: “In drawing up a strategy on young black people’s overrepresentation, the Government should ensure young people themselves are consulted, and that local and national organisations ensure young people’s views are systematically taken into account in forming and evaluating policy”.

The Building Bridges Project was set up to show how young people can be involved in designing, forming and delivering policy. It was also introduced as a pilot whereby young people (16-25) from various racial, cultural and economic backgrounds would be given the chance to interact and learn from each other and through human rights education find out what unites them rather than what divides them in a society where materialism, lack of respect for each other’s dignity and rights, exclusion, fear and isolation thrive.

In particular, in June 2006, Race on the Agenda (ROTA) started a research and policy project to engage young people from various ethnic backgrounds to:

- increase their awareness of human rights and ethical values with a view to address their biases and build bridges between them;
- collect evidence relating to the knife and gun culture that is rooted in the capital with a view to affect policymaking.

ROTA is a social policy think-tank that has been active since 1986. ROTA works with London’s Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities towards achieving social justice by the elimination of discrimination and promotion of human rights, diversity and equality of opportunity. ROTA achieves these aims by informing London’s strategic decision-makers about the issues affecting the BAME voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the communities it serves and by making government policy more accessible to London’s BAME organisations.

The Building Bridges Project is broken down to ten Phases. With this report, Phase 1 is concluded. The findings were collected through desk research and fieldwork with key stakeholders and practitioners from the criminal justice field. Key conclusions and recommendations include:

- **Culture vs. crime:** The issue of gangs, guns and knives goes beyond what the criminal justice system understands as “crime”. It involves a culture that has gradually developed particularly in deprived areas both in rural and urban areas. This is particularly true for London. To understand and fight this culture there needs to be an acknowledgement of its complexity and multifaceted

nature. This culture grows within an environment of social exclusion and inequality; scientific evidence (Hosking and Walsh 2005) has shown that when exposed to inequality at an early age children are unable to develop feelings of empathy, an emotion that the culture in question lacks. Furthermore, it is near impossible to separate this culture from overarching cultures held by wider society and across other excluded groups. To an extent, the culture in question is itself a sub-culture of wider societal cultures; despite attempts by others to stress its exclusivity from the rest of British society. The use, possession and symbolic identity of weapons are informed by this culture. Furthermore within this culture violence becomes normalised and desensitised. We contend that there are a number of sub-cultures that feed into this culture. This can result in a wide range of people accepting, embracing and partaking within the weapons culture and exiting the culture from different standpoints. These sub-cultures can affect young people of varying social groups in different ways.

- **Gaps in Policy and practice:** This report recommends the following:
 - Greater involvement of young people in the formation of policies that affect them – this includes the gang, gun and knife culture as well as wider criminal justice matters such as hate crime, drugs and violence.
 - Stronger partnership between community-based projects and statutory criminal justice agencies. Case studies identified in this report seem to be unknown to mainstream organisations, and they tend to work in isolation, in the shadow of the law and without sustainable and long-term funding. Where partnership works has developed, the results are encouraging.
 - The role of respect in the design of policy is paramount in creating an inclusive and tolerant society of citizens that respect each other.
 - Human Rights Education has an important role in creating hope and broadening the minds of young people. As the Commission for Equality and Human Rights is about to open its doors, it is recommended that methods are explored to promote Human Rights Education through the three levels identified in this report. The Safer London Foundation has also noted the potential role that education can play in changing the lifestyles of young people which involve criminal behaviour.
 - The role of the Voluntary and Community Sector should not be underestimated in the fight against the gang, gun and knife culture. The sector has direct links with the communities it was set up to serve and this is particularly true for BAME groups which have traditionally been discriminated against.
 - Community cohesion and integration does not mean absorption of different cultures. The recommendation of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion on Single Group funding suggests that discrimination is an old phenomenon and that groups should no longer be funded on the basis of the communities they aim to serve but on the integration they aim to promote. This is not encouraging when put in

the context of inequality facing London's BAME communities. Funding not only needs to continue for specialised BAME groups working on the gun/gangs/knife culture but also be strengthened.

- The complexities of the culture and context of issues should be addressed in the formation of policy; it is insufficient to target knife and gun crime, without due consideration and understanding of the cultures within which they persist. Furthermore, that these cultures are considered within the context of the wider societal cultures rather than seen as distinct from them.
- A Home Office report on Gun Crime published in December 2006 states clearly the complexity of a 'gun culture' and that 'it is imperative that those working on crime reduction in communities affected by gun crime engage with young peoples' decision making processes'(Hales 2006). By being youth led the BBP is untangling the culture in question by following just that recommendation and as young people we aim to illustrate through the BBP the causes, and solutions, to a culture within which gang, gun and knife crime persists.

- **Youth Empowerment and volunteering:** Numerous studies have repeatedly pointed out the detrimental effects of excluding young people when developing policies that affect them, while they emphasised the positive impact that voluntary activities can have especially when empowering them to regain self-respect. In light of the recent recommendation of the Home Affairs Committee Inquiry, the BBP aims to serve as a paradigm for future projects that aim to put this recommendation in practice. The GLA Guns, Gangs and Weapons Practitioners' Forum have also acknowledged the importance of empowering young people to lead discussions in this field; at their recent seminar the Forum allowed us to co-lead two workshops to consider the benefits/barriers/solutions of youth led work. Stakeholders' awareness of this key issue was reflected in the fact that over 100 people attended our workshop over the course of the day. Findings, from the BBP, so far show that by empowering young people and by giving them voice to explore what affects them and their families they regain the respect and control they are lacking and most often seek to find in the gang, gun and knife culture.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, many thanks to the main authors of this report, Carlene Firmin and Richard Turner for the unpaid, passionate and hard work they provided to ROTA in carrying out Phase 1 of the Building Bridges Project. In my view, both can serve as role models for the young people that belong to their respective communities and to the UK society at large.

I am also grateful to the organisations that supported Phase 1 of the Project, namely Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, which match funded my post, Big Boost and V, which covered expenses occurred by the young people involved in the Project, as well as City Bridge Trust which agreed to support the remaining Phases of BBP.

I am particularly thankful to the volunteer and internship centres of the London School of Economics for the help in recruiting young volunteers as well as the GLA Guns, Gangs and Weapons Practitioners Forum for their support.

Dr. Theo Gavrielides
Head of Policy
ROTA

INTRODUCTION

1. Project Overview

The Building Bridges Project (BBP) is a young person-led (16-25) research and policy project looking at the causes of and solutions for the gun, knife and gang culture in London. The project brings together 8 people under the age of 25 to work as a team to conduct desk and field research with 30 other young people, and use these findings to write a report and produce a film to be launched in June 2008. The project is supported by Race on the Agenda, and sits within the organisation's broader violent crime policy work. The project aims to build bridges on a number of levels; between the young people involved in the project, but also between those affected by and involved in gun and knife violence and those who create the policies aimed at tackling it. It also aims to build bridges between young people and policy, as well as voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations with statutory agencies within the criminal justice system.

2. Youth Leadership

This project is unique in that it is led, developed, informed and produced by young people; they are involved in every stage of the project and have ownership of it. This is significant given the age of those young people involved in gun and knife violence, and in gang crime in general. According to Metropolitan Police recorded crime statistics, young people aged between 10 and 17 accounted for over a quarter (28%) of those accused of knife crime in the three months up to September 2005 (GLA 2005). The age of those involved in gang violence appears to be decreasing. In Lambeth while crime has reduced by 2%, gun crime has increased by 15% and involvement of under 20's has increased by 50% (Lambeth X-It 2007). Furthermore, a recent Streetgov survey showed that 75% of young people deemed themselves to have the greatest understanding on gang culture compare to 12% believing that it was the government (Appendix A).

By giving young people control of this project, ROTA creates positive alternatives for them to be involved in and provides them with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, potential and responsibility. Finally, through this initiative ROTA provides opportunities for volunteering, showing the value that it has for those involved (individuals and organisations) as well as the society at large.

3. Human Rights

A side-objective of the BBP is to test the impact and value of human rights education on young people. All members of the project team will undertake Human Rights and Ethical Fitness training based on the values underlying the Human Rights Act and the UN Convention for the Protection of the Child. As the group of eight will come from a diverse background and across London boroughs the human rights training will also inform them of methods for working together

and through any disagreements that they may face as a group. This project will illustrate the benefits of human rights values (e.g. dignity, respect, fairness) to the project's development and will inform how the group works with one another and with those whom they consult. During the two year life of the project, ROTA will monitor changes in the attitudes, perceptions and biases of the group members, as they are informed by various human rights and equality activities which will be assessed by the Impetus Award Scheme, an initiative that is run by the Institute of Global Ethics and supported by the Department of Justice and Department for Education and Skills. The Human Rights Training will be provided by Independent Academic Research Studies (IARS).

4. BBP Objectives and Deliverables

The detailed objectives and deliverables of the BBP are:

- To engage 8 young people (16-25) from various ethnic backgrounds in:
 - Conducting fieldwork with 30 young Londoners to collect evidence relating to the knife, gun and gang culture that is rooted in the capital;
 - human rights and ethnical fitness training to increase their awareness about issues affecting their respective ethnic communities and inform the way they treat each others;
- To provide research and methodology training and support to the young researchers.
- To help the young researchers develop their writing, communication and presentation skills.
- To produce a written report & film with evidence-based policy recommendations reflecting the young researchers' thoughts and aspirations as these will be developed while talking to their peers.
- To produce a short film capturing the main findings and experiences of the young groups.
- To ensure that the needs and realities of the interviewed young sample are directly reflected in the policy recommendations.
- To present the report/ film in an annual event/ conference and disseminate the findings to interested parties.
- To test whether this initiative can function as a pilot for similar projects in the future and inform key partners about it.
- Ultimately, to build bridges between White young Londoners and their BAME peers and help fight the knife & gun culture.

5. Methodology & timeline

The project started in June 2006 and will finish in June 2008. The project is split up into the following phases:

- Phase 1 (June 2006 – June 2007): Desk research to be carried out by a team of young people from various ethnic backgrounds

- Phase 2 (June 2006 – August 2007): Recruitment of 8 young people (core team) from various ethnic backgrounds to carry out the remaining phases.
- Phase 3 (September 2007): Ethical fitness, human rights and methodology training to the team of 8 young people¹
- Phase 4 (October 2007): Recruitment of 30 young Londoners (sample team) from various ethnic backgrounds who live in deprived areas of London and have experienced gun & knife crime either as victims or offenders or are members or used to be members of a gang.
- Phase 5 (October 2007 – December 2007): Fieldwork to be carried out by 8 young people from various ethnic backgrounds with interviews with the recruited sample².
- Phase 7 (January 2008): film
To produce a short film capturing the highlights of the project with a view to (a) increasing young people's awareness of the issues raised by the project (b) inform key stakeholders about the crime prevention and policy recommendations produced by the young people (c) create an opportunity for media/ PR exposure.
- Phase 8 (June 2008): Final report and event
 - To produce a final report incorporating all the findings and policy recommendations.
 - Hold a free event to present the findings, the film and final report.
- Phase 9 (June 2008): External and internal evaluation
- Phase 10 (June 2008 – ongoing) : Dissemination, awareness raising
To share and learn from the work, and to influence other agencies e.g VCS, youth groups, funders, local authorities, statutory agencies & government.

6. Methodology and aims of this report (Phase 1)

With this report Phase 1 of the BBP is concluded. The findings are based on desk research and meetings with various stakeholders in the criminal justice field as well as policy makers and practitioners. ROTA is a member of the Greater London Authority (GLA) Gangs, Guns and Weapons Practitioners forum which has been involved in the BBP. The young authors also collected evidence from two workshops they carried out at the annual GLA "London Gangs Guns and Weapons Practitioners Forum Conference". The Manager of the BBP, ROTA's

¹ Ethical fitness training to be provided by the Institute of Global Ethics; Human Rights and methodology training to be provided by Independent Academic Research Studies.

² Discussion guide to be based on: (a) the findings from the desk research (b) the discussions of the team (8 young people) (c) discussions of the team with the Guns, Gangs and Weapons Forum (d) discussions of the team with other stakeholders.

Head of Policy, also collected evidence through two workshops that were held at the Annual NACRO conference “Young black people and the criminal justice system”. In brief, the report will:

- Gauge an idea of the gangs, gun and knife culture problem as it is perceived by young Londoners.
- Detail current legislation and institutions in place to tackle gang, gun and knife crime.
- Consider the success of legislation, policy, rhetoric and initiatives and any gaps in the approach and results and challenges that we face.
- Theoretical effectiveness of future policies, the results of the Inquiry of the Home Affairs Select Committee in the involvement of young black people into the criminal justice system, Violent Crime Act 2006 and other government led initiatives.
- Promote volunteering and encourage young people from all cultures and ethnic backgrounds to get involved in volunteering activities.
- Analyse and critique current government responses from a young person’s perspective.
- Test the use and value of human rights and equality values in challenging biases and stereotypes especially through education initiatives with young people both within and outside school.
- Explore the value of youth leadership, including the role of trust and engagement of young people, the role played by education and social inclusion in tackling gang culture.
- Review existing community projects, assessing their strengths and weaknesses
- Prepare the next Phases of the projects, particularly the fieldwork and the questionnaire for action research.

7. Culture vs. crime

The BBP and the young team of volunteers are less interested in the theoretical debates around the criminal actions that lead to prosecution (e.g. gun and knife related crimes such as possession and carrying, homicide, assault etc). The project is mainly interested in the gun, knife and gang *culture* in which some young Londoners participate and appears to surround violent crime. The young people involved in the BBP are uniquely poised to provide a better understanding of a youth culture which criminal justice agencies have struggled to come to terms with. We will be working on the notion that there is a distinctive culture which has a set of accepted practices, beliefs, principles and rules of conduct. These inform the ways in which a number of young people interact with one another. A broad spectrum of thoughts and actions are being brought together into a coherent whole. There exists a number of sub-cultures which feed into this culture and as Hales et al contend ‘it is clear that the possession and use of illegal firearms is too complex to be explained by reference to a single unifying

criminal 'gun culture', and that it may be more useful to describe the presence of plural criminal gun cultures' (Hales et al 2006: 103).

