

**Street Violence amongst Young Men
in London: everyday experiences of
masculinity and fear in public space**

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by

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Abstract

Arising out of widespread concerns that incidents of street violence amongst young people in the UK were spiralling out of control, this research draws on feminist deconstructions of the public-private space divide to emphasise the importance of a social constructionist perspective on street violence; street violence as it is experienced, understood and constructed by young people. Methodologically this research combines ethnography with Critical Discourse Analysis in what has been referred to as critical ethnography (Fairclough, 2001). Adopting a practitioner research approach within a primarily street based youth work setting, accounts were drawn from a range of sources, including interviews and participant observation with youth workers, young people and local public figures. This study draws out the implications for young men's subjective experiences of the inner city streets near where they live, focusing on the construction of masculinities in the context of political pressures and institutionalised discourses of young people. The young men in this research experienced uncertain and often fearful public spaces in which the ability to construct a credible propensity for violence was an essential part of a successful masculine identity. It is suggested that a significantly greater focus is required on critical gender identity work with young men, specifically in relation to their identity constructions in public space.

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1.0 Theoretical Framing of the Problem

1.1 Background to research

‘We can fashion institutions that generate less violence’
(Braithwaite and Daly, 1994, p. 245)

There are two important features of Braithwaite and Daly’s perspective on violence with which I found resonance and which are, therefore, insightful on my broad perspective on street violence and the particular approach I have adopted in researching it. Firstly, the quote above suggests that not only have our social institutions been ineffective when it comes to reducing levels of violence but that they may be viewed as culpable in its generation. This emphasis on social institutions challenges what appears to have become a default view of contemporary street violence amongst young people in London (and more widely) as being in some way attributable to a new breed of ‘feral’ young people (Bawdon, 2009). As such, my focus in exploring the problem will be on exploring sociological explanations which view the problem as a product of societal dysfunction, rather than psychological or biological explanations which are more likely to focus on explanations related to individual pathology (Clinard and Meier, 2011).

The second feature of Braithwaite and Daly’s perspective that appeals to me is that it offers the hope that we can ‘fashion institutions’ differently. Relating this to my research, I have approached the issue of street violence with a degree of optimism. Not a naïve optimism that a single solution can be found that will resolve the unnecessary death of teenagers on London’s streets, rather, that through a thorough and on-going exploration of the constantly shifting landscape of street violence we can hope to fashion societal institutions and, more specifically, public spaces within which young people fear less for their safety.

This research was initiated in 2008 during a period of significant national concern about levels of physical violence amongst young people, and particularly young men. There was general concern amongst members of the public and, unsurprisingly, the issue was also receiving significant political and media attention. Across most of 2007-2008 it was rare that popular tabloids did not carry a story relating to youth violence. Concern amongst politicians resulted in new measures being considered to tackle the problem, including tougher sentences for carrying and using knives (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2009). Police also heightened the intensity of their focus on young people's involvement in street violence particularly through the use of very visible measures such as the use of mobile knife arches (O'Neill 2008).

Within this wider context of national concern there are two key factors which resulted in my undertaking of this research. The first is that a bid for PhD bursary funding was granted by Brunel University, and the second relates to my own motivations for choosing to apply for that PhD post. At the time of applying to Brunel for the PhD research position I was working as a youth worker in a South London Borough. Given the level attention that the issue of street violence was receiving from politicians and national media it was not uncommon to be asked, as someone working with young people, what I thought the root causes of the problem were. Despite regular contact with young people for whom street violence was an all too regular occurrence I was not able to offer a reasonable answer to the question of causation or prevention. In particular, it frustrated me that I could not even say whether street violence was actually increasing or not. The other frustration was that I was unclear about how youth workers should best support young people. It seemed to me at the time that if this was something I was experiencing it was highly likely that many other professionals working with, and concerned about, young people were experiencing exactly the same lack of clarity. It was the pursuit

of greater clarity in relation to the ‘nature’ of the problem that first caused me to commit to this research project.

A full chapter-by-chapter outline will be provided at the end of this chapter, however, there is an important point to note at this stage in relation to the ethnographic approach adopted within this research and, more specifically, the implication this has for the presentation of literature within this thesis. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that a key feature of the ethnographic approach is a “*constant interplay between data and ideas throughout the research process*” (p. 159). People have compared the completion of a PhD to giving birth to a child. Having been through the child birth process twice over the course of completing this PhD, I would disagree. I would suggest that the PhD process is more akin to raising a child than giving birth to one. The research problem has, like my two children, become an integral part of my life. At times it has consumed me, frustrated me and even angered me. At points I have had to drive forward the development of ideas relating to the research problem with hard graft and immersion in the literature. At other points amazing insights and understandings have appeared unexpectedly and provided new direction for my enquiries. My intention here is not to present the research process as some sort of mystical journey, rather to suggest that, in my case at least, my understanding of the problem has developed through a constant process of dialogue between literature, data and ideas at every stage of the research process. I have attempted to reflect this dialogical process, and the resulting emergence of ideas, by adopting a chronological approach to the presentation of literature, rather than placing all of the literature in one ‘literature review’ chapter.

Chapter one, therefore, introduces literature which informed the epistemological perspective underpinning this research. Chapter two locates the problem geographically, demographically and professionally and, in doing so, introduces literature relating to the

professional context which was central to the data collection process. Chapter three is the chapter which most closely resembles a conventional literature review chapter. Here literature is explored which helped to develop my understanding of a number of concepts that were central to the precise focus of the research. Lastly, chapter 7 introduces literature which emerged mostly during and after data collection, and which informed my theorising of the research findings.

1.2 Framing the problem

In the mid-1800s the UK became gripped with fear after a series of ‘Garrotting’ attacks primarily in London but which also occurred in other cities around the country (Garrotting being the use of a rope, wire or scarf to strangle a person). At the same time the practice of transporting criminals to Australia came to an end swelling the numbers of the ‘criminal classes’ and adding further to the public’s fears of the growing numbers of criminals loose in the city. The ever present fog, which was so much a feature of Conan Doyle’s ‘Sherlock Holmes’ stories set in this period, was an effective metaphor for the uncertainty and danger, or even death, which was perceived by many to lurk in every back street and alleyway (Brimblecombe 1987, p.128). It was not just in fictional novels, however, that the activities of the ‘criminal class’ were documented, “*intrepid explorers of the slums and the 'rookeries' of the poor, like Henry Mayhew, often wrote of this 'class' as if its members belonged to some distinctive, exotic tribe of Africa or the Americas*” (BBC, 2012).