Through ROTA's BBP, the young people will attempt to investigate a number of sub-cultures which may feed into a broader youth culture in varying degrees. However, it is important to acknowledge that the understanding and appreciation of cultures and sub-cultures can be extremely complex. This complexity is mirrored by the complexity of violent crime. Appendix II charts an attempt by the Metropolitan Police's Operation Trident to mark out some causes of black-on-black gun crime. We ought to take care not to assume that a simple causal model operates whereby every dialogue and verbal interaction between young people necessarily results in crimes. Much of what young people might say does not actually result in action. And even when a weapon is carried it may never be used. A survey of youths carried out by MORI on behalf of the Youth Justice Board found that 31% of young boys in school and 52% of young boys excluded from school admitted to have carrying a weapon, yet never using it (Youth Justice Board 2004: 33).

When considering the causes of gun, gang and knife culture and sub-cultures amongst young people, one cannot detach it from the cultures adopted by the state, the media and civil society. Therefore, when discussing the causes of gun, gang and knife culture we also consider the relation it bears to what Garland has termed 'the culture of control' and the Government's increasingly punitive approach to tackling crime. Furthermore, the government's Respect Agenda attempts to 'enforce a modern culture of respect' on people. This cross-Government strategy aims at fostering values such as tolerance, acceptance and 'common decency' (Respect Website 2007) through formal social control mechanisms. Whether or not these goals are attainable is unclear, however the strategy may be flawed in a society where individualism appears to be deeply embedded. This individualistic culture is adopted by much of civil society and played out by government policy³ and rhetoric, the media and criminal justice services. It is intertwined with the causes of the culture in question. As such, not only understanding this multifaceted causal relationship is necessary for grasping the causes of gun and knife culture; it is imperative for finding realistic means to addressing it.

³ Furthermore, awareness among academics such as Downes and Wacquant of the states 'penal management of poverty'.

PAINTING THE PICTURE

When reviewing the situation of weapon-enabled crime carried out by young people in the UK, and more specifically in London, it is important to avoid over-playing its frequency and the type of sensationalism found in large segments of the media. At the same time however, one needs to acknowledge that the culture in questions cannot be sufficiently identified by any statistics; this is for two main reasons. Firstly, many crimes that characterise the culture go unreported. Secondly, the fear that is created and permeates the culture in question cannot be represented in crime statistics; crucially, it is this aspect of the culture that can act as a dominant influence in the decision of a young person to carry a weapon.

Taken the above into consideration statistics show that 0.4% of all crime in England and Wales involved the use of guns in 2004/05. Indeed homicide by shooting is relatively unusual in the UK (Hales et al 2006: 3; Brookman and Maguire 2003: 32). It is important not to be easily seduced by comparisons with the situation in the United States: here firearms are by far the most common type of weapon used in homicides (Brookman and Maguire 2003) and the availability of weapons differs greatly from the UK's stance on firearms which can boast some of the most stringent firearms laws in Europe.

These early caveats are not included, however, to lessen the serious issues surrounding what is often identified as a burgeoning 'weapons culture'. Evidence shows that the overall number of gun crime offences recorded by police forces in England and Wales rose significantly between 1997/98 and 2001/2. It continued to rise at a slower rate until 2003/04. Since 03/04 we have seen a slight reduction in gun crime, however this is largely due to a substantial reduction in air weapon offences (Hales et al 2006: 3). Knives and sharp instruments are the most common method of killing, accounting for around a third of homicides (Brookman and Maguire 2003). An added worry here would be the ease with which knives can be accessed. There are approximately 22 million households in England and Wales each of which are likely to possess a single kitchen knife. Penknives are also readily obtainable and accessible to young people (Centre for Crime and Justice Studies 2006). Levels of knife crime have remained stable at around 6-7% of all violent crime, according to the British Crime Survey (Dodd et al 2004). Monthly fluctuations may occur but the number of offences does not tend to increase or decrease significantly over sustained periods.

The costs of violent crime are however, very high. Apart from the obvious physical and emotional consequences to the victim and their families they can also affect the wider community in which they take place. This can be seen in the effect that violence has had on the black community in London (Pitts and Palmer 2006). Not only have the areas in which they live become the scene of terrible acts of lethal violence but there is also a sense among many that the black community as a whole has become vilified for the actions of a few. The high economic costs of violence may also be considered. Estimates show the cost to

the taxpayer of murder to be £1,100,000 and serious wounding £120,000 (Bullock and Tilley 2002: 49).

Weapon enabled crime, and in particular gun crime, appears to be most prevalent in the large urban areas of the UK. In 2003/04 37.6% of gun crime in England and Wales occurred in London. If you take into account Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Nottinghamshire and the West Midlands then the vast majority of gun crime will be accounted for (Hales et al 2006). Issues surrounding deprivation and social exclusion are obviously important here and these will be discussed in greater depth but it is significant to remember the urban element to weapon enabled crime. This may help to explain the over-representation of young black males as both victims and offenders of weapon enabled crime. In the period 1995-1999 32% of all shooting incidents in England and Wales involving a male suspect and male victim, at least one offender was black (Brookman and Maguire 2003: 34). Bullock and Tilley found in Manchester that people from ethnic minority backgrounds were five times more likely to be victims of murder and attempted murder and almost twice as likely to be victims of serious wounding as white people (2002: 14).

Serious violence also affects young people disproportionately. Those aged between 16 and 24 are most likely to be the victims of crime (Dodd et al 2004). Media reports have recently seized upon a series of fatal shootings and stabbings which they suggest show that the average victim and offender are getting younger and younger. They may be some evidence to back this up, since 2005 Operation Trident has prosecuted twenty people under 20 of murder in London. Trident officers have commented that recent behaviour suggest there is little graduation in the severity of offences carried out by young people, serious violence is increasingly being committed by young people from a very young age (as young as ten or eleven) (Tyler 2007).

THE POLICY, LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

1. Main Legislation and Policies

Although there has been no specific policy directed towards the gang, gun and knife culture in the UK, specific crime policies and rhetoric has been recently directed at tackling this. The most recent of these, The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 makes four main additions to issues affecting knife and gun crime that will also have a direct effect on the gang culture:

- increased the age of knife purchase from 16 to 18;
- increased the maximum sentence for knife possession in a public place from 2 to 4 years;
- conferred powers to schools to search their pupils;
- criminalised giving someone a weapon to mind.

These changes are in addition to a plethora of legislation, initiatives and policy already governing offensive weapons⁴. Stop and search by the police, anti-social behaviour orders and dispersal orders have also been directed at young people involved in gang culture. Operations Trident, Trafalgar and Blunt have been set up by the Metropolitan Police to tackle the violent crimes specifically and the Government's Social Exclusion Unit works on issues of deprivation and those young people deemed to be 'at risk'. Due to time and space constraints we will not discuss their arguments and recommendations⁵ here, as they are not reflected by the government's stance on gang, gun and knife culture. Rather, comments made by the Prime Minister often conflict with work being done by the Social Exclusion Task Force and departments of the Metropolitan Police. Government statements are often reflective of the attempt to use punitive measures and 'zero tolerance'⁶ to tackle gang violence. This is evidenced in the Prime Minister's recent statement: 'In respect of knife and gun gangs, the laws need to be significantly toughened' (Blair 2007).

2. Operation Trident

Operation Trident was set up as an intelligence-based initiative in 1998, with focus primarily on Lambeth and some on Brent. In 1999 out of a total of twenty-six murders in London, eighteen involved members of the black community (McLagan 2006: 75), so with gun crime amongst the black community seemingly worsening, in July 2000 Operation Trident was extended and an OCU was

⁴ For legislation the reader is referred to: The Prevention of Crime Act (1953); The Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act (1959); Firearms Act (1968); The Criminal Justice Act (1988); The Offensive Weapons Act (1996); the Knives Act (1997), amendments to the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (2004).

⁵ Trident have produced a far more detailed chart of the causes of gang culture, these are not reflected in the policy discussed to address this complex issue – See Appendix 1

⁶ Although this approach may be more evident in rhetoric than practice.

established with around 200 officers. Its aim was to tackle 'black-on-black' drugs and gang related violence. The name Trident was chosen to represent a three-pronged response to gun crime.⁷ The Metropolitan Police Authority has called for Operation Trident to be extended across London and to cover gun crime in other minority ethnic communities. 'Trident is the strongest gun crime brand in London and its impact must be retained in any new organisation structure' (2004: 19).

One solution, which Trident is currently heavily promoting in the media, is the role played by Crimestoppers, an independent UK registered charity that operates an anonymous phone-line for anyone with information about crime who, for whatever reason, does not want to go to the police. It enables people to 'do the right thing and stay safe' (Crimestoppers 2006). If trust can be built up in the anonymity of Crimestoppers, then young people may feel able to share information they know. Hales and Silverstone (2005) also highlight the role Crimestoppers and other independent intermediaries can have in overcoming 'hostile attitudes towards the police, fears of being labelled a grass and attitudes that promote personal retribution'. This is a strong response by the police which utilises the knowledge that there is a strong culture amongst young people of not 'grassing' which can lead to exclusion and social ostracism. Operation Trident has also used effective advertising campaigns aimed at young people which crucially is informed by young music makers.

3. The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector and Academia

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) is operating at both grass roots and policy levels, implementing many programmes to address the issues of gang, gun and knife culture. Projects such as the Lambeth X-It programme focus on diversionary activities and providing viable alternatives to violence, anti social behaviour and crime⁸. Organisations such as ROTA and NACRO inform policy and help develop strategies that reflect the realities and needs of all London's communities particularly those most affected by the gang, gun and knife culture.

The role of the VCS in addressing the gun, gang and knife culture should not be underestimated. Many of the aspects of the culture that we are investigating grow at street level and are entrenched within communities – although they may be as a result of overarching policies that affect them. On top of this is the issue of trust. Those working for community groups often have a trusting relationship with those involved in gang culture. As young people, we often find it easier and more

⁷ 3 pronged approach: 1) Intelligence: The intelligence team can feed into the other two groups. A database has been created which is made available to all Metropolitan police officers. Intelligence is made problematic in certain cases where incidents may arise out of trivial disputes or where the group or gang involved is disorganised and fluid. 2) Proactive Unit. 3) Reactive teams investigating shooting incidents.

⁸ Other notable schemes include Defending da Hood, Boyhood to Manhood, Calling the Shots, Streetwise, the Southwark Mediation Centre, the Youth Empowerment Solutions for Hackney and the African Hackney Youth FC Club development, TRUCE and Communities Respond, among others.

productive to work with people who we feel are party to our experience and have a first hand understanding of our lives.

The difficulties for the VCS lie in the sector's capacity, legislative support and evaluation. To take these in order: the VCS is notoriously under-funded and many projects are not sustainable. The VCS also has to balance engagement with government and policy makers with their service delivery – both being extremely crucial in the area under discussion – without the correct policies in place the VCS finds itself picking up where gaps in policy are failing to address causal issues of gang, gun and knife culture. These two issues, of capacity/funding, and policy support, combine to cause problems with evaluation. This last difficulty is entrenched due to government's evaluation requirement, within the framework of New Public Management that places emphasis on outputs over outcomes. Projects may produce positive outcomes for many young people but funding pressures often mean that they have to focus on measurable, hard outputs such as the levels of recidivism.

Academic research can also be an important tool in furthering our understanding of the complexities of violent crime. Work by organisations such as the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies have focused on the social factors that lead young people to gang culture, such as economic and social deprivation and school exclusions. There are still questions to be asked in relation to the culture issue that we are interested in – for instance, what makes a 13 year old boy put a knife in the pocket before he goes to school even if the intention is not to use it. Therefore, while we will draw greatly on academic research in this stage of our project, we hope to demonstrate the complexity behind culture, i.e. the sub-cultures that allow it to occur in the first place, rather than discuss the cause of crime. As young people, dissecting and expounding the culture that we navigate is what we are best placed to do.

CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS: A YOUNG PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

While trying to understand the causes that lead to the gang, gun and knife culture and action that could be taken to fight it, it is important to remember that a culture is a complex set of norms, beliefs and rules which informs a person's outlook. A number of sub-cultures can feed into a culture giving it a multi-faceted structure. As young people we are active repositories of this culture, and can be both informed by the culture and shape it. The intricacy of the culture ensures that we must try to uncover some of the key strands running through it. Therefore, we proceed with a positive frame of mind and a hope that things can indeed change. As the Wave Report concluded, 'although violence is increasing alarmingly in our society, it is either universal nor inevitable, but a behaviour that is caused and can be prevented' (Hosking 2005).

Wider cultures are in operation within society such as political cultures, social ideology and populist media culture that bear a causal relationship to the culture in question. Further to this is the particular cultural response by the UK, and to a greater extent the US, to reject penal welfarist approaches. This report will argue that these wider cultures entrench rather than tackle the culture and sub-cultures adopted by us as young people, especially in matters of gun, gang and knife culture.

In order to begin unpicking the causal aspects of gun, gang and knife culture we will consider all factors in answer to this broadly sweeping question: Why do some young people choose to arm themselves when leaving their homes? This list is by no means exhaustive and it is important to remember that the factors will inevitably overlap and interchange with one another.