Public concerns in relation to the garrotting attacks, and the criminal classes more generally, were heightened through extensive coverage in both national and local newspapers and politicians pushed through legislation, such as the 1863 Security from Violence Act (known as the ‘Garrotters’ Act’), to enable the state to deal more effectively with the perceived threat to the public (Gray, 2010). These historical accounts resonate in many ways with the accounts of more recent

public concerns about street violence discussed above, and with similar concerns in many periods in-between. These recurring periods of 'Moral Panic' highlight the way in which street violence both shapes and is shaped by society's response to it. The relationship between societal concerns and levels of violence will be a recurring theme within this research.

Linguistically the word 'street', within the term 'street violence', serves as an adjective; it is used to give additional information about the type of violence being talked about. This is a basic but important starting point. The nature of the violence that is being discussed, how it is to be understood and importantly how it is to be tackled is dependent on the additional information given by the adjective 'street'. As Hall (1997) notes, language is a system of representations which we use to give meaning to the world around us; "*meaning does not inhere in things, in the world..it is constructed, produced*" (Hall 1997, p. 24). As such, the first step in understanding the nature of the street, and therefore the nature of street violence, will be to explore the way in which its meaning is constructed (and reconstructed) and by whom.

The use of street in describing a particular form of violence is perhaps most commonly thought to be an indicator of the physical location within which violence occurs; violence in the street. However, street could also be said to tell us something about the nature of the violence; violence of the street. The point here is that street has both material and symbolic significance and in order to understand the nature of street violence for an individual, a group, a community or a society it is essential to consider the processes through which the material and the symbolic are combined in the construction of the street.

It is possible to describe the physical elements which make up the street; the bricks, the paving slabs, the cement etc. We can map it and

identify its geographical boundaries, and we can use lengthy legal processes to reinforce the legitimacy of these geographical boundaries. However, despite having these ‘tools’ at our disposal to put boundaries on the material space around us, it is impossible to separate the material street from the symbolic representations which give it meaning. That is, our representations are both culturally and historically specific (Hall, 1997). This approach to understanding the world around us and, more specifically street violence, can be categorised as social constructionist. However, social constructionism is a very broad category which incorporates, informs and is informed by a wide range of theoretical perspectives. A discussion of its particular relevance to this piece of research, therefore, is important.

As a linguist Saussure’s primary focus was the way in which language functioned as a system of signs and he identified three core elements to this linguistic system; the sign itself, the signifier and the signified (Saussure et al, 1974). The linguistic sign, according to Saussure, was a combination of the signified and the signifier. Consider a ‘concept’ or a ‘thing’, for example, a street and the sound which represents that street; the sound we make when we speak the word street. In this instance the signified is the ‘concept’ or ‘thing’ and the signifier is not just the sound that represents that concept or thing but the psychological imprint of that sound. The sign then is the whole; ‘a two-sided psychological entity’ (ibid, p.66) consisting of the signified and the signifier. Importantly, Saussure emphasised the arbitrary nature of the sign, arbitrary not in the sense of being random but in the sense that the sets of concepts which we have developed to represent the world around us might have been structured very differently. That they have been structured in the way they have is a reflection of the kind of society we live in. Language therefore “*never exists apart from the social fact, for it is a semiological phenomenon*” (ibid, p. 77).

Later theorists such as Derrida, Foucault and Barthes, all influential thinkers in the development of social constructionism, added to Saussure's work. These authors, however, saw culture as a sort of 'language' and, as such, an important point of departure from the work of Saussure was in relation to the fixed nature of meaning (Burr, 1995). Roland Barthes, for example, focused on understanding the use of signs in culture and culture as a form of language. Barthes distinguished between denotation and connotation as different levels of analysis. He suggested that Saussure had focused primarily on denotation, the more literal or common-sense meaning of a sign, to the detriment of connotation; connotation referring to the more subtle, at times hidden, cultural meanings. Barthes paid particular attention to the hidden meaning in photographic representations claiming that "*in no other treatment does connotation assume so completely the 'objective' mask of denotation*" (Barthes 1986, p.10). In 'The Photographic Message' (1961) Barthes draws attention to aspects of connotation such as other objects in photos, the use of techniques such as lighting, exposure and printing and the relevance of syntax (Ribiere, 2008). The significance of connotation can be clearly seen in the difference between the two sample images in Figure 1.1. Both depict a 'street' yet each is imbued with different, culturally informed, meanings. Barthes' approach provided a framework for understanding the way in which these culturally informed meanings are constructed.



Figure 1.1: Differing representations of 'street'

Barthes makes a valuable, although perhaps not immediately obvious point linking representation and street violence in his essay titled 'Representation- The Greek Theater' (1986). In this essay Barthes gives a detailed description of 5th century Greek Theater, and concludes that a spectacle such as this "*assumes its meaning only when it is integrated into the material life of its users*" (ibid, p. 76). Although we might be able to reconstruct a piece of Greek Theater, the true meaning of the performance lies not in the detail of the performance but in its cultural and historical significance. Street violence, as with Greek Theater, is 'performed' within a historically and culturally specific context. From a social constructionist perspective then, we can only fully understand acts of violence by understanding the cultural and historical context within which they are perpetrated; "*realistically, how can we understand violence without understanding what it means to the offender?*" (Messerschmidt 1999,p. 198)

Michael Foucault has had a significant influence on social constructionist thinking by shifting the focus from language to discourse, as a system of representation. For Foucault discourse is about the production of knowledge through language where certain discourses rule in particular ways of talking about things whilst ruling out other ways of talking about things (Foucault, 1990). An issue such as street violence for Foucault only exists meaningfully within the discourses about it.

"According to Foucault, what we think we 'know' in a particular period about, say, crime has a bearing on how we regulate, control and punish criminals. Knowledge does not operate in a void. It is put to work, through certain technologies and strategies of application, in specific situations, historical contexts and institutional regimes" (Hall 1997, p. 49).

Foucault was particularly interested in exploring the historical evolution of particular technologies and strategies of knowledge (Foucault, 1972; 1977) in order to demonstrate the ways in which

discourses are mobilised to control social practices. Whilst Foucault's work on discourse analysis provides a powerful tool for deconstructing young people's experiences of fear and violence in public spaces, Foucault's extreme relativist position does not allow for a consideration of street violence other than as existing linguistically (Foucault 1970). Foucault's position suggests that "*we cannot establish an epistemology for determining what is real or imaginary, because such an epistemology would itself be a discourse with conditions of existence*" (Eve et al 1997, p. 8). However, Foucault was not prescriptive in how his ideas might be used, viewing them as a 'tool box' that might be drawn on in different ways. His ideas have been widely adopted, and adapted, within the constructivist tradition by those who share his relativist position, but also by those who would seek to put Foucault's toolbox to use from a critical realist perspective. The contributions of these critical realist perspectives in informing my methodological approach will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.3 Towards a research question

One of the most immediately obvious points which became apparent through an initial exploration of the wider body of literature on street violence in London is that it is not a new phenomenon. From Dickens' London of the 1800s through to the Teds, Mods, Rockers, Punks and Skin heads of 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's London, the issue of street violence amongst young people has been a consistent concern for the city's residents (Gray, 2010; Pearson, 1983; Roy and Porter, 1994; White, 2008). A central feature in both historical and contemporary accounts of street violence in London is the significance of its socially constructed meaning, an issue which is culturally informed and historically located (Cohen 1972; Cohen, 1985; Hall, 1997; Back, 2004). Research such as that conducted by Fyfe and Bannister (1998), Moore (2008), Goldsmith (2008) and Minton (2008) along with writings such as Svendsen's (2008) 'A Philosophy of Fear' all, either

directly or indirectly, highlight growing perceptions of fear in British society and suggest that the desire for an ever sanitised public space experience is impacting on efforts to manage young people within and out of public space. However, little is known about how this climate of fear is impacting on young people's experiences of public space. In particular, there is a gap in the literature looking specifically at the extent to which levels of fear and marginalisation amongst young men in public space may be impacting on levels of street violence.

The initial stages of my literature review focused on a considerable number of enquiries and research reports investigating the issues of knife, gun and gang related violence. These reports will be discussed in more detail within Chapter 3, but at this point I would highlight a number of key points relating to street violence in London, which have been a significant influence in the development of a research aim and research question. Firstly, knife, gun and gang related violence within the UK are not, contrary to popular belief and media representations, 'spiralling out of control' (Eades et al, 2007, refs). The second point of note is that whilst gun and gang related violence require concerted efforts on behalf of the police to tackle them effectively, they still only account for a small percentage of deaths and injuries amongst young people (Young et al, 2007). Thirdly, evidence suggests that numbers of young people carrying knives is on the increase, although there is some debate as to whether knife related deaths and injuries are on the increase (Booth et al, 2008, Eades et al, 2007).

Given there has been no significant change in the availability of knives in recent years, any increase in the numbers of young people carrying knives is unlikely to be supply-related. That is, it is not the result of a sudden increase in the availability of knives as they have been readily available in kitchen drawers or from local supermarkets for some time. An increase in knife carrying, therefore, is more likely to be related to some other non-supply related factor, and the most

commonly cited reason for young people carrying weapons, of one sort or another, is for protection (Young et al, 2007, Lockhart et al, 2007)

However, little is known about men's experiences of fear in public space. In particular, there is a gap in the literature looking specifically at the extent to which levels of fear and marginalisation amongst young men in public space may be impacting on levels of street violence. The following research aim and research question are intended to gain a better understanding of young men's experiences of fear in urban public spaces and how this may relate to their involvement in street violence.

Research aim:

To explore how interpersonal physical violence perpetrated by young men against young men in London's public spaces relates to their experiences of fear in public space?

Research question:

How do young men talk about their experiences of public space and what resources do they draw on in managing fear and/or marginalisation in public space?

Based on this aim and question an important focus for data collection was on young people's experiences of the cultural and historical contexts within which they experienced street violence. The particular approach adopted to achieve this will be discussed in more detail within the research design section. Before doing that, however, I will provide an additional insight into my own background, as this background has informed the development of this research at every level.

1.4 Researcher background

I am a white Irish male who, was born and grew up in a middle class family in Dublin, Ireland, where I lived until I was aged 23. I trained as a youth worker in Ireland and worked there for 2 years before moving to Sydney, Australia, where I lived for 3 years. While in Sydney I spent most of my time working as a youth worker. At the time of starting this research, had lived in the UK for 10 years, all of which had been spent working as a youth worker.

At the outset of my career in youth, when on my very first youth work placement in Ireland, I was asked by my line manager what I wanted to achieve through my placement to which I naively responded ‘I want to help people’. What followed was a series of debates about what it means to ‘help’ people and the significance of this for my role as a youth worker. The people I am debating with today have changed and the arguments have become more complex but the same underlying question of what youth workers should be trying to do with or for young people continues to challenge me.

Periods of crisis, however, can be important in sharpening the perspective of an individual on what their priorities are and I had such a moment in 2007 when I was employed by a London Borough as a youth worker. Within this role I managed a small staff team and between us we ran 4 youth clubs across a number of disadvantaged communities. On a particular evening one of the youth clubs was open but I had left work and the club was being run by a number of the regular part-time staff. I was on my way to meet with a friend when I got a phone call from one of the youth workers to say that there had been a shooting outside the youth club and that one of the staff members had been shot.

The incident occurred when two staff had gone out of the club to break up a fight between some young people. At that point another

young person appeared with a shotgun which he fired into the group, hitting a young person and one of the youth workers. What followed was a number of extremely challenging weeks and months when, as a staff team, we attempted to deal with the fall-out from this incident. A central focus for me over the following months was supporting the staff member who had been shot as she dealt with her physical injuries. Additionally she faced the challenge of weighing up the moral obligation she felt to testify against the young person who shot her, against the very real personal danger that testifying presented.

As a staff team we were determined to get the youth club open again and to do what we could to continue to provide a youth service to young people in the community. Yet, it felt to me at the time that we were doing this because it was what we knew to do. It became clear to me at this time that there were significant shortcomings in my understanding of how young people experienced violence, the role it played in their lives and, in particular, what youth workers should do to support young people who experience violence. It is this perceived shortcoming that has driven me in conducting this research. The outcome of the research then, is important in as much as it contributes to youth work practitioners' understandings of and responses to street violence.

1.5 Research Design

In the interest of gaining a better understanding of young men's subjective experiences of public space an ethnographic approach was used for its ability, through researcher immersion, to capture the social and cultural significance that ordinary activities hold for individuals and groups (Brewer 2000). Specifically, this involved spending two evenings per week (3hrs per evening) over an 8 month period working with a team of street-based youth workers observing and talking with young people in a number of public spaces in a south London Borough. Street-based youth work represented an ideal

vehicle for conducting ethnographic research because of its emphasis on going out to meet with young people ‘where they were at’.

In addition to these street-based sessions data was gathered by spending 3-6 hours on a weekly basis in and around a youth club setting over a 12 month period. During these sessions notes were taken on observations of young people’s interactions in public space in addition to noting discussions and comments from the young people themselves about their experiences in public space. Participants were limited to those young people who happen to be in the areas I visited at the times I visited them. However, a number of measures were taken to improve the chances of making contact with a selection of young people that was broadly representative of the demographics of the area.

Where more consistent contact was established with individuals or groups of young people attempts were made to set up either individual interviews or focus group discussions. These were used to talk in more detail with young people about their experiences of fear in public space. Within focus groups ‘social (or sketch) mapping’ techniques were used to provide a more participatory and less intimidating way for young people to convey the meaning that public space holds for them (Craig et al 2002, Travlou et al 2008). Observations and discussions were noted retrospectively, as soon as practically possible after data collection sessions. Data was transferred from written to digital format within ‘NVivo’ qualitative data analysis software, which was used as an aide in coding and analysing the data. Data analysis adopted a discourse analysis approach in exploring young people’s constructions of fear in public spaces.