1. Social Exclusion

The exclusion of young people from mainstream society occurs at a number of levels and has the potential to compound our disaffection from the mainstream. Furthermore, scientific evidence (Hosking and Walsh 2005) has shown that when exposed to inequality at an early age children are unable to develop feelings of empathy, an emotion that the culture in question lacks. In contrast, being involved in a gang can provide a sense of belonging. This belonging is not always the result of an explicit choice, nonetheless this 'constrained choice' is often driven by a desire to conform to a young culture; albeit an inclusion that pivots around ideas of material wealth and respect. This question of constrained choice is significant when one considers who is doing the 'constraining' – what role does policy, government, the criminal justice system, populist media and civil society play in directing this choice towards gang culture.

When considering the impact of social exclusion on young people it is easier to break the concept down into more specific areas: the role of the welfare state and general inequality, housing and deprivation.

1.1. Welfare State and Inequality

The fact that those involved in gang culture are mainly from the lowest socio-economic groups is not a coincidence. This is reflected across the UK in urban areas. London is a key example. Poverty and deprivation impact upon young people in many different ways, it is multi-faceted and complex.

The impact of poverty and deprivation on the psychological state of young people is of great significance when considering gang culture and violence. Ethnographic research and interviews with young people and offenders (Hales and Silverstone 2005; Pitts and Palmer 2006; Bowling 1999) have demonstrated that the physical environment that young people face on a daily basis influences how they perceive their future and their present. The poor state of the local economy, as well as the poor quality and over-crowding of homes in many of these areas, is often exacerbated by the geographical proximity to more prosperous communities, which demonstrates a stark contrast to their lives. Running concurrently with this awareness is the belief that they too have a right to share in the wealth of the country; this is heightened by media representations. In the current cultural climate that we are navigating we are driven towards materialistic wealth as if it is achievable by all. However, as the gap between rich and poor widens, for some members of the poorest communities this only seems achievable via illegal means (Bowling 1999: 537) and hence they are lured into the lifestyle of gang violence. In short, relative deprivation impacts on the psychological well being of young people and contributes to the creation of a culture which justifies and makes violence and gang membership attractive.

1.2. Housing and Deprivation

As the British economy has increased in strength over the past ten years, all social classes have witnessed increase in prosperity to society in general – however, this wealth has not been equally distributed across the country. A clear example of this was the right to buy introduced by Thatcher's government; those in the wealthier working classes purchased the better quality social housing leaving poorer communities with poorer housing that was also stigmatised (Pitts and Palmer 2006). There is an additional racial element when one considers the effects of de-industrialisation of the late 1970's which left many from Caribbean communities without manual labour and they congregated in urban areas offering limited job availability to match their skills.

Statistics of types of tenure illustrate the disproportionate number of particular communities living in social housing compared to house ownership, with other issues of overcrowding being of significance. This fact is important when one

considers the disproportionate numbers of Black children being affected by gang violence in London (Pitts and Palmer *ibid*). However when one considers the socio-economic standing of particular communities and why they find themselves in areas of poverty, as has been briefly illustrated, it is evident that their ethnicity is not the main causal factor in their behaviour, their poverty is.

The housing of those involved in gang culture is also significant for another reason. Much of gang culture is coloured by turf war when drugs are involved. More recently evidence has shown that some young people are required to pledge allegiance to the postcode that they live in and are at risk when entering in to other areas that they are not from. Young people from the poorest communities now identify themselves by the area that they live in – they belong to that and will protect it.

However the structure of this is not determined in any fix sense, and housing estates as well as post codes and on a wider scale sub-regional divides can lead to conflict between gangs. The state of these housing estates does not inspire pride in maintaining them. The physical appearance of the poorest areas mean that pride of their areas is measured in the strength of fear that they invoke and is borne out in the danger of being caught 'slipping' in their area rather than your own. As Hallsworth and Young submit (2004: 12) group formation may be seen 'as a function of the ecology of space'. Locked into compressed spaces such as estates from which there is little opportunity to escape creates conditions suitable to loyalty (and conflict with other areas) and feeds the culture in question.

2. Education

Statistics from OCJS and research by the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies demonstrates that those who have been excluded from school are substantially more likely to carry weapons than those within the school system. Furthermore, those who are excluded from school are more likely to have been a victim of crime than those who are in mainstream education (CCJS 2006; Youth Justice Board 2004; Budd et al 2005; Sharp et al 2005).

When young people have been excluded from mainstream education the possibility of earning a living that they would deem respectable is perceived as being a practical impossibility. Due to the poverty that these young people also find themselves in they are often focused on taking themselves out of this situation by the time that they have a family of their own (Pitts and Palmer 2006). The combination of a lack of prospects and relative deprivation allow gang culture to breed – they create a constrained choice, a perceived one way street.

Those who are involved in gangs are well aware of this disenfranchisement of young people from the education system; they fill the gap. They lure young people in to gangs with the promise of wealth that they can no longer achieve via legal means. If these young people remained in the education system with the

belief that they could remove themselves from deprivation via legal means the lure of a gang due to a want for wealth would not be as effective as it currently is.

Furthermore, such explicit exclusion is damaging to a child's psychology. Discussion of young people involved in young culture is often conducted within conversations about terrorism. The young people involved in both cases feel disaffected and detached from mainstream society where as they feel that they belong to the gang or terrorist faction that then dictates their future path; this path is promoted as a positive alternative to their present situation.

The impact of school exclusions on Black Caribbean boys should also be noted. Boys of Black Caribbean origin are three times more likely to be excluded from school than their white peers (Department for Education and Skills 2006). The impact of exclusions on the BAME communities and their disproportionate involvement in gang culture in London is not coincidental. In other parts of the UK white boys are more likely to be involved in gangs than any other ethnic group (Bennett and Holloway 2004a), however, due to the placing of Black communities in deprived areas of London and the impact of school exclusions on this same group, their involvement in gang culture in a London context is not a surprise. What should be stressed is that it is often social causation that leads to such groups being more likely to be involved in gang culture, in particular contexts, and not their ethnic culture itself, that causes their involvement.

It is worth noting the general impact of the national curriculum on certain members of the community that also lead young people to feel disconnected to mainstream society. The curriculum and indirect prejudice towards certain BAME communities and the white working classes can contribute to a lack of interest in education from some young people. The 'choice' system that operates in the education system and 'white flight' of the middle classes from certain schools has led to an unequal education system with the poorest families often placed in schools together segregated from other classes. This well documented inequality (Wilson and Rees 2006) compounds the more general deprivation of the young people involved in gang culture and what long-term chances they perceive themselves as having.

3. Human Rights Education

In the UK, over the last four years, there has been a gradual shift from looking at the different equality strands (i.e. race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender and faith) in isolation to dealing with discrimination in a holistic way. In Europe, equality has traditionally been seen as a human right, and this is slowly starting to take place here. With the passing of the Equality Act 2006, a single human rights and equality body, the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (ECHR) is established to safeguard and promote the values underlying the Human Rights Act 1998 e.g. dignity, respect, equality, fairness and freedom. The Single Equality Act will bring all discrimination laws together to provide the ECHR, other statutory agencies, public, private and VCS bodies with a platform from which

they can challenge abuse of equality in a holistic way. The CEHR will also have specific powers to promote these values through education.

In light of the recent legislative, policy and institutional changes, the BBP looked at the value Human Rights Education (HRE) can add, and its impact on young people's attitudes, perceptions but also aspirations about their lives, the society in which they live and the relationship they wish to have with their peers particularly if they belong to a different racial, cultural or economic background.

The BBP set off to examine this bearing in mind that at present, the current curriculum aims to teach *about* human rights i.e. learning about the historical development of human rights, key human rights documents (mainly international statutes and UN conventions), mechanisms of protection and basic conceptions of human rights. However, what the BBP thought could add value and maybe address some of the reasons that lead to the examined culture among young people is promoting HRE in a way that is not just *about* human rights, but also *for* and *in* human rights. Put another way, promoting understanding and embracing the principles underlying the concept of human rights. It is also about improving individuals' lives through the use of these principles.

Arguably, advocates of HRE are willing to utilise the smallest opportunity to their advantage, by developing a range of materials which if they cannot be used in the citizenship curriculum, then they will piggyback on other curriculum areas in order to increase young people's exposure to human rights ideas. Research by organisations such as the National Foundation for Education Research, demonstrates that by and large, teachers of other subjects, which do not deal substantively with social, moral and political issues, find it difficult or unappealing to become side-tracked by HRE. Pressure on curriculum time, the need to cover the syllabus, achieve targets, be accountable, all mitigate against the success of HRE.

In the absence of a formalised HRE, BBP looked at other sources to understand whether human rights and equality education can have a notable impact on young people's attitudes and lives. Three case studies were identified:

3.1. The Hampshire schools RRR experiment: a whole school approach

Following a study visit to the Children's Rights Centre at Cape Breton University, Canada, Hampshire LEA secured DfES funding to roll out in-service training about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Hampshire programme "Rights, Respect and Responsibility" (RRR), and was initially aimed at primary schools.⁹ The programme is now offered to secondary schools. The programme's key elements are:

⁹ During 2004-2005, 325 Hampshire primary schools chose to attend training days on RRR.

- The UNCRC is taught as a body of knowledge and is promoted as a framework for the schools' ethos, training and learning.
- It treats children and young people as citizens now, not as "not yet's".
- A rights perspective is built into a range of subjects including Literacy, Maths, Science and History.
- Classes draw up charters of rights and responsibilities which all children and the teacher sign
- The programme is now for all pupils and students aged 4-16.
- The universality and internationalism of the rights in the UNCRC provide a context for rights promotion and exploring rights violations both near and far.
- More democratic approaches to teaching and learning are promoted, emphasising participation and rights and respect for teaching and learning.
- Moreover, a rights based vocabulary is developed through the regular work of teachers.
- Finally, the programme encourages teachers and students to reflect upon where the values of their schools come from and how they are experienced. Consequently, they may feel less isolated by basing their values on human rights principles and the UNCRC because:

The programme allows teachers, schools and children to point to an authority that is higher than their classroom, the school, their community or their country in support of the school's values. It demonstrates that codes of conduct are not unique to each school, but come from a set of world-wide principles, informed by the moral precepts of the world religions, but not religious.

All these changes have been part of a 2005 research study that was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the RRR programme. Some of the findings are:

- Teaching RRR is an empowering and morale-boosting experience.
- Teachers are motivated toward increased professionalism in their interactions with students rather than guided by personal feelings.
- Children are empowered when they learn about their rights.
- RRR has proven very effective as a behaviour management strategy.

In particular, the researchers reported:

- "An overall very positive early experience with the RRR initiative. In both interview and survey responses, the training was described in very positive terms.
- The implementation was not hampered by excess challenges.
- There was agreement on the need to sustain and expand the initiative.
- The reported impact of RRR was positive on pupils' behaviours, and especially positive on teachers.
- The data indicate that teaching RRR has the potential to increase teachers' sense of self-efficacy and enjoyment of teaching, and to engender more positive attitudes toward their pupils.
- These changes in teachers would be expected to bring about positive changes in pupils' motivations, learning, and behaviour.

- The data analysis showed a strong relation between the impact of RRR on teachers and the impact on their students”.

3.2. The Northern Ireland example: a cognitive approach

In Northern Ireland, after the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement of 1998, human rights and equality were placed at the top of the political agenda and were made central to the development of a peaceful society. The Human Rights Commission that was established after the 1998 agreement placed HRE at the centre of its strategic plan establishing an Education Committee to oversee its work in this area. Consequently, HRE became an underlying theme within the local and global citizenship curriculum.

In 2002, the Department for Education in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission and the five Education and Library Boards set up the Bill of Rights in Schools Project (BORIS) with the aim of producing an educational resource on the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. This could be used in post-primary schools. The outcome of this initiative was the “Bill of Rights in Schools: A resource for post-primary schools”, an innovative textbook for Key Stages 3, 4 and post 16. The resource is being used within the wider framework of the Local and Global Citizenship curriculum or within other courses e.g. politics, law, English and history.

It is worth noticing that the curriculum in Northern Ireland had undergone major transformation. This was achieved after thorough investigation and public consultation. In particular, the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) carried out a research programme to collect the views of young people, their teachers and their communities about changes they would like to see in the curriculum. The study started with a seven-year survey with 60 young people (from age 11-18). The qualitative findings (reported by the National Foundation for Educational Research) were supported by questionnaire surveys of 3,000 young people. The majority of the participants felt that schooling was relevant only for passing exams and jumping hurdles. Most of them thought that the curriculum had nothing to do with their lives now or for the future.

The same view about the appropriateness of the curriculum was also shared by the teachers who were asked to participate in the study. This group however expressed concerns about the continuous changes they had to respond to over the last few years. The views of the wider community were also sought through 21 conferences. This helped establish a framework of curriculum objectives and sub-objectives or key elements. The aim of the framework was to simplify the objectives of the curriculum establishing that it was about developing individuals and contributors to society. This initiative is supported with a training programme that aims to prepare the trainers as well as a pilot to test the impact.

3.3. The impetus award scheme: a skills based approach led by young people

Following a successful pilot in 2002, the impetus programme was launched in October 2003 at the Young Peoples Parliament in Birmingham. It is a partnership across the UK between young people and their local communities promoting values, rights and responsibilities. Local Voluntary Panels that are drawn from all sections of the community support and assess projects that tackle real issues against four criteria:

- Exploration of shared rights and responsibilities.
- Creative application of shared values.
- Whole school/ organisation involvement.
- Community engagement.

The scheme is led by young people, while participants are encouraged to explore and identify the community's central values, putting them in the context of the Human Rights Act. They are also encouraged to develop the confidence to put those values into practice in their schools, colleges, youth organisations and local communities. An impetus certificate is awarded to every submission and each year the programme celebrates achievement at local, regional and national events. An annual UK Showcase Celebration is held in London. The 2002 evaluation showed:

Pupils (based on interviews with pupils and teachers)

- Participation had increased their self-esteem and personal confidence.
- Acquisition of skills, including the development of social, communication, vocational and creative skills.
- Strong involvement in active citizenship, which had a significant bearing on their local communities and environment.
- In some cases where projects had involved working with communities outside the school, pupils felt that they had benefited from meeting adults, especially those involved with the Local Voluntary Panels (LVPs).
- Involvement with the Award had broadened pupils' understanding of citizenship.
- The external nature of the Award gave it greater kudos and authority.
- The Award helped to counteract the negative images of schools and young people that dominate much media coverage.

Adults (based on interviews)

- The Award has flagged up rights and responsibilities within the schools through projects that emphasised school improvement over school effectiveness and attainment over achievement.
- The majority of respondents welcomed the focus on the Human Rights Act.
- The projects presented for the Award had helped to build social relationships across and within peer age groups and with teachers and other adults.

- The programmes associated with the Award promoted actions which developed school ethos through promoting values such as; tolerance, mutual respect, acceptance of difference, integrity and honesty.
- The programmes created a lot of interest and publicity in local communities and among other schools that, along with the Award, led to greater self and external recognition of the work done by the teachers involved.
- Most of those working with pupils with SENs felt that the Award had epitomised inclusion by making their pupils feel part of the mainstream.
- A great strength of all the programmes surveyed was that they allowed pupils to deal with authentic social and organisational issues. It gave pupils a voice and saw them as active citizens operating within an authentic culture of youth.
- The contribution of local and national co-ordinators was highly appreciated. They were pivotal in all contexts, contributing to the smooth running of the pilot.

3.4 Conclusions regarding human rights education

Through the case studies we identified, we concluded that HRE can play a crucial role in transforming young people's attitudes towards life and their society, and give them hope and inspire them. Successful HRE needs a three-dimensional approach:

- Human Rights; a cognitive process: At this level, human rights could be taught through the available resources e.g. types of rights, history of rights, international legal instruments, how democracy functions. [HRE about HR]
- Human Rights; a skill based approach: [HRE for HR]
 - Personal and social skills: self-knowledge and self-awareness, assessing and understanding your own motives with regard to others, realising your own prejudices.
 - Interactive skills: listening, resisting group pressure, expressing opinions.
 - Problem-solving skills: locating information, making decisions, using judgement, conflict resolution.
- Human rights; an environment-based approach [HRE in or through HR]: Creating a learning environment where the structures, methods and relationships operating in the teaching and learning situation (environment) reflect the values of human rights and its learning objectives: creating a whole school policy, democratic working methods which demonstrate mutual respect between teacher and student.

The following areas in the current delivery of human rights education in schools could be considered problematic:

- Citizenship is the only part of the school curriculum where human rights *per se* have to be addressed. The pressure to deliver, however, often leaves critical human rights matters untouched in the hope of covering them through other classes but this rarely happens.

- There is lack of training in this area, while teachers who are not familiar with teaching similar issues feel extremely uncomfortable side-tracking.
- There is evidence to suggest that cross-curricula approaches are less successful. This is particularly true for topics that are not simply a matter of cognitive processes, but may demand more meaningful and practical ways to be welcomed into students' minds and hearts e.g. embedding human rights in their thinking.
- Pressure to cover the syllabus and achieve school targets play a role in prioritising HRE.

4. Respect

4.1. The Role of Respect in Policy Design

Linked to the problem of human rights education is the role of respect in designing and delivering public policy. In 2006, the government launched its Respect for Action Plan investing over £420million in it. A recent study by the Runnymede Trust said: "Respect can indeed provide an overarching policy agenda, but as we elaborate we need to be clearer about the meaning of respect in order to make that agenda coherent" (Khan 2007). The report explains why thinking about the needs of BAME Britons helps to provide that clarity. It also points out that the role of BAME Britons as not figured deeply enough in the government's respect agenda and that this failure is relevant in the fight against the gang, gun and knife culture. It is important to note that emphasis in the Government's Respect Agenda is placed firmly on the need for respect for one's neighbours and community. There is no discussion of how to gain respect or self respect; in this way it assumes a narrower role as a tool to tackle crime rather than as a wider social goal.

4.2. Respect as a cultural goal

Issues around respect have an additional problem; this refers to respect among young people. This can be sought after through severe violence and the expression of machismo which are generally respected qualities. Masculinities among young men has been well documented (Newburn and Stanko 1994; Connell 2005) however amongst young men from deprived areas the necessity to gain respect is exacerbated by the fact that legitimate paths to success often may be blocked to them (either in reality or perceived). These legitimate avenues are usually associated with educational attainment, employment and/or career progression (Curry 2004). So as the National Youth Survey suggest (2006: 2) 'children who experience failure at school or other kinds of social exclusions could be looking for status'. The MORI Youth Survey has identified that 'the vast majority of young people in mainstream education (62%) have never used a weapon. However, only a quarter of excluded young people could say the same (24%)' (Youth Justice Board 2004: 32).

The commission of a crime may provide excitement and thrill to the perpetrator. The communication of this enjoyment of crime and appreciation of violence usually occurs within the masculine social networks of the lower classes. Increasingly young females appear to be exhibiting these 'masculine' traits, committing acts of violence, seemingly in pursuit of fun. A discussion of class here is made as it is these lower classes that most clearly learn about the status that is afforded to successfully violent men. These young people often do not have jobs, are not in education and are not part of a family unit. Their behaviour is not constrained or regulated by these elements in any way.

Hallsworth and Young (2004) argue that the groups causing the most problems are those which are characterised by a subculture of 'hyper-masculinity' and a sense of omnipotence at having engaged in criminal activity without being caught. This hyper-masculine culture can be seen to have a number of ramifications for young men who engage in it:

- It produces men who will retaliate at the slightest provocation. A cycle of retaliation is often inevitable. Street retributive justice is chosen ahead of recourse to the law.
- 'Feminine' values such as forgiveness, care and compassion are rejected in favour of masculine ideals of strength and power.
- Mundane arguments are 'reconstructed... into the stuff of legend' (Hallsworth and Young 2004). Trivial arguments are amplified and believed to be 'wars' or 'battles'. Neighbourhoods and estates become re-branded as 'turfs' or 'territories' as the legend is expanded.
- It creates unstable men who consider themselves invincible and untouchable.
- The violence will bring the attention of the law upon them.
- 'Cowards will find that their criminal careers come to a rapid and ignominious end. In the criminal underworld there is no place, or mercy, for the weak' (Jacobs 2000: 3).
- The use of guns and weapons become related to imagery and machismo. They become a symbolically powerful method of demonstration, far more effective in their message than fist-fighting.
- Issues of respect, and importantly disrespect, may lead individuals and groups to have 'beef' with others. So called 'diss' shootings become common.
- An absence of male role models in some BAME communities may lead to visible (and violent) drug dealers, or gang elders, filling the vacuum.
- Expressive and symbolic violence can not only attain personal status but be used to usurp rivals.
- Shoot or be shot - 'In the context of a criminal culture in which conflict and firearms are to some extent normalised, conflict can quickly develop into what is effectively a 'shoot or be shot' scenario and even very trivial precipitating incidents may result in fatal violence' (Hales et al 2006: 82-83). Firearms can raise the stakes quickly in very trivial disputes.
- Venues such as nightclubs take on social significance. They are places where the ostentatious display of wealth is important and the presence of a public audience (including women) may lead to young men being reluctant to 'lose

face' in a dispute. A spilt drink, a cut-in at the queue at the bar, or a bump on the dance floor could quickly escalate out of control.

- The settling of personal disputes (with often trivial origins) will make it very hard for police to predict where and when conflict may arise.
- Young people may find themselves subscribing to the idea of 'no-go' areas whereby groups of young people stake their claim to a 'territory' which is the geographical embodiment of their status. This reluctance to 'cross borders' can severely limit one's access to employment, education, leisure facilities or other resources.

4.3. Community based solutions to the issue of respect

Community based projects such as the BBP, From Boyhood to Manhood and Calling the Shots help young people develop their own sense of self-respect, explaining how self-control and authority can help in problem solving. The encouraging findings of the aforementioned project suggest that youth work, human rights education and youth empowerment can shape young people and so future citizens in a way that is only matched by parents. Values such as integrity, dignity, humility, responsibility and respect for self and others are needed for a safe democratic society and ethical citizens.

5. Family Structure

Much has been made in both political and popular arenas regarding the role played by lone parent families in leading to a rise in gang, gun and knife culture amongst young people. However, it would seem that the socio-economic context in which the young person is raised is a stronger determining factor in their involvement in gang culture than who is raising them. What is clear is that aspiration and future planning play feature in the choices (constrained or otherwise) of young people, and it is here that role models, as well as physical environment, have an impact.

There is a wider issue to be discussed regarding role models. This role is often filled by parents. However many young males can find role models by other means. Gang elders or drug dealers who form a constant, visible presence in some neighbourhoods could be viewed as 'successful', respected figures. The breakdown in families is often highlighted as a primary cause of crime (The Centre for Social Justice 2006). However in their survey of 80 offenders convicted of gun crime offences, Hales et al noticed mixed findings. Only 22 of the 80 had grown up in a household that included both natural parents. 35 had grown up in a single parent household. Furthermore 31 of the offenders reported having children of their own, all of whom were therefore growing up with their father in prison (2006: 25). There has been much rhetoric and media speculation about a lack of positive black role models available for young black boys and hence they follow negative role models when their fathers are 'absent'. Some reports also make reference to black men having multiple partners, past or

present, who have borne him children and refer to these women are referred to as 'babymothers' (McLagan 2006). This issue is likely to have some impact on an individual's behaviour but it has perhaps been afforded too much weight in debates.

However, such speculation is both unhelpful and discriminatory. The attempts to racialise family composition in this way is simply counterfactual. Single parent families run across ethnic and class boundaries and generalisations that state otherwise are simple attempts to locate blame. Furthermore, young people enter in to gun and knife culture from various backgrounds. More research is required to see if there is any substantive links that can be made; until then racialising blame in this manner is simply incorrect.

Discussion of family structure has its own implications. The negativity that is portrayed about single parent families and the lack of discipline within them acts as another means of separating such families from the mainstream and allowing them to feel 'less' than what is deemed acceptable by society. Furthermore, the blame for their predicament is placed on the individuals caught up in gang culture rather than the structures and policies in place that may have contributed to it.

6. Materialism

Linked to the issue of status and respect is the phenomenon of materialism in today's society. It has been argued that gang lifestyle feeds into a 'hyper-material culture' which young people are part of (Hales and Silverstone 2005). This hyper-material culture champions wealth and the conspicuous display of symbolically significant material goods (fast cars, clothes, and jewellery). Weapons may also be a form of fashion accessory within this culture; the Fear and Fashion report by The City Bridge Trust argues that 'the status associated with the possession of a knife has a ripple effect and creates a fashion that other children might want to follow' (Lemos 2004: 8).

In this late modern environment the pursuit of wealth and luxury is perennial. There exists a consumerist and capitalist context where instant gratification is often achieved by materialistic possessions. Young people believe that one way to earn respect and betterment is through demonstrating how much they possess. Affluence has assumed a goal in society to which many drive towards and a lust for wealth may lead to strain within communities (Merton 1938). Young people are placed under intense pressure to fulfil material expectations with the latest trainers, label brands or MP3 players becoming a necessity. Peer pressure and media-driven values of fashion and wealth can place young people under great strain. Not having the right types of clothes or trainers can lead to social ostracism and bullying which in turn can lead to greater conflicts. A trivial issue such as having a 'lesser' brand rucksack instead of a big recognised brand like Nike or Adidas could be utilised by aggressors as a means of goading someone into conflict.

In many deprived areas legitimate access to these material expectations is usually unattainable. Their legitimate local economy not demonstrating success for inspiration, and their exclusion from mainstream education, the respect that they crave is earned via illegitimate means. It is the deprivation that they find themselves engulfed within, running alongside the wealth experienced by others, which drives their psychological need for materialistic immediate gratification. In contrast to their legitimate prospects involvement in gangs can offer a world of thrills and excitement and high status material goods such as mobile phones, jewellery and trainers. Those higher up in the gang hierarchy or street-level drug dealers will form a visible model of wealth and 'success' to younger members in communities. This may tie in to an idea that gang activities and violence can become so normalised within some communities that it comes to be perceived as a suitable and viable life option. Pitts and Palmer argue that in accessing illicit wealth young people are actually embracing their 'marginalised social status'. They identify a process of becoming 'ghetto fabulous' whereby they are symbolised by 'bling': flashy cars, designer clothes, highly visible jewellery and expensive champagne. Young people can gain high levels of respect and status from their peers. The money could, as Pitts and Palmer argue, 'provide them with the means to buy their way up and out of the 'ghetto', but because this is where they find their most appreciative audience, this seldom happens' (2006: 14).

7. Seeking trust, protection and affection

Young people tend to seek solace, security and enjoyment in friendship groups. In the absence of a supportive family or wider community, this need for belonging and affection can be heightened. Friendship groups are based on values of trust, loyalty, affection, sympathy and other important ideals for young people. The benefits of friendship to young people are manifestly different to those of family or work relationships. As the gaze of criminal justice policy has widened to include focus on anti-social behaviour and incivilities friendship groups are increasingly labelled as 'gangs' in public discourse. Young friendship groups do sometimes take part in crime (both property and violent crimes) but most often this is adolescence-limited crime and groups grow out of these experimental forms of crime. A gang has crime at the root of its existence. Within the context of a gang, a young person can be accelerated into the culture we are discussing.

It is assumed that membership in a gang can bring status or respect within one's area. This will be discussed in greater detail subsequently. Status building is closely tied into the notion that a gang will offer support in terms of physical protection. Membership in a gang or crew will offer protection from other gangs or crews (perversely it will also mean that you are now identified as a gang member and may become embroiled in enduring inter-gang disputes). This strategic affiliation can be linked in with Pitts' notion of the 'reluctant gangster'. Young people may feel pressured into gang affiliation because of risks

(perceived or real) to their safety and their family from non-affiliation. The risk of violence may well be coming from the very gang to which they reluctantly join.