A number of specific outcomes were expected from the research. Firstly, at a local level the research was expected to offer youth providers based in the research location an insight into the needs of

young people in local communities. In particular, it was expected to provide direction for organisations looking to carry out preventative work with young people at risk of engaging in knife crime. Secondly, it was expected that the use of social mapping within the research could offer street based youth workers an example of an alternative method for exploring and sharing young people's public space experiences. Finally, it was expected that, through conference presentations and publications, the research would contribute to policy discourses on youth violence, in particular to prompt further discussion on the role of fear in influencing young people's weapons carrying practices.

1.6 Overview chapter by chapter

In total this thesis contains 7 chapters, this being the first. Chapter 2 will focus on the research context. Given the ethnographic approach adopted within the research it is considered essential to outline aspects of the specific historical and cultural context within which the ethnographic observations took place. Discussion within this chapter will describe the physical layout of the research location in addition to the demographics of the population that lived there. The area's history will also be discussed by way of highlighting how it has been shaped by significant periods in its history. As a youth worker with my own historical connection to the research location, it was considered important to discuss how this history has informed the research process. Some of the challenges associated with being both a practitioner and a researcher are discussed and implications identified for the other aspects of the research process. Some reflections on my relationship with members of the youth work team are discussed and implications for data collection are highlighted. Information on where young people 'hung out' and when is also discussed as it provides an important backdrop to some of the more specific insights in later chapters. Finally, Chapter 2 considers some of the challenges presented by the collection of data in a street based location.

Chapter 3 begins by discussing the challenges associated with defining and measuring violence and outlines the definition of violence to be adopted within this research. The rest of Chapter 3 is divided into two sections. The first of these reviews a broad range of reports and publications concerned with young people's involvement in street violence. The focus in reviewing this literature was on identifying levels and patterns of young men's involvement in street violence. The second half of this chapter focuses on the context within which urban violence is perpetrated by drawing on insights from Social Geography. Finally, the chapter considers a specific example of an approach to understanding and questioning violence which has been informative in the development of this research.

Chapter 4 considers the methodology and methods adopted within this research. The chapter starts with a discussion of ethnography, and the particular approach to this ethnographic research is outlined. Criticisms of the ethnographic approach are identified and discussed. The data collection process is discussed providing greater detail on aspects such as the amount of participants, the range of participants, the data collection locations, the methods employed and the expected variations in data. A number of ethical considerations are discussed and measures taken to minimise risk are outlined. The chapter finishes by discussing how the data was analysed with the use of Nvivo data analysis software.

Data analysis is presented across two chapters, Chapters 5 and 6. The content of these chapters is split on the basis of an aspect of discourse analysis which was central to the data analysis process, subject positioning. Chapter 5 discusses how young people's presence in public space is constructed in the discourses mobilised by local officials, media sources and within the text of public space. Chapter 6 considers, in the context of this wider positioning, what subject positions young people themselves adopted. In particular, it explores

the relationship between young men's constructions of successful public space identities and their involvement in physical violence.

The final chapter begins with a discussion of what Fairclough (2001) describes as the '*social conditions of discourse production*'. Here the focus is on identifying how the discursive analysis outlined within Chapters 5 and 6 relates to the wider social context and, particularly, the connections between language, power and ideology. The role of physical violence in young men's constructions of 'successful' masculinities is also considered within Chapter 7. Key findings from the research are identified and discussed before outlining a number of specific final conclusions.

2.0 Locating the Research- geographically, demographically and professionally

This chapter will describe the context within which this research was conducted. Given the emphasis that will be evident throughout this research on the significance of the cultural and historical context within which violence is enacted and experienced, it is considered important to take some time to explore a number of features of the research context which shaped the data collection process in a variety of different ways.

The research context will be discussed in two sections. The first of these will focus on providing a broad overview of the research setting, exploring aspects such as the demographics of the local area, local history and distinguishing features of the organisational setting where much of the data was collected. The second section will focus more specifically on relevant aspects of the researcher's engagement with the research setting.

2.1 The research setting

The setting for my data collection was a London Borough situated on the south side of the River Thames, which will be referred to here as River Borough. Whilst River Borough ranks in the top 50 most deprived of England's 326 local authorities (DfCLG 2010), like many London Boroughs it experiences significant variations both across and within the various wards which form its internal administrative boundaries. The pretty parks and leafy streets of River Borough's more affluent communities to the south of the borough can seem very far removed from the higher density and higher rise surrounds of the more edgy north side of the borough.

Although data collection did not stick strictly to particular ward boundaries, for the purposes of providing an overview of levels of

deprivation within the area there are three Wards and twenty-four Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) for which Indices of Deprivation data has been collected. Based on the Department of Communities and Local Government Indices of Deprivation (2010) two of the twenty-four LSOAs that made up the data collection area, Dock Town, were in the top 10% most deprived in England; ten, or just under half, were in the top 20% most deprived in England and 19 were in the top 30% most deprived. Only three of the twenty-four LSOAs were outside the top 50% most deprived.

Compared to national averages Dock Town's population in the 0-29 age group is a little above average but it is more closely aligned with the London average (Figure 2.1). In relation to Dock Town's ethnic diversity, its percentage of ethnic minorities is much higher than the national average, although this would be expected within an inner London Borough. A point of note however, is that Dock Town's white population (60%) was higher than the Borough average (52%) (Figure 2.2). Whilst there are many factors which may have impacted on this statistic the possible link to issues of racism in the area should be noted and are discussed further below.