There may also be instrumental reasons for gang affiliation. Gangs can be perceived as a viable career option due to a lack of access to legitimate opportunity. Gangs involved in drugs may be making decent enough amounts of money to be viewed as successful. Gangs may also use violence as a means of accessing capital. Low paid work is therefore rejected in favour of instant wealth 'albeit short-term and highly dangerous' (Pitts and Palmer 2006: 14).

Geographical location may be an important factor in gang affiliation and development. Whereas in the US gangs may form along ethnic lines and Latino gangs are clearly defined from black or white gangs, the UK scenario appears to suggest that postcode is a stronger factor than race. Towns and areas may have a gang or, as is more likely, estates within areas or boroughs will have their own gangs in competition with one another. Hales et al contend that gangs 'appear to thrive where clear spatial or social boundaries can be identified, such as town centres or housing estates, and where there is a reasonable degree of community stability, such that people locally know (of) each other and gang identities can bridge generations' (2006: 32). Gangs can form a visible presence within an estate so youngsters will grow up with the presence of a gang around them and with friends and family often part of the gang network.

Further research is needed into gangs in the UK. This will in turn help to take the agenda for dealing with gangs away from the populist media. Little is known about the inner workings of a gang and their structure. Too often do we rely on a Hollywood idea of a hierarchical gang with a king pin and his captains who lead troops of enforcers. UK gangs are likely to be highly fluid and often very unorganised.

8. The drugs and weapons market

Hales et al (2006) found that illegal drug markets represented the single most important theme in relation to the use of illegal firearms, running as a 'golden thread' through their survey of offenders (2006: 65). A link has been suggested between rising levels of drugs and drug related crime and increasing violence and weapon crime. The problem of illicit drugs in the UK is extensive; a recent report estimated that the value of the domestic illicit drug market stood at over £5 billion, despite reductions in drug prices (Reuter and Stevens, 2007). Illicit drugs can clearly be a significant economic generator within the street criminal economy (Hales et al 2006).

In a survey of 350 individuals and organisations the Metropolitan Police Authority found that drugs were cited as the root cause of gun crime, anecdotal evidence from police officers on the ground backed this up (2004: 33). The MPA's report also highlighted the correlation existing in the Borough of Lambeth. In 2002/03 it

was the top 'hotspot' in London for both drug offences and firearm offences. The MPA argue that 'action should be taken to curb drug use if the gun crime problem is to be tackled effectively' (MPA 2004: 27).

In areas of high unemployment, deprivation, poor housing and where opportunities and expectations are low the drug trade offers (false) hope to youngsters coping with the realisation of their situation. A thriving illicit drugs market can provide young people with economic worth.

The illicit drugs market is an economic market which functions without contracts or legitimate business transactions. Illicit markets for crack cocaine and heroin have high potential profits yet no recourse to 'conventional risk management strategies such as legally-enforceable contracts, calling the police and purchasing (Hales et al 2006: 13). Issues of trust and order have to replace contracts. These are inevitably underpinned by fear, intimidation and violence. Demand in the market is rarely a problem and as Brookman and Maguire point out 'it is the level of the demand for illegal substances that makes drug-dealing so lucrative and hence leads people to be prepared to kill to assure their place in the market' (2003: 35). Drug selling is a high volume, repeat business (Jacobs 2000).

Lupton et al (2002: 24) distinguish between closed drug markets and open drug markets. In closed markets, access is limited to known and trusted participants. An unknown buyer may need to be introduced before they can make purchase. Deals are normally arranged via mobile phones and 'runners' are sent to pre-arranged locations. Open markets are ones where there are no barriers to access; someone completely unknown would be able to buy drugs in an open market. This distinction clearly has implications for the weapons and gangs culture in London. The existence of runners ensures that children as young as 10 or 11 can become entangled in the drugs market. 'High levels of school exclusions and a lack of recreational facilities will result in children 'hanging about' and coming into direct contact with dealers' (Lupton et al 2002: 27). They can become users themselves or start to carry weapons to protect themselves when carrying the valuable merchandise. Open markets are also susceptible to violence. As access is relatively easy high levels of violence may ensue. Open markets are characterized by low-levels of trust and violence and intimidation maybe required in order for the market to operate smoothly. An illicit drug market with both a high demand and a high supply of drugs is susceptible to violence. A market saturated with drugs leads to different groups trying to sell as widely as possible (Pearson and Hobbs 2001). A closed market with a balance between one dealer and a few buyers ought to operate smoothly.

It may be important here to differentiate between middle market distribution and street level dealing. While the two often overlap, the middle market will be the link between the importer and the street. Typically in one area there may be around half a dozen high-level dealers supplying about 20 to 30 middle-level dealers.

This group would then supply an estimated 60 to 70 'occasional' dealers and between 30 and 150 runners (Lupton et al 2002). Many small level dealers or runners may only have contacts with the middle market and have no idea from where the drugs have been sourced in the UK. In the middle market reputation for violence and violent action can be a good base for business as the potential for violence as an implied threat is important. Violence will mostly be instrumental to ensure debts are paid, transactions completed and discipline maintained. Ultimately however, violence is 'bad for business' and is characteristic of market dysfunction and instability (Pearson and Hobbs 2001: 41-42). While we should not over estimate the sophistication of the middle market and underestimate levels of violence that may exist there it is important to differentiate it from the street-level drug dealing in which youth gangs may be involved in.

The relationship between illicit drug markets and weapon enabled violence does appear to be in existence. Involvement in the drugs market may feed into fears of victimisation and necessitate the acquisition of firearms or other weapons. Proceeds from drug dealing may enable young people to purchase a weapon or put them into contact with people from which they can borrow a weapon such as a gun. It is important to remember however that the use of these weapons, which may initially have been accessed for use in the drugs market, are not exclusively used there. The context in which a firearms and knives is eventually used may have little to do with gang affiliation or drug markets and may be commissioned to settle personal disputes, often of a quite trivial nature (Hallsworth and Young 2005a; Hales and Silverstone 2005; Hales et al 2006; Pitts and Palmer 2006).

As noted above the illicit drugs market is underpinned by violence, fear and intimidation. This atmosphere of violence does not only impact on those participating within the markets but will extend to the communities creating a climate of intimidation. Local residents may be unwilling to give information to the police for fear of reprisal. It may also serve to break down the bonds between the community and 'inhibit community interaction' (Lupton et al 2002: 36).

9. Fear and Victimisation

Fear and insecurity can be underlying causes of violent crime, and characterise much of the culture within which this crime persists (Lemos and Crane 2004; Youth Justice Board 2004; CCJS 2006). In a recent Streetgov survey commissioned by CiResearch 68% of respondents believed that street crime was on the increase while 55% of respondents felt that police in their area made too little a presence (CiResearch 2007). A person's perception of crime can be influenced by personal victimisation, the experiences of friends or family and media influences. The 2004 MORI survey found that just over a quarter (28%) of children in mainstream schools and 57% of excluded children said they had carried a knife in the last year.

This high number may be an indicator of levels of fear in our society. Whilst statistics and logical reasoning suggest that the presence of a weapon at a conflict is likely to enhance the risk of injury to all those involved, the idea of carrying a weapon for protective reasons is a strong one for many young people. Young people are well aware that they are the group most at risk of victimisation. A knife in a jacket pocket may help a young person to feel confident of his or her surroundings. Knife carrying in school can be a response not only to bullying in school but also the journey to and from school which is likely to bring many young people into contact with one another. The window between 3pm and 7pm is when a lot of violent crime occurs. This is no coincidence. Bus stops, train stations and the area around schools can become the scenes of violence. Some school children who may for quite separate reasons detest school work, dislike their teachers and not like their uniforms, adopt a strange 'patriotism' towards their school. School peers may come into contact with groups from other schools and they can become violent towards one another simply on the grounds that they are from different schools. Inter-school violence becomes common and larger numbers of people may be dragged into conflict. The school journey can be a treacherous ordeal for some young people and a weapon may provide a reassurance of safety which they feel a CCTV camera, a bus driver, a school teacher or the police cannot.

The victim of violence will often feel shame and humiliation. Through violent retaliation he or she can look to rid themselves of shame by shaming another. They can look to distance themselves from feelings of vulnerability through violence. Weapon enabled violence communicates perceived strength and power.

Those involved in gangs will also suffer greater risk of victimisation. A gang member may have to avoid travelling alone and unarmed to avoid being caught 'slipping', that is in another 'territory' without backup. Gang membership becomes a double-edged sword, simultaneously affording one protection and security in numbers yet also bringing one into conflict with greater numbers of people.

The distinction between victims and offenders of weapon enabled crime can often be blurred as offenders often report that they have been shot at or stabbed in the past (Hales et al 2006). Very few attacks are ever reported to the police and a retributive cycle of violence can be triggered off. Drug market participants can suffer the highest risk of victimisation.

BBP through ROTA has identified a number of community based projects that work with victims and offenders in a holistic way without putting labels and blame but by placing emphasis on reintegration and restoration. Examples include the Southwark Mediation Centre and the Lambeth based Restorative Approaches Project. These are based on the concept of restorative justice which is an umbrella term that is used to refer to practices that aim to involve the parties of a crime into a constructive dialogue that empowers the victim, helps offenders see

the impact their actions had and reach agreements on how to amend, heal and restore. ROTA has developed a specific project around the use of restorative justice with violent crime such as hate crime and a report has been produced with detailed recommendations (Gavrielides 2007).

10. The effect of the media

10.1 Reporting

Crime is a staple of news in the Western mass media. In the same way that a sports, business, politics, or foreign affairs story has their allocated space in newspapers and broadcasts, the crime story, or story about crime, is a consistent page-filler in our news. Stories should also be exciting, unusual and dangerous. In order to fill all these column inches and on a daily basis (even more regularly with the advent of 24-hour new broadcasts such as Sky News and BBC 24) there must be an 'eternal recurrence' (Rock 1973) of news stories. The media engage in an explicit form of linkage in their presentation of crime news. Unrelated crimes are often connected together under one headline giving the impression that they are part of a similar process. This linking together of unrelated stories serves to exaggerate, deviate and prolong stories. This is not to say that the events did not take place in reality and are entirely fabricated but stringing them together as if connected will afford the stories additional weight in the consciences of the public. It is this form of linkage which can help to create a moral panic around an issue. New crimes are 'found' and narrated in the press as if there is a sudden surge in the reported activity (Cohen 1972, Hall et al 1978).

Public sentiments will be pointed towards a picture of moral malaise and an age of disrespect that may in fact not be in existence. Banner headlines will serve to sensationalise the issue. In February 2007 the highly publicised murders of three young men took place in South London. Billy Cox, 15 in Clapham; 15 year old Michael Dosunmu in Peckham and James Andre Smartt-Ford, 16 in Streatham. In a matter of days any instances of violent crime were included under one large story. Maps were shown of the geographical proximity of the crimes and anecdotal evidence was published. The point here is not to take anything away from the tragic nature of the killings nor to try and underplay their seriousness but to try and deflect away from the systematic linking of crimes by the media so that they are portrayed as connected and as if they are part of a larger process.

10.2 Popular Culture

Hip-hop music, violent video games and violent movies are often identified as the cause of violence amongst young people. The glamorisation of guns in popular music and films feeds into a 'culture of violence' but as Lemos argues 'virtually all people are exposed to TV and media violence, why is there a negative impact only on some of them?' (Lemos 2004: 8). Indeed the audience of hip-hop music is as much middle class as anything else. We would argue that very often

popular culture is an expression or a symptom of the culture that allows gang activity to persist but it does not necessarily bear a causal relation to that culture. It can even be viewed as part of the culture, but this is an expressional aspect of the culture. A 'desensitisation to violence' may exist amongst certain groups but this comes from exposure to real life violence as well as television and films (Shropshire and McFarquhar 2002). This desensitisation can take on a cyclical effect with desensitisation leading to increased violence which in turn will desensitise further. Gang members now are often reported to be more violent than those who were becoming gang involved in the late 1980s or early 1990s (Hales et al 2006; Shropshire and McFarquhar 2002).

It is often the lyrics of specific urban artists which incur the outrage of the mass media. However the effects of these lyrics are unlikely to inform behaviour in to any great degree. What may resonate with many young people is the 'aspirational lifestyle portrayed by some sections of the music industry' (Hales et al 2006: 100). The urban music industry represents mainstream success in the face of adversity (see section 6 above 'Materialism').

Music can be mobilised as a tool for anti-gun and knife campaigners. Music and music production can be a diversionary activity to give young people a sense of purpose and worth. It may also through its music condemn acts of violence and call for an end to gun and knife crime. One positive example has been the films of Lyrical Wordz the set up by Wayne Campbell whose preventive message has been aired in schools.

11. The Criminal Justice System

The role of the criminal justice system and its relationship to the media, state/government ideology and civil society, is extremely significant in creating its own culture, which in turn has had a hand in creating the culture in question, and sustaining it, rather than stemming it. We will demonstrate this in three distinct sections, 1) considering the populist punitive culture adopted by government and supported by the media – the culture of control, 2) increasing punitive approach of the criminal justice system, 3) actual policy change – with a focus on prison figures and stop and search policies

11.1. Populist Punitiveness and the Culture of Control

Garland has argued that at present in both the UK and the US a culture of control is in operation. This culture is a shift from the penal welfarist approach to tackling crime and can be evidenced in both policy and rhetoric directed at crime reduction. The main aspects of this culture are: a victim/offender dichotomy with the rights of the former always trumping the rights of the latter, prioritising the removal of offenders from the mainstream, increasingly punitive responses to crime, crime used as a politically expedient tool and the relationship between politicians and the media in achieving this. While this culture is more evident in

practice in the US, while it is rhetorical in the UK, it is equally significant. The adoption of this culture by the state, is reflected in civil society's attitude to, in this case, young people, and the media's coverage of them.