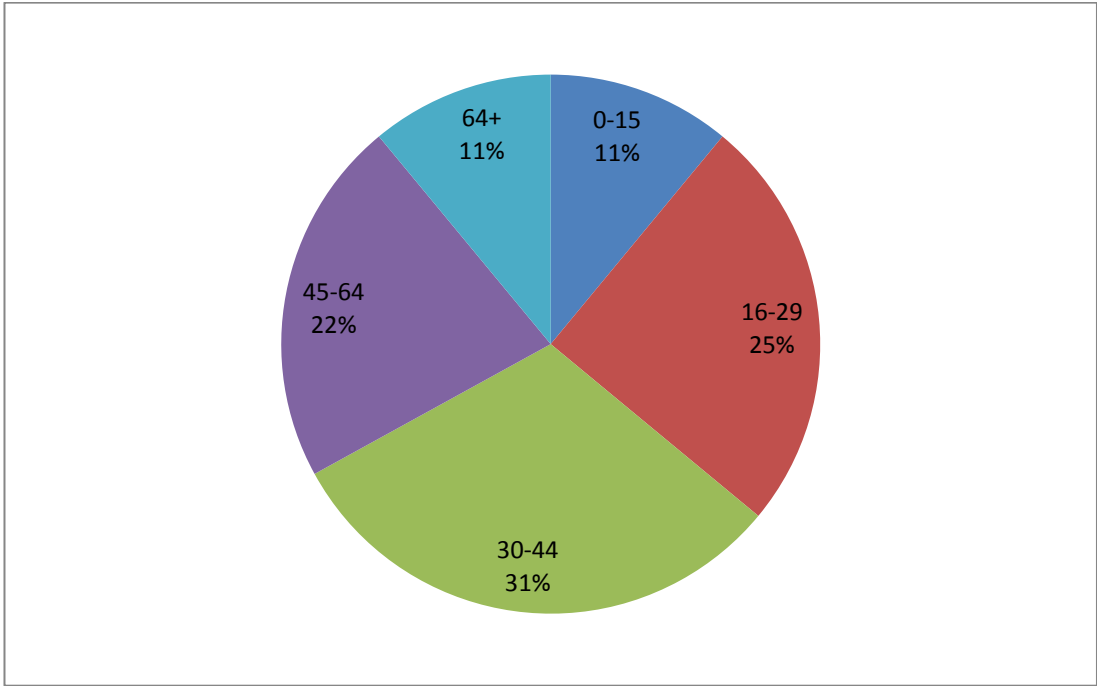


Figure 2.1: Dock Town Population by Age (ONS 2001)

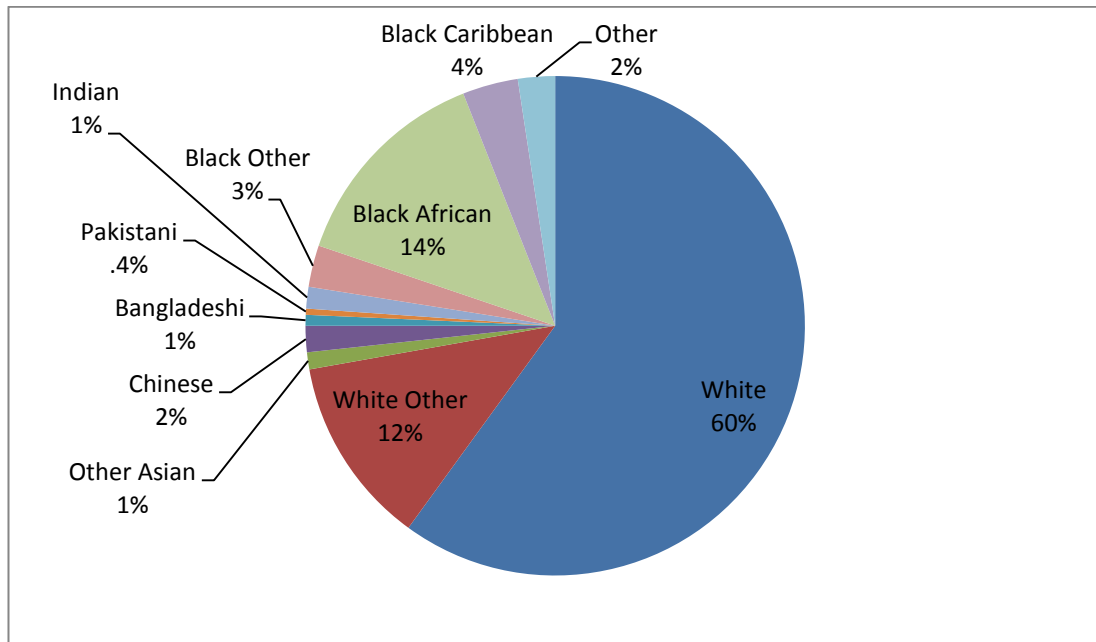


Figure 2.2: Dock Town Population by Ethnic Group (ONS 2001)

Dock Town, is a district in the north of River Borough which, up until the mid-1960s, was a Borough in its own right. Although it has now been *absorbed* into the administration of River Borough, many of its residents, older and younger, still retain a very strong sense of local identity. An in-depth exploration of the rich history of Dock Town is beyond the scope of my discussions here, however, a brief overview of a number of key points in its history will add depth to discussions within subsequent chapters.

As the statistics above highlight, Dock Town would still not be described as a wealthy community, however, living conditions for its residents today are a far cry from the appalling conditions of abject poverty experienced by many of its residents in the 19th and 20th centuries. At that time, and right up to its eventual demise in the mid to late 20th century, the river trade and the Docklands industries formed an essential part of the area's economy and also helped to

shape its cultural identity. However, with the gradual decline of trade passing through the inner London Docklands the community lost both a source of income and a source of identity. Despite its hardships, or perhaps in spite of them, Dock Town's residents retained a strong sense of local identity which, in the post war years, was to become more sharply defined along racial lines as a large Afro-Caribbean population settled in the area as part of government post-war recovery initiatives. While the openly racist and confrontational National Front marches which were once a relatively regular occurrence on the streets of Dock Town no longer happen, the experiences of some of the young people I talked to in the course of this study would suggest that you do not have to dig too deep to reveal some of these underlying racial tensions.

Since the 'influx' of immigrants in the post war years Dock Town has experienced numerous subsequent migrant groups, each of whom has in their own way contributed to Dock Town's cultural tapestry. In more recent years, the extension of a London Underground line to the area has resulted in a different type of influx to Dock Town. Many of the remaining riverside Dock Buildings, which once housed some of the country's poorest people, have now been gentrified by the many well-paid city workers who have chosen to settle in the area because of its proximity to the City of London and riverside views. Authors such as Ware (1992), Cohen (1999) and Back (2004) have all explored the processes of settlement and resettlement that accompany the continual ebb and flow of population change in London.

From the earliest part of the 20th century Dock Town Youth Club (DTYC) has had a presence in Dock Town. It was originally set up by a Reverend as a 'mission club', intended to bring both spiritual and physical healing to the impoverished residents of Dock Town and surrounding areas. Since its foundation in the early 1900s the youth club's physical presence has gradually grown, to the point that it is now one of the biggest youth clubs in the country. Inside the youth

club the nature of the support offered to the local community has also changed significantly over the years. Its Christian mission, however, has remained a corner stone of DTYC's work in Dock Town.

In choosing a suitable data collection location I had some initial reservations about DTYC as I was concerned that its Christian ethos might overshadow my data collection. That is, I was concerned that if the staff were too evangelical in their approach this might make some young people, or groups of young people, reluctant to talk with me. While it is impossible to say that no young people were deterred in this way, my experiences during data collection did not suggest that it presented a significant barrier. While the question of 'faith' arose in my discussions with some of the other youth workers and I sensed that there was a degree of curiosity in relation to my own religious beliefs, the staff team did not adopt an evangelical approach in their contact with young people outside the club.

Another important point of reflection in the early stages of the data collection, and one which would remain a consideration throughout, was my own professional background in Dock Town. About a year before starting data collection I had given up a full time youth development worker post with River Borough Council which I had held for about 4 years. Having this connection with the Borough, and more specifically with Dock Town, gave me some background knowledge to the local community and enabled me, for example, to secure the support of DTYC more readily. My post had been largely organisational with minimal direct work with young people in Dock Town and I considered this to be both helpful and unhelpful from a data collection perspective. There were times when I felt that being more familiar with some of the young people would have helped in initiating conversations. However, I also considered it useful to have had to work at building rapport with young people and not to be too influenced by what I might have already felt I understood about their experiences.

The *history* I had with River Borough and Dock Town also resulted in a small number of encounters with previous colleagues which might best be described as mildly uncomfortable or awkward. For example, when I met my previous line manager at the outset of my data collection and she realised that I had chosen to do my data collection at DTYC, as opposed to with River Borough's youth work team, she appeared to be somewhat put out, as the notes from my research journal indicate:

“She seemed to have concerns on a number of levels. Initially she wanted to be sure that I wasn't coming in building relationships with young people and then leaving without any feedback, and leaving the young people without any feedback on their needs. She also expressed concerns about the fact that I was working with DTYC, I wondered if she had expected that I might do my research with the youth service. She appeared to be suggesting that DTYC was empire building and that they were going to use me and my research along the way” (Meeting with Youth Service- 03-11-09)

While future encounters with this same manager over the course of my data collection suggested that she did not hold any significant grudge, the incident made me more aware of the balancing act I needed to play between making the most of previous contacts and being constrained by these same contacts.

Before discussing some of the early encounters I had with the other staff at Dock Town in the early stages of data collection it is important to provide an overview of what youth work is and of the particular approach to youth work adopted by the staff team that I worked with during data collection.

At its most general youth work seeks to support young people in their transition from childhood to adulthood, although more specific definitions and role descriptions exist, such as that offered within the National Occupation Standards for Youth Work:

“Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential”

(Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2012)

Accompanying this stated purpose are 5 core values, 41 standards and over a hundred specific indicators of good practice. More widely much has been written about specific aspects of youth work practice. Davies (2010), for example, considers youth work practice and principles against the backdrop of neoliberal policy agendas; Sercombe (2010) and Banks (2010) discuss the importance of ethical youth work practice; Westergaard (2009) provides guidance on group work with Young people; Jeffs and Smith (2010) highlight the significance of informal education within youth work; and Maguire (2009) looks at what youth workers need to know about the Law. However, despite what are reasonably well established national youth work institutions and a substantial body of literature exploring its methods and practices, there is much debate both from within and outside the profession on exactly what makes one piece of work with young people youth work and another not (Davies, 2010; House of Commons Education Committee, 2011).

Without wanting to get side tracked with this issue, the important point to make here is that the range of individuals and organisations that might position themselves under this heading is extremely mixed and varied and, as a result, encompasses an equally varied range of relationships with young people. Youth services in the UK have always been provided by an eclectic mix of statutory and voluntary sector providers, however, the pattern of provision within local authorities in England since the 1960s has tended to involve a significant core ‘universal service’ provided directly by local authorities and supported by a range of voluntary sector organisations. The significant cuts experienced within the sector as a result of the

on-going financial crisis, and related austerity measures, combined with neoliberal policy agendas has resulted in a broader mix of third sector and, more recently, private sector providers pursuing a more targeted, ‘problem solving’ style of youth service provision (Davies 1999, 2010).

The specific youth work approach adopted by the youth workers that I worked alongside during data collection might generally speaking be described as street-based youth work. As the title suggests, this approach to youth work involves spending time on the streets making contact with young people. The streets, or outdoor public spaces, were the primary work base. However, in the UK there is a distinction drawn between two types of street based youth work; outreach and detached. While in practice the dividing line between these approaches is often quite blurred (Whelan, 2010), the principle of the distinction is worth noting as it had a bearing on the specific youth work project I chose to work with. The role of outreach youth workers is to meet with young people, generally speaking in public spaces, with the specific purpose of encouraging them to become involved in a particular project. As such, outreach youth workers are said to have a clearly defined pre-determined agenda when they meet with young people.

Detached youth workers traditionally distinguish themselves from outreach, and other forms of youth work, through their detachment. Detached workers attempt to achieve a degree of institutional and organisational detachment in order that their work priorities might be led by young people, as opposed to by organisational or institutional priorities. Crimmens et al (2004) define detached youth work as an approach to youth work which,

“Endeavours to provide a broad-based, open ended, social education in which the problems and issues to be dealt with, and the manner in which they are dealt with, emerges from dialogue between the young person and the youth worker” (p. 14).

Detached youth workers are said therefore to be more willing to negotiate with young people on questions of power and control (Tiffany, 2007). As has been suggested above, factors such as funding imperatives and outcome targets mean that not many, if any, detached youth workers could be said to achieve the stated *ideal* of attaining institutional and organisational detachment. The principle, however, had resonance with my desire to gain an insight into young people's subjective experiences of Dock Town's public spaces; it offered an approach which would be supportive in enabling me to make contact with young people on the streets whilst not being excessively directive or controlling about the way in which I went about this.

2.2 The youth work team

The starting point for my work with the detached team was to run a number of training and planning sessions with the staff who would be involved in supporting the research. This was, in essence, a coming together of my research priorities with the work priorities of the host organisation, and the individual staff members who would be supporting the work. The sessions were facilitated by me, a point I was pleased about at the time. I felt it would give me a degree of freedom to ensure that we planned the work in a way that complimented the research process. It was clear as the data collection process continued that this 'leadership' role did, as anticipated, give me a high degree of freedom in determining the direction of the work, however, it also presented challenges, as is evident in an early e-mail exchange with Joe, the DTYC lead youth worker for street based youth work.

Joe: 'With respect this isn't my piece of work a lot of planning has already gone into this and I have been asked to get involved, I am very happy to do so but this wasn't my plan or vision so can't say I feel comfortable in taking the lead or at least not yet' (E-mails, 22-10-09).

Michael: 'You're absolutely right in saying that it's not your piece of work, it's a partnership piece of work

between myself as a researcher with Brunel and DTYC. I suppose what I was trying to say was that you will lead the DTYC side of this partnership. If you feel that that's an accurate statement then what we need to iron out when we meet is what that will mean in terms of your responsibilities and my responsibilities and then make sure that the rest of the staff team are clear on this'(E-mails, 23-10-09).