Victim participation in the development of policy can provide policy makers with a fuller picture as to the extent and nature of certain crimes. In the arena of weapon enabled crimes it is worth noting that many offenders are likely to have been victims of violent crimes themselves, hence an offender/victim dichotomy cannot be made (Hales et al 2006). Occasionally messages sent out by 'angry victims', when targeted at young people and not social failures can lack the measured approach needed and policy is likely to only increase in severity as a result. However some groups of victims' families such as PAV (Parents Against Violence) assume an instrumental role in attempting to stop disputes erupting into violence others victim groups may simply call for more punitive responses.

Placing victim opinion at the centre of approaches to tackle crime is integral to the culture of control that Garland (2001) has discussed. This culture is populist and focuses on public perception rather than solid action. Therefore, rhetoric that demonises young people who adopt gang culture, is more politically expedient than producing long term policies that consider their welfare. This approach simply entrenches the divide between excluded young people and mainstream society, thus increasing the allure of the gang lifestyle. Furthermore, the fear whipped up by this style of discussing crime also creates fear in other young people who may then choose to arm themselves as a matter of safety. Jonathan Simon has argued that such a political culture is only possible in a state that has adopted an individualist ideology. Such an ideology also feeds a mentality where it is 'every man for himself' allowing a culture that breeds violence to be sustained.

11.2. Punitive Penal Systems

The above state culture is evidenced in the increasingly punitive penal system that is being endorsed in the UK, and to an even greater extent in the US. While rhetoric forms a major part of this culture of control, there is also a significant role played by the actual policies in place, and the chosen political direction of government.

There are two main aspects to the increasingly punitive approaches of the UK and US governments; namely harsher and more controlling penalties on one side and decreasing government expenditure on welfare on the other. While this has occurred to different extents in either country it is helpful to note them both for comparative means and to emphasise the ideology behind the chosen direction.

Taking the latter aspect first, it has been argued by academics such as Currie, Bowling, Downes, Young and Wacquant that punitive penal systems are now being used as a means to controlling the poorest members of society. This 'penal

management of poverty' (Wacquant 1999) is linked to reduced spend on welfare and the decline of the penal welfarist approach to tackling criminal behaviour. Furthermore, understanding the political direction in this way further explains the culture of control discussed by Garland – not only are punitive systems a means of controlling crime, but they are a means of controlling poverty. This link is not surprising given the previous discussion of the importance of the role that social exclusion, poverty and inequality play in creating a culture when gang activity and violent crime is deemed acceptable.

What emerges from these links is that punitive penal systems should not be considered in isolation. The culture and ideology adopted by the state at both a political and civil level highlights the significance of punitive penal systems. While the UK is nowhere near close to the 2 million citizens imprisoned in the US, or the low level of welfare provided by the US, the rhetorical, and to a lesser extent practical, direction that the UK has adopted is evidence of a somewhat shared ideology and culture. Gang, gun and knife culture amongst young people can actually be enhanced by the culture of control. This will be demonstrated in the following section that considers specific examples within the criminal justice system of punitive responses to gang, gun and knife culture.

11.3. The Prison system, police responses and stop and searches

The government's reduced spend on certain areas of the welfare system compared to rising prison figures, and the comparative patterns of penal policy in the US and the UK demonstrate an increasing concern with managing crime via punishment rather than structural welfare issues that could hold causal links to them in the first place.

Stop and Search policies are important when analysing gang culture for numerous reasons; namely, the fact that they are used to tackle weapon possession and also the role that they play in excluding certain groups of young people thus making them more disconnected from the mainstream and reducing the possibility of such communities working with the police to tackle cases of gang violence (Pitts and Palmer 2006).

In the most recent legislation in place to tackle gang violence stop and search practices have now been extended to the school environment. However, Brookman and Maguire concluded that 'police actions alone are unlikely to have a huge impact on carrying knives' (2003: 34) and Hales and Silverstone's report on gun crime in a west London borough also stated that 'there was general awareness of risks of being stopped in possession of a firearm by the police although this does not appear to have universally influenced the offender's behaviour' (2005: 59). In a later piece of research Hales and colleagues reach a similar conclusion 'Indeed, where such individuals feel they may be killed it is conceivable that no reasonable criminal justice sanction would deter them from carrying firearms' (Hales et al 2006: 95). It seems that the attempt to control the

crime, rather than understand the culture that fuels it, drives policies such as stop and search. However, such a response further fuels the culture amongst us young people, as it acts as a means of exclusion. Targeting young people in this way does not, in any way, make us feel like part of a system; rather it already assumes that we are fighting against it.

Furthermore, the racial bias evident in police stop and searches (Wilson and Rees 2006) combined with the disproportionate number of Black Caribbean boys excluded from schools¹⁰ cannot be overlooked. It is interesting that the government has used the education system to extend stop and search practices rather than explore less punitive measures within an educational setting. Weapon possession figures increase dramatically when considering those who have been excluded from mainstream education. This disaffection of young males leaves them open to the lures of gang membership; especially when a decent salary with legal employment, once excluded, seems unrealistic. This negative attitude towards the police affects their respect for authority and the law, as well their willingness to aid in investigations. In their article, 'Othering the Brothers' Pitts and Palmer (2006) extensively analyse the impact of the negative relationship between the police and the black community, and how this in turn compounds the grip of gang culture on these disaffected communities.

Rising prison figures and the racial make up of prison inmates compounds the extent to which the criminal justice system excludes and isolates young people from the mainstream and enhances the allure of gang culture. However, authors such as Wacquant have argued that such exclusion may be intended (Wacquant 1999; 2001). One can be led to such a conclusion when the evidence against such approaches seems plainly obvious.

Taking the example of 'zero tolerance' practiced by the NYPD, Ben Bowling has argued that this approach had little impact on the gang culture in New York at the time, and in fact it was the actions of community groups on the ground that influenced the change in tide of practicing gang culture rather than punitive police measures. In fact murder rates began to rise even when strict policing practices were employed (Bowling 1999); furthermore, before the 'zero tolerance' practices of Bratton were employed murder rates had already had a massive decrease. When Jack Straw wanted to transfer the model to the UK he failed to take account of this fact, or of the impact of community groups' work.

Such examples create an expectation that more support for community groups and a lesser focus on punitive actions would be the most reasoned response to gang, gun and knife culture. However, as the culture of control dictates, such a response would not be politically expedient, and that often seems to be prioritised when making decisions in the criminal justice arena. Furthermore, the fact that community groups had the greatest impact in the above example

¹⁰ Black boys are three time more likely to be dealt with by exclusion than young white people (Department for Education and Skills 2006b)

emphasises the importance of the role played by the culture of those involved in the criminal activity in the first place. Community support can address both the culture of fear amongst some young people and the culture that actively endorses violent crime amongst others.

During the Home Affairs Select Committee meeting inquiry some interesting points were made around the role of education and the DfES. In particular discussion was made of the impact of school exclusions on crime amongst young people and the balance that needed to be struck between law enforcement agencies, community and voluntary sector groups and the family in tackling knife crime within younger communities. Discussion was also made of the necessity to improve sustainability and support good practice in the voluntary sector to address violent crime. This report welcomes these suggestions but is at a loss as to why such a direction has not been adopted by the state or advocated in the media or by politicians. One explanation is the culture of control argument adopted by Garland and others. This leads us to once again question the role of external cultures in sustaining gun, gang and knife culture amongst young people.

Rob Allen has discussed the detrimental impact of increasing punitive measures to tackle gang culture. Given the ages of those involved in, and affected by, gang culture, increasing punitive measures will see more young people in custody and in the criminal justice system. As such, he states that much more emphasis should be placed on the role of the Dfes in tackling these issues in a causal fashion than the Home Office tackling them in a consequential fashion (Allen 2006).

Placing more children within the Criminal Justice System cannot be viewed as a positive thing. Furthermore, criminalising young people does not act as a deterrent to them re-entering the criminal activity – in fact it often has the opposite effect. Significantly for this paper, it also has the clear potential to entrench loyalty to the only culture to which they do not feel excluded – gang (gun and knife) culture.

Due to the fact that there has been little acknowledgement of the impact of social issues, the lifestyle of the young people involved in gang culture is not considered when assuming increasingly punitive models to tackle gang culture. This is illustrated in rhetoric that constantly distinguishes between victim and offender (when in gang violence offenders are often also victims) and the assumption that the criminal justice system will be enough of a deterrent, when the choice to enter a gang is not always a young person's in the first place. They are already excluded from mainstream society on a number of a levels and their means of integration is not through shared values but through materialistic gratification within a context of relative deprivation. However, from this section it is clear that it is not only enough to understand gang, gun and knife culture out of the context within which it is active: the culture adopted by the state in how it

views and tackles criminal behaviour is integral to understanding why current tactics to stem it are not working and more importantly, how the wider society actually contributes to sustaining gang, gun and knife culture amongst young people.

12. Youth empowerment and involvement in policy making

Numerous studies have repeatedly pointed out the exclusion of young people in the development of policies that affect them. On the positive side, a number of schemes have been established to empower and enable young people to influence these agendas including that of gang, gun and knife crime. Examples include the Big Boost award scheme, the V fund and the Help Yourself programme.

The BBP and this report are very timely in light of the recent recommendation of the Home Affairs Committee (2007). In particular, Paragraph 211 states: "In drawing up a strategy on young black people's overrepresentation, the Government should ensure young people themselves are consulted, and that local and national organisations ensure young people's views are systematically taken into account in forming and evaluating policy".

The BBP aims to serve as a paradigm for future projects that aim to put the Home Affairs recommendation in practice. Findings so far show that by empowering young people and by giving them voice to explore what affects them and their families they regain the respect and control they are lacking and most often seek to find in the gang, gun and knife culture.

UNRAVELLING THE CULTURE

We would like to convey the complexity and multifaceted nature of the culture that surrounds the use, possession and glorification of weapons by some young people. Furthermore, it is near impossible to separate this culture from overarching cultures held by wider society and across other excluded groups. To an extent, the culture in question is itself a sub-culture of wider societal cultures; despite attempts by others to stress its exclusivity from the rest of British society. The use, possession and symbolic identity of weapons are informed by this culture. Furthermore within this culture violence becomes normalised and desensitised.

We contend that there are a number of sub-cultures that feed into this culture. This can result in a wide range of people accepting, embracing and partaking within the weapons culture and exiting the culture from different standpoints. These sub-cultures can affect young people of varying social groups in different ways. While it must be emphasised that this is far from an exclusive list of sub-cultures at work, the predominant sub-cultures which we have identified are:

A culture of fear – this can manifestly alter a young persons' view of their surroundings and other young people who they come across. A culture of fear can affect all social groups and could lead to a young person carrying a weapon for fear of attack. Fear may help to explain weapon possession within schools. Schools and the journey to and from school can become scenes of violence. A young person, who has carried a weapon in the past through fear without ever using it, may eventually grow out of his or her fear; or it may act as a trigger leading them to partake in other aspects of the culture in question.

A culture of deprivation and poverty – Marginalised social groups make up the bulk of the statistics of offenders and victims of violent crime. Their disadvantaged social positions will alter their perceptions of the society they live in and the avenues open to them for social mobility. Many other sub-cultures are active within this culture, and in a sense create it, such as materialism, status and respect, and the wider culture of control. The role that poverty and deprivation provides is that they exasperate sub-cultures that are not exclusive to the poorest members of society, but their impact is often most negatively experienced by them.

A culture of masculinities and materialism – Young people and especially young males subscribe to a culture where displays of power and strength are very important to their social standing. Similarly not wearing the latest fashions and brands will bring about social condemnation. This strain placed upon young people will be greater for the poor and disadvantaged who have more legitimate avenues for success closed to them. Issues of status and respect become very important and a weapon in many circumstances will become a symbolic display of strength.

A culture of belonging and exclusion – The desire amongst young people for solidarity, trust, friendship and security are just some of the factors that lead to the formation of peer groups. These groups will provide young people with many positive experiences but may bring with it a pressure to conform. This conformity, backed by intense peer pressure, may lead to weapon possession being normalised within a group. The culture of belonging will also feed into the idea of materialism and the need to have the right (best) material goods. Belonging can also arise as a direct result of wider exclusion; this can be evidenced across excluded groups. When one is excluded from the mainstream they can find solace in an alternative group, this is enhanced further when members of the groups can emphasise with their exclusion or claim to be fight the same cause. Examples of such exclusion can be on the grounds of class/wealth or mainstream education.

A culture of control – This is wide-ranging and informs the political climate, the state's ideology, media representations and public perceptions of crime and criminals. Late modern societies such as the UK have adopted a rugged individualistic social stance. Increasingly this has led to an individualised approach to crime and the state's rejection of penal welfarism and responsibility for the wider community. Increasingly punitive attitudes are expressed in the relationship between the media, politicians and the general public, and have the potential to sustain gun and knife culture, and the sub-cultures within it, under the guise of tackling it. A punitive approach to young people serves for the labels afforded to many young people ('yobs', 'louts', 'gangs', 'hoodies' etc) to be internalised and acted upon. Perceptions of young people in society are rarely positive and the culture of fear is directly enhanced by the culture of control.

A culture of criminality – This culture runs across a wide spectrum, from fear of crime as an 'other' to an acceptance of crime as a normal aspect of life. Both ends of the spectrum however act as a sub-culture which feeds the wider culture in question and can be linked to the culture of control discussed above. Society's and the media's obsession with crime places it at the centre of our lives, and either avoiding it or being part of it characterises how we navigate our life choices (be these constrained or not). Criminality amongst young people can be thrilling, exciting or simply something to do. Life for many young people can be boring and mundane. At the same time it can be something to be feared intensely. Criminality can provide them with stories and action which can be moulded into the stuff of legend. Disagreements are reworked into 'wars' or 'battles'.

Youth culture – Whilst, like the general gun and knife culture in question, this culture is the product of numerous sub-cultures, it still needs to be noted. Young people are perceived as being separate from the rest of society; this is a perception held by civil society in general, but to an extent has been internalised by young people. The Queen in her Christmas speech of 2006 hinted at these problems: 'there is always the danger of a real divide opening up between young

and old, based on unfamiliarity, ignorance or misunderstanding' (HM The Queen 2006). This separatist attitude lays the foundations for a 'youth culture'. This is far from a new phenomenon, it is merely characterised in different ways over time. For example, particular styles of music have always played part of youth culture, although these styles may have changed over time. It is important, however, to note that many aspects of youth culture are an expression of gun and knife culture rather than a cause of it. Popular youth culture will of course feed into the weapons culture found expressed by some young people. Popular representations of violence and weapons may add to the normalisation of weapons in young peoples' lives. There is a high level of status afforded to weapons in youth culture. However, much of what has been labelled a cause, for example hip-hop music, is neither exclusive to young people nor did it precede gun and knife culture. We would hold it to bear an expressive, rather than causal relationship, to gun and knife culture.

Gang culture – We have been careful not to afford this culture too much emphasis as weapon possession is not exclusive to gang members and as we have seen before the definition of a 'gang' is fluid and subjective. Peer groups who only partake in low-level criminality have been re-branded as 'gangs' in the media. There are some groups who routinely undertake serious crimes, of which weapons are at the root, who can be identified as gangs. Gang involvement can however prolong a young persons' association with weapons and increase their personal risk of victimisation. Pitts' (forthcoming) idea of 'Reluctant Gangsters' has suggested that involvement in a gang can be hard to voluntarily remove oneself from.

The interactions between some of these sub-cultures are perhaps best evidenced in two scenarios, whereby the same tragic result is reached using the same deadly weapon but from two very different backgrounds. In scenario (A) a middle-class young boy has been the victim of some bullying to and from school. One day he decides to carry a knife from home in his bag. Days go by where he does not use it but it gives him a sense of security and he feels untouchable. Finally one day there is a scuffle in which he produces the knife, in the melee the weapons is turned upon himself and he is fatally wounded. In this scenario the culture of fear is obviously a strong factor as is the culture of masculinities whereby the feeling of possessing weapon brings perceived power. In scenario (B) a young boy is excluded from mainstream education and finds solace and a shared identity with other young people on his estate who have had the same experience. One day a friend produces a knife and talks up the value of carrying a knife. The peer group all begin to carry weapons until the boy feels great pressure to perform. One day a group from another area confront them and a violent conflict occurs. Again in the melee the weapon is turned on the boy and a fatal wound is incurred. In scenario (B) the same result is reached but the culture of deprivation and poverty is important as is the culture of belonging, and the culture of exclusion from the mainstream.

GAPS AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER WORK

1. Gaps in research

There is currently little research on the culture of gun and knife crime amongst young people. In comparison there have been large amounts of research around young people and the criminal justice system. More recently, work has been carried out around various gang formations and weapon possession (Pitts forthcoming; Bennett and Holloway 2004; Hales et al 2006). However, none of these really capture, or focus attention on, the cultures informing this activity. In short there is research on the crime rather than the culture within which it persists.

On the other hand there have been academic arguments made around political culture, ideology and societal attitudes. A chasm exists in linking these arguments with the cultures and sub-cultures of young people. Garland's arguments, for example, are linked more to policy which addresses crime, rather than culture or policy which addresses culture, seemingly as there is not much which addresses the latter.

Therefore, there is research both on culture and on crime, but not in the same places. What this piece of research demonstrates is that there clearly is a link between the culture and the crimes that exist within it, and that viewing crime through this lens provides the multi-faceted understanding required to tackle it. More research in this area would provide the depth required to make recommendations from a cultural perspective.

While much has been made of the similarities between the US and the UK in political rhetoric and the media, we find these comparisons far from helpful. Crime levels as shown in statistics display great statistical differences, as well as the vast differences in laws governing weapon possession. Apart from London few UK urban areas are comparable to US cities in their size and makeup. However, in academic research there have been two significant comparisons that have been made, and have been referred to over the course of this paper. Firstly, Bowling (1999) has noted the lessons that can be learnt from the New York crack cocaine epidemic. Bowling argues that this was overcome not by 'zero tolerance' approaches but rather by community activity. From a cultural perspective this is significant in the sense that attempts to tackle the crime were not as successful as shifts in the culture/attitudes at the grass roots level. If there is not an appropriate culture at play then it is more of a challenge for such crimes to persist; conversely if the culture provides the fertile soil, then the seeds of crime will flourish.

While the crime levels, policy and prison figures are distinctly different in both countries, the culture of control is evident, at least at a rhetorical and ideological level, in politics, the media and civil society. Other countries, such as Sweden,

that still maintain a stronger loyalty to penal welfarist approaches to crime have a significantly different cultural attitude to criminal behaviour (and this is reflected in its policies and prison figures) (Downes and Hansen 2006). While the UK, to an extent, sits somewhere in between Sweden and the US in policy and action, the level to which it now embraces and enacts the culture of control signals further shifts to a US approach to crime control. This in turn will impact on the gun and knife culture amongst young people. Therefore it is the similarities in the culture of States, rather than the crimes of the State's citizens, that should be the focus of discussion and that does impact on policy direction.

2. Gaps in policy

There are two main gaps in policy to address gun and knife culture amongst young people. Firstly, there is no government policy that addresses the culture with a clear understanding of its complexities and its relation to wider cultures. For example, the Respect Agenda, where it is targeted at young people and their behaviour, focuses on young people in isolation of societal and political cultures that interact with them and is based on a superficial perception of 'youth culture'. Little attempt has been made to understand sub-cultures at play or the relationship that they bear to wider societal cultures. In fact, politicians have been at length to stress the distinct nature of the cultures surrounding gun and knife crime as being separate and alien to mainstream British society.

Secondly, policy which does exist in this area is directed at crimes and offences, often devoid of context. There is a general line of increasingly punitive measures to crack down on the crime, devoid of reference to the cultures within which these crimes persist. A clear example of this is in the distinction made between victims and offenders in policy. Often this culture witnesses a blurring of victim and offender. Furthermore, focusing on end results, such as a murder, localises responsibility with the young people involved and not the wider chain of events, such as those that supplied the weapons etc. This oversimplification breeds a culture of blame (within an individualised context) that allows policy and rhetoric to have a narrow focus. Such a focus is removed from the cultural context within which events take place. Such subtleties are missed with this sweeping punitive approach, in both actual policy and political rhetoric.

Initiatives such as the Home Office Connected Fund and the Cabinet Office's Social Exclusion Unit need to be encouraged. The Home Office Connected fund which works to tackle gun crime, knife crime and gang issues has to date supported around 300 small groups in England and Wales, these groups based in the third sector are well placed to deal with young people at risk from the gang, gun and knife culture. This fund should be maintained and if possible extended. An acknowledgement of the place for understanding and preventing development of knife and gun culture as well as knife and gun crime would be a recommendation that this report would make.

The Social Exclusion Unit does have the potential to recognise the impact of social causes on gun and knife culture. The Sure Start programme, not without its problems, can manifestly help the lives of some families in the most deprived areas. The Social Exclusion Unit remains in its infancy and is yet to realise the potential it possesses. One stumbling block it faces is the current New Public Management approach of government that bases many goals on stringent targets. This does not bode well for an approach that considers complex cultures. For example, the focus on lone mothers seems to focus on that particular target group and specific issues such as employment. Taking this approach to the matter in hand would potentially lead to a focus on the crimes committed by young people as a specific target group.

In short whilst there is the political potential to address these issues, state ideology and government method means that they are currently used to address target actions and groups, rather than cultural settings and societal practices. Cross departmental working could be an initial means of addressing these complexities, but if they fail to acknowledge a cultural level of understanding then any approach they offer will hit the wrong target.

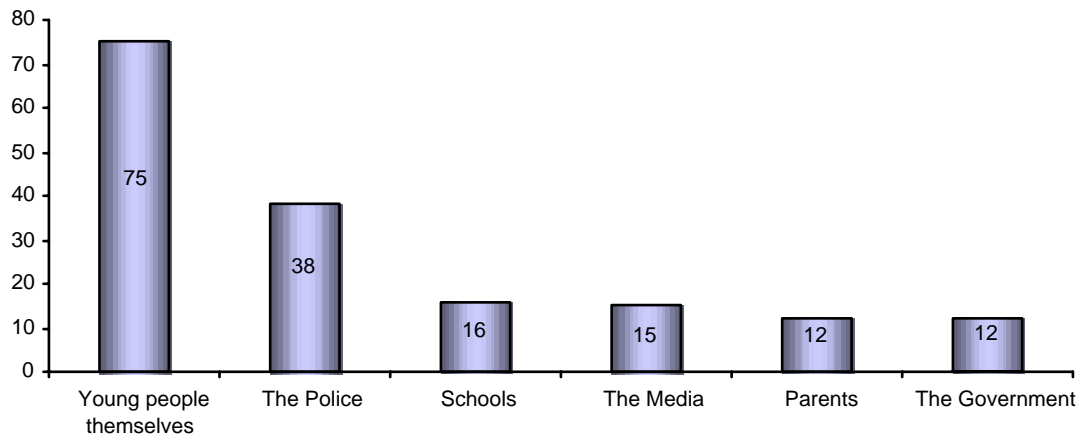
The following recommendations are put forward by the BBP which will be exploring them further during its remaining Phases:

- Greater involvement of young people in the formation of policies that affect them – this includes the gang, gun and knife culture as well as wider criminal justice matters such as the combat of hate crime, drugs and violence.
- Stronger partnership between community based projects and statutory criminal justice agencies. Case studies identified in this report seem to be unknown to mainstream organisations, and they tend to work in isolation, in the shadow of the law and without sustainable and long-term funding.
- The role of respect in the design of policy is paramount in creating an inclusive and tolerant society of citizens that respect each other.
- Human Rights Education has an important role in creating hope and broadening the minds of young people. As the CEHR is about to open its doors, it is recommended that methods are explored to promote Human Rights Education through the three levels identified by this report.
- The role of the Voluntary and Community Sector should not be underestimated in the fight against the gang, gun and knife culture. The sector has direct links with the communities it was set up to serve and this is particularly true for BAME groups which have traditionally been discriminated against.
- Community cohesion and integration does not mean absorption of different cultures. The recommendation of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion on Single Group funding suggest that discrimination is an old phenomenon and that groups should no longer be funded on the basis of the communities they aim to serve but on the integration they aim to promote. This is not encouraging when put in the context of inequality facing London's BAME communities.

- The complexities of the culture and context of issues should be addressed in the formation of policy; it is insufficient to target issues, in this case knife and gun crime, without due consideration and understanding of the cultures within which they persist. Furthermore, that these cultures are considered within the context of the wider societal cultures rather than seen as distinct from them.

APPENDIX I: STREET CRIME – PERSPECTIVES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

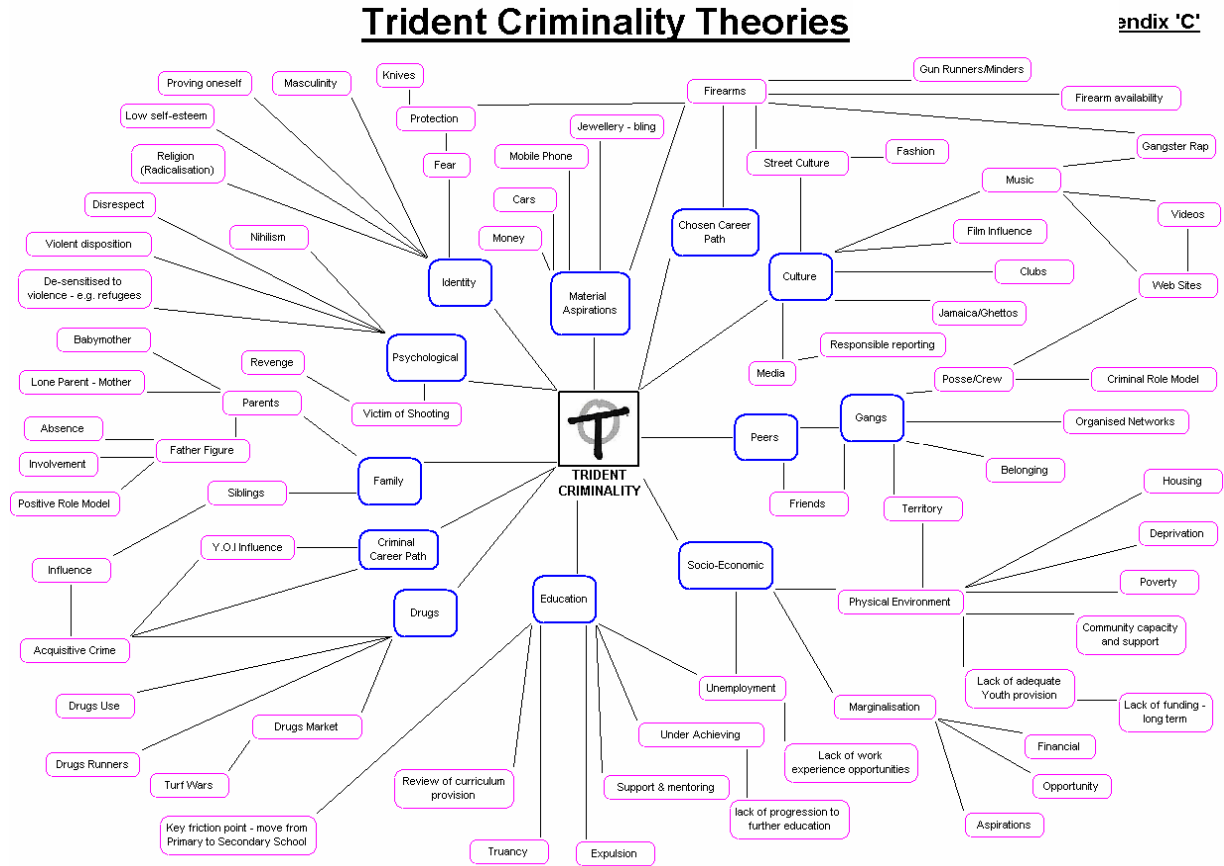
As far as you are aware, do any of the following have a realistic understanding of the causal factors of gang culture?