Joe: *'Thanks for your email makes more sense now, Yeah would be good to meet next week Tuesday works best for me between 12 and 4pm?'*
(E-mails, 23-10-09).

The change in Joe's attitude towards the project is very noticeable. Initially it is clear he feels he has been pushed into this piece of work and does not view it as his piece of work. Joe's second e-mail, on the other hand, shows a clear shift in his outlook. He is clearly more relaxed and shows a move from being what I read as disgruntled to more relaxed and willing to engage in a discussion about joint working. Despite the clarity that might have been gained through these early discussions, at times Joe and Sonia, the other core members of the detached team, were inclined to sit back somewhat, seeing me as the 'expert' or lead worker. This may have also been compounded by the good working relationship I had with DTYC's chief executive, and their line manager, who was very supportive of the research and gave me a lot of flexibility in determining how the partnership work would be taken forward. This aspect of my working relationship with DTYC's detached workers was highlighted at a point 2 months into the street based observations when the other two workers were still approaching groups of young people with a degree of reluctance. An entry in my research journal reads:

'As we approached there was a conversation between Joe and Sonia about who was going to do the leafleting. I felt a sense of frustration that at this stage in the work there was still a reluctance to engage with young people'
(Detached Observations, 13-05-10).

The following week I note:

‘Although both Joe and Sonia talk about the detached work in a way that suggests they have taken it on board it seems at other times that they are somewhat removed from it, possibly seeing it still as my piece of work’ (Detached Observations, 17-05-10).

From a research perspective it was in my interest to support DTYC’s workers in taking greater ownership of the detached work; their active engagement would broaden the range of young people we talked to and, ultimately, would help to advance the research outcomes. However, becoming overly pre-occupied with staff development issues would have shifted my focus and detracted from the research outcomes. Achieving this balance was a regular point of reflection within my research journal. A good example of this tension can be seen in my reflections on the evaluations I conducted with the detached team members, the following being an example:

“I find Joe and Sonia reluctant to analyse the session in any great detail. It seems to be me looking for the detail in the small encounters we have. I get the feeling at times that if I said nothing they would just note what we did and leave it at that. I will need to draw this out of them or possibly challenge them on this if they do not start to be a little more proactive with this” (Detached observations- 31/11/09).

It is normal practice for youth workers to conduct an evaluation at the end of a session working with young people. The purpose of the evaluation is to reflect on practice and to consider the support that young people might need from staff. It is an aspect of practice that youth workers focus quite heavily on within their professional training, and its absence in this case was a source of frustration for me. Whilst more in-depth reflections would have been helpful from a data collection perspective, too much time spent on ‘challenging’ professional practice would have detracted from my focus on my primary focus, young people’s experiences of public space. In reflecting on this tension throughout the research my focus was always on ensuring that, on the one hand, I took advantage of the working relationships I had with the detached workers and the insights

these relationships offered on young people's experiences, whilst also ensuring that any more substantial or demanding staff development issues remained the responsibility of DTYC management and staff. Challenges associate with practitioner-research are discussed further within Chapter 4.

2.3 Day to day work

With the initial training, planning and preparation work completed we began our work on the streets. Our initial intention was for each session to last 3 hrs. A session being the term typically used by youth workers to refer to a planned period of time spent working with young people. A session would normally include some time working 'face-to-face' with young people in addition to some planning time at the start and reflection time at the end. The three hour street based session then, was to consist of 30 minutes conducting a briefing among the 3 staff and carrying out any preparation at the start, 2hrs on the streets and 30 minutes debriefing among the staff at the end, as is usually good practice in youth work. Debriefing would involve sitting as a team and talking about how the session went and recording these reflections in writing on a standardised session recording form. In practice these timings varied greatly depending on how much there was to talk about before or after a session, how many young people we met on the streets and how severe or mild the weather was. Most of the sessions were from 6pm to 9pm on a Monday and Wednesday, although these days and timings were varied on numerous occasions either to see if other young people were around at different times of the day or because of staffing issues.

While five staff members took part in the initial training and planning for the project, it was always envisaged that there would be a core team, myself, Joe and Sonia, with a number of additional staff who could be called on as and when they were needed. Our focus over the first two weeks was not to attempt to make contact with young people

but to walk around as many areas as possible within Dock Town to see where young people were gathering, what age groups we could see and what sort of activities they were engaged in. The point of this exercise was to begin to make an assessment of which areas we would be best focusing on. The decisions in relation to the range of locations considered and the aims that had been set out for the development of its street based youth work project:

- To engage with young people who are not already engaged with other services, and identify needs that we can support them with
- Understand more about how young people experience public space
- Build a solid base of knowledge within the team about the local support services available to young people
- Build stronger and more positive relationships between DTYC and the wider community

Over this time we also visited a range of youth projects in the area to make them aware of our presence and to see if they had any information about where young people were gathering or ‘issues’ that they felt we should be aware of. I should clarify that by ‘issues’ I mean any information relating to the needs of young people in the local community that they felt we, as a team of detached youth workers, might be able to respond to. This information was also relevant to my data collection. In practice much of the early stage engagements with other providers focused less on discussing young people’s needs and more on negotiating our respective positions. That is, some providers were keen to work in partnership with us, in which case our focus tended to be on assessing the extent to which our work might be affected by such partnership work. On the other hand, there were some providers that we were keen to develop links with who showed anything from apathy to disgruntled opposition at the suggestion of engaging in partnership work. The quotes below provide some insight into both of these extremes.

'At this point James [Tower Youth Club manager] asked us to go with him to the office where we had the most abrupt conversation possibly I have ever had with a colleague from another youth provision. James emphasized that he had talked with Steve [DTYC youth work manager] recently about their [partnership] work and that all his dealings would go through Steve. I knew immediately that he was not interested in any discussion [about partnership working]' (Detached Observations, 11-11-09).

'Some pressure was put on us before and after the meeting to meet with the new Targeted Youth Support team who will be involved in detached work. I felt politically it would be wise to agree to this although it seems that they still don't have a very clear idea of what they are doing at the moment.' (Youth Provider Meeting, 26-11-09)

As the work progressed it became clearer through team reflections who was willing or eager to engage in partnership work with us and who was not, and we attempted to develop these links either through specific initiatives or through casual contacts during our regular walking route around the area. This route took us around all of the main council estates in Dock Town, as our initial observations and information gathering led us to believe that these estates were the areas where we were most likely to meet young people. We did, however, also attempt, at least occasionally, to go to areas where we might not anticipate meeting young people so as not narrow our focus too much. On occasions the initiative to vary our routine in this way came from DTYC staff whilst on other occasions it was something I initiated in the interest of enhancing my data. Over time a cross fertilisation of ideas began to emerge with me suggesting ideas to the DTYC staff about ways that they might improve or advance their street based work with young people and the DTYC staff making suggestions to me about aspects of young people's experiences of fear in public space worth considering within my research.