Source:
StreetGov (2007) 'Street Crime – Perspectives from Young People' Wilmslow, Cheshire: CiResearch

APPENDIX II: TRIDENT CRIMINALITY THEORIES

Source: Operation Trident



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APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

Gun Crime

'Gun crime' is a generic term used to cover all instances of illegal use of firearms. This includes illegal possession when no other crime has been committed. It makes no distinction between the illegal use of 'real' lethal firearms and imitation firearms (Hales et al 2006). Real lethal firearms include purpose built lethal firearms, re-activated firearms and converted imitation firearms. Imitation firearms are those weapons that closely resemble real lethal firearms in appearance but cannot discharge a projectile capable of inflicting a lethal injury. This includes BB guns, blank firers, deactivated 'real' guns and decorative imitations. Most firearm offences involve the firearm being used as a 'threat' (Home Office 2003).

Knife Crime

'Knife Crime' can also encompass a broad range of offences. Knife Enabled Crime as defined by the Metropolitan Police Service is "Violence against the person (excluding possession), sexual offences, robbery and burglary where a knife is used, seen or intimated" (Hitchcock 2007) Knives may be brandished in the course of a crime or an offender may be found to have had a knife on him even though it was never produced. During 2006 12,341 knife enabled crimes were recorded by the Metropolitan Police – or about 1 every 40 minutes. The probability of serious injury is 4.5 times more likely when a knife is used to assist a crime (Greater London Authority 2007). The presence of weapons increase the likelihood of someone being killed, be it the intended victim or the attacker themselves.

On 19th March 2007 the Home Secretary John Reid (BBC Website 2007) announced that to provide greater clarity in dealing with knife crime a new system of recording offences would be introduced. Separate knife offences would now be recorded for attempted murder, wounding with grievously bodily harm, wounding with intent to grievously bodily harm, robbery of personal property and robbery of business property. These small changes may provide criminal justice agencies with a clearer picture of knife crime in England and Wales but it is important to remember that both gun crime and knife crime are both severely under-reported to the police and therefore police recorded crime figures may only show part of the picture.

BAME

We use the term BAME to refer to all groups who are discriminated against on the grounds of their race, culture, colour, nationality or religious practice. This definition includes but is not exclusive to those people of African, Asian, Caribbean, Irish, Jewish, Roma and South East Asian descent.

Gangs

The existence of gangs in Britain is nothing new. Groups of youths roaming the streets have been found in the UK for many years. Glasgow for example was plagued by violent 'razor gangs' in the interwar years and this is before the onset of 'modernity' which is often blamed for triggering the breakdown of our once golden society. Concerns over the state of our youth have made up a 'seamless tapestry of fears and complaints about the deteriorated present' (Pearson 1983: 208). Despite this gangs continue to be portrayed as a new, alien phenomenon with the establishment adopting a myopic view of the past.

We have seen a recent shift in the depiction of gangs in the UK. They are often portrayed as an 'alien' phenomenon. There has also been a liberalisation in the use of the word 'gang' so that many events become defined or re-defined as gangland conflicts. The idea now is that Britain has somehow inherited this gang culture from America or the Caribbean and that is something alien to British culture. It is the subject of gangs and gang membership which is normally seized upon by the media and general public. Little research has been carried out into gangs in Britain and the temptation to bring about US comparisons needs to be avoided (Hallsworth and Young 2005: 15). Bennett and Holloway in their analysis of drug arrestees quote a study carried out in the United States which estimated in 1998 the number of gangs across the US to be over 28,700 and gang members numbering over 780,000 (2004: 308).¹¹ One must remember that the situation in the UK differs greatly from our American counterparts. In 2002 Operation Trident estimated that there were around 8 gangs active in north London (MPA 2004: 39). Bullock and Tilley identified 4 major gangs operating in South Manchester (2002: 23). In a survey of 80 offenders convicted of gun crime around half stated that they had been in a gang or crew. Many of those interviewed indicated they had been part of a group or a collective but insisted that this was not a gang or crew (Hales et al 2006). Clearly the scale is drastically different however this is not to deny that there are gangs operating on British soil.

It is important here to note the lack of a clear definition existing in British criminological research surrounding gangs. Indeed the liberal use of the term 'gang' within the public sphere has added to the confusion: 'Far from being used in any clearly defined and systematic way it has been applied in ways that problematically include groups to which the gang label out not to be applied' (Hallsworth and Young 2005: 15). The media construction of the UK gang appears to be a rare but extremely violent criminal firm, often interwoven with middle-market drug distribution. However some research suggests that gangs can be more akin to friendship networks and often have little involvement in

¹¹ The survey asked a sample of law enforcement authorities across the country whether there were gangs operating in their area. J.P Moore and I.L. Cook: *The National Youth Gang Survey*. (1999) The National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) on behalf of the Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention.

crime. The word 'gang' conjures up stereotypical images that are at best misleading, if not destructive. Hallsworth and Young identify a distinctive type of youth culture which has been influenced by commercialism and American gang culture. This 'street' culture leads to groups of 'wannabe' gang members. These individuals or groups are likely to be highly conspicuous. They may well have adopted 'gang talk' but are likely only to engage in low-level anti-social nuisance and avoid serious criminality.

The lack of research has resulted in the media and the police leading in the race of description. Types of gang activity will also vary over time and place making stable definitions difficult (Marshall et al 2005). Various types of gangs with differing degrees of collective structure or fluidity are likely to exist in different areas but in spite of this a generalised definition can be worked towards. A clear definition will also limit the tendency of political commentators and the media to blur boundaries between groups which can exaggerate the problem (Marshall et al 2005).

Most adolescents will belong to an informal group at some point in their young lives. These peer groups often act collectively and many will commit various minor crimes or anti-social behaviour. It is necessary to avoid labelling these groups committing random adolescent crime as gangs and adopt a more restricted definition. Bullock and Tilley refer to 'enduring identifiable groups of young people who see themselves as members of those groups, and who commit crime as part of that membership' (2002: 23). The idea of crime being definitional to a groups' image is significant. It is also important to remember that not all gang involved young people are 'gang members'. A young person may be a gang 'associate', he or she will be associated with a particular crew or gang but may not regard themselves as an actual member of the gang (Shropshire and McFarquhar 2002). One problem here is that these associates will be viewed by others, especially by rival gangs, as gang members and may therefore face similar pressures as gang members. Gangs are mostly male in their membership although more research is probably needed to review the myths surrounding the 'female gangster'. Gang participation may now be stretching down to affect younger age groups. We are no longer looking at 16-17 as being the start of gang involvement but instead early to mid-teens. Some media reports have even suggested that drug-gangs are using primary school children as runners and weapons carriers. There was however only incidental evidence to back this up. Bennett and Holloway in a survey of drug arrestees found that the median age of current gang members was 19 while the median age for past gang members was 24. They suggest that the difference between the ages may be a product of maturation and that past members might have been the same age as current gang members when they were gang-involved but have subsequently 'grown out' of gang membership (2004: 14).

We can then start to pick out differences between certain types of youth collectives found in society. Hallsworth and Young (2005b) have forwarded the following analysis of urban collectives.

Peer Group: Relatively small, unorganised and transient groups composed of peers who share the same space and a common history. A small focus, offering safety in numbers and physical backup. Conflicts at this level will be localised and time-limited. Crime will be mostly non-serious in nature and not integral to the identity of the group. Typically comprised of individuals who knew each other from school and who had grown up in the same neighbourhood.

Associates: People who were known to each other but not close friends, sharing spaces such as estates or colleges. Periodically engage in low-level criminality. Individuals may be drawn into violent conflict by association.

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

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

As the above classifications suggest the gang culture does not consist entirely of people belonging to distinct rival groups. Some people may not regard themselves as being a member of, or affiliated in some way, to one particular named gang. They may identify with the 'gang' culture and 'move' with other young people who may be part of a particular gang or crew but are not necessarily themselves part of that gang or crew. Gangs can be one generational appearing more like a peer group than a gang with an age range of between say 9 or 10 up to around 15 or 16. Equally gangs can be multi generational with a more structured membership of older 'players' and younger members on the margins. Bullock and Tilley note that two of the four South Manchester gangs on

which they concentrate had, at the time of writing, been in existence for around 14 years, while the two others had emerged much more recently (2002: 24). Gangs may start life as kinship groups but evolve into serious criminality.

Pitts (forthcoming) has raised the idea of the 'reluctant gangster'. Research into youth offending team caseload surveys had suggested that around 40% of gang involved young people felt they were trapped into the lifestyle. It was suggested that gang membership in the first place was highly pressured and that an exit from a gang could be very dangerous to both themselves and their families.

Voluntary and Community Sector

By Voluntary and Community Sector we are referring to organisations and groups that work on a not-for-profit basis. These include, but not exclusively, community groups, self-help groups, youth groups, research organisations, social policy groups, advocacy groups, service provision organisations, umbrella organisations and mentoring groups.

APPENDIX IV: GEOGRAPHY OF THE BBP

Despite the focus of the research falling on the gun, knife and weapons' culture amongst young people in London, the fieldwork stage will limit its concentration on areas of high crime in London due to time and funding constraints. The five London Boroughs on which the Building Bridges Project will concentrate are Brent, Hackney, Haringey, Lambeth and Southwark. These Boroughs represent a geographical spread of London with Haringey in the North, Lambeth and Southwark in South London, Brent in West London and Hackney in East London. The five Boroughs all come under the operational remit of Operation Trident, the Metropolitan Police's division dealing with black-on-black gun crime. According to Metropolitan Police recorded crime figures these are boroughs with some of the highest levels of violent crime and gun enabled crime. We are careful not to assume a straightforward causal link between the culture and the crimes but it is thought that the areas highest in violent and weapon enabled crime will display the gun, gang and knife culture strongly.

Brent

Brent is in the North West of London. In the 2001 census Brent's population stood at 263,464. It has a substantial Asian and Black population. In 1999 Brent experienced a series of fatal shootings, including a high profile 'shoot-out' at the Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre, run by Brent Council (McLagan 2006: 59-60). Harlesden and Stonebridge have received media attention for gang activity. Metropolitan Police Figures for the 12 months up to March 2007 show 6,216 offences for violence against the person (182,355 Met Total) and 175 gun enabled crimes (3,375 Met total). Both of these figures represent a fall in crime levels from the previous year.

Hackney

Hackney is ranked 5 out of 354 local authorities in England in terms of average deprivation (Where 1 is most deprived). Within the Borough is a number of deprived housing estates, some gaining notoriety within the media include Clapton, Pembury and London Fields. The Borough has an ethnically diverse population. Hackney is known to have the much publicised gang the Hackney Boys operating from the Borough. Metropolitan Police Figures for the 12 months up to March 2007 show 7,148 offences for violence against the person (182,355 Met Total) and 155 gun enabled crimes (3,375 Met total). In the 12 months up to March 2006 the level of gun enabled crimes stood at 247.

Haringey

Haringey is located to the north of London and is 11 square miles in area. According to the 2001 Census nearly half of its 224,500 people came from ethnic

minority backgrounds with around 11% Caribbean, 10% African, 8% Asian and 5% Eastern European. Haringey is known to have the much publicised gang the Tottenham Man Dem (TMD). The TMD have been locked into an enduring rivalry with the Hackney Boys which is thought to have started in 1997 with the TMD shooting of a sixteen-year old schoolboy Guydance Dacres from Hackney, who was studying for his GCSE's which instigated a spiral of retaliation (McLagan 2006: 94). Metropolitan Police Figures for the 12 months up to March 2007 show 5,651 offences for violence against the person (182,355 Met Total) and 151 gun enabled crimes (3,375 Met total).

Lambeth

Lambeth is ranked 23 out of 354 local authorities in England in terms of average deprivation (Where 1 is most deprived). Lambeth is one of the most densely populated inner London boroughs, with a population of around 269,100 based on the 2001 Census. 38% of Lambeth's population comes from ethnic minorities, the seventh highest figure for a London borough. Areas of Lambeth which have attracted attention from the media for weapon enabled crime include Brixton, Streatham and Stockwell. Metropolitan Police Figures for the 12 months up to March 2007 show 8,344 offences for violence against the person (182,355 Met Total) and 251 gun enabled crimes (3,375 Met total).

Southwark

Southwark, South London is ranked 17 out of 354 local authorities in England in terms of average deprivation (Where 1 is most deprived). Within the Borough of Southwark is the ward of Peckham. A few highly publicised crimes have tarnished Peckham's reputation such as the murder of Damilola Taylor in November 2000, a multiple shooting outside Chicago's nightclub on Peckham High Street in July 2000 in which eight people were hit, five of them young women (McLagan 2006: 77) and three murders in February 2007 (including the murder of 15 year old Michael Dosunmu in his bedroom). Metropolitan Police Figures for the 12 months up to March 2007 show 8,435 offences for violence against the person (182,355 Met Total) and 264 gun enabled crimes (3,375 Met total).

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Race On The Agenda
Unit 101, 37 Cremer Business Centre
37 Cremer Street
London E2 8HD

020 7729 1310
020 7739 6712 (fax)
www.rota.org.uk