At a very practical level, when we met a new group one of us would approach them and tell them where we were from and what we were

doing. The exact wording of this explanation varied but it generally centred on us telling the young people that we were youth workers and we were meeting with young people out on the streets to see if there was any support we could provide them with. As mentioned previously, I did not immediately identify myself as a researcher, this information tended to come out as contact with young people developed.

The reception we received from young people varied from reasonable levels of enthusiasm to indifference. When groups were not interested in talking with us they had a variety of different ways of indicating this from running away, to laughing or joking about us or even kicking footballs in our direction. Both extremes of young people's responses are highlighted in the quotes below.

'As we talked one of the boys who came out of the bookie [bookmakers] came over and asked this young person for a smoke. He took out a new packet of cigarettes and gave him one out of it. As the older boy was waiting for the smoke he was looking at me wondering who I was, he looked at me and I said 'How's it going', knowing he was unlikely to want to engage in any discussion, he didn't respond in any way but looked to one of the younger boys and asked who we were. When the younger boy explained that we were from DTYC he almost immediately turned away in an exaggerated way to highlight that he didn't want to engage with us in any way' (Detached Observations, 21-04-10).

'We went into the football area and chatted for a couple of minutes and then it seemed that the young people made an assumption we were up for [keen or eager about] playing football and began making up teams. We went along with this and within a few minutes we were playing a game again' (Detached Observations, 03-03-10).

For the most part, young people were at least willing to tolerate our presence, however, on one occasion we were reminded of the fact that we were outsiders in the estates and communities we were working in and that we should not mistake tolerance for acceptance. I noted the following in one of my journal entries:

“There was no one in the lower football area but we [the detached team staff] sat eating chips and chatting at the side of the cage. I felt that it was helpful to be able to sit here and see if young people came along and I had a sense that we were starting to be more relaxed in the area. I even made the comment to the others that the 4 Blocks Estate has a bad reputation yet we hadn’t experienced any problems and could sit without problem in the middle of it eating our chips. No sooner had I said this than a battery was thrown from somewhere and landed on the ground near us. It made reasonable noise when it landed which made me think it had been thrown from one of the flat windows above. We chose to ignore this first incident and sat chatting, trying to look calm but soon another battery was thrown. At this point we felt it was a good idea to move on as if one of them hit us they would most likely hurt or do some real damage if it hit one of us in the head” (Detached observations- 07/04/10)

As a team of workers, we had a lot of time when we were walking around looking for but not necessarily finding any young people, especially during the particularly cold winter months. In this time we talked about a variety of issues from individual staff members personal lives to tensions and conflicts among the staff team at DTYC. This was also helpful time for reflecting on the work we were doing, discussing points such as the needs of the young people we were engaging with or ways we could alter or improve our work. Given that we often had a lot of time on the streets to have these types of discussions, it was not uncommon to find when we went back to the club to review our session that there was little left to talk about.

Despite the previously mentioned tension between myself and the detached team around leadership or ownership of the work, one of the most satisfying points of our reflections was the common agenda that existed between the youth workers and myself as a researcher. Ultimately, we were both focused on engaging with young people in public space so that we might learn more about their public space experiences, albeit for different reasons. This point was specifically

noted by staff in one of the team reviews conducted over the course of data collection:

“The team commented that they found the process of getting to know the community very useful for their work with young people, both inside and outside the centre. The type of community knowledge that the team talked about as being useful included: the physical layout of the area, the range of youth providers located in the area and the services they offer, the types of environments that young people ‘hang-out’ in and the community ‘issues’ (violence, family problems, theft etc.) that they have witnessed by spending time in the community” (Detached team review-July 2010)

DTYC was interested in using the knowledge gained to develop youth work interventions that might directly respond to needs identified by young people. Whilst this was a valuable outcome from the research partnership, it was not my immediate concern. The following sections provide an initial overview of the information I gathered about how young people engaged with public space in Dock Town.

2.4 The ‘hangout’ locations

From an early stage in my street based observations it became apparent that one of the most common places for young people to spend time in the public space around Dock Town was in the various sports cages (I will refer to them as ‘cages’) dotted around the Dock Town council estates. There were over a dozen of these sports areas each of which differed in terms of their layout, the facilities they had, the state of repair they were in and the level of usage they received by young people. Unsurprisingly, young people were generally using these spaces to play sports of some sort, generally football. In fact, football appeared to dominate the lives of many of the young people we came across. If they were not playing football they were standing on the sidelines talking about football and if they had stayed at home on a particular night it was often because they were watching a big football match on the TV. Even on the coldest of nights young people ventured out to play football with friends.

'We met two young people who were hanging out at the football area behind the church...It was interesting that they were just hanging out there waiting to see who else showed up. They commented that they had no football so they were reliant on others showing up who had one. It was a cold night and they must have been pretty cold waiting around like that' (Detached Observations, 14/12/09).

While the cages were the main places where we could expect to meet groups of young people with any degree of predictability, they were not the only location that we met groups of young people. There were 3 other main locations where we might expect to meet young people; in the stairwells of the council housing blocks, outside the shops or book makers on one of the two main commercial roads in Dock Town or in the public spaces along the river.

Across all of the council estates that we visited there were numerous blocks of flats where we would, on occasions, meet groups of young people gathering in the stairwells. My own previous experience working as a street based youth worker led me to believe that we would encounter young people hanging out in stairwells more often than we did. The lack of this type of encounter is likely to have been caused by two main factors. Firstly, the winter months were particularly cold and although the stairwells offer a degree of protection from the elements, when it is minus 2 degrees outside sitting on cold concrete steps is unlikely to be a particularly appealing option to young people. Secondly, many of the council blocks we visited had been adapted with electronically locking doors which could only be accessed using a residents pin number. In many cases it is likely that these security doors will have been installed for precisely the purpose of limiting access and preventing young people from gathering in stairwells. Despite these deterrents we did on a few occasions meet young people hanging out in stairwells, but these

encounters were relatively infrequent and they did not lead to any substantial engagements with young people.

‘As we went up the stairwell it appeared that they [a group of young people] were getting further and further away, not clear if they were running from us or just happened to be going up higher. They eventually came out of the stairwell and as we reached the floor they were on, they ran past us in the other direction chasing each other. It seemed clear that they were playing a game amongst themselves and it wasn’t a good time to try to engage. We left them to what they were doing but agreed that we would come back again to see if we could engage with them on another night’ (Detached Observations, 31/11/09).

Two ‘main’ streets, or streets with concentrations of commercial activity, dissect Dock Town from east to west; North Street and South Street (see Figure 2.3). Both of these streets were part of our regular walking route and on most nights we could expect to come across at least one group of young people on these streets.

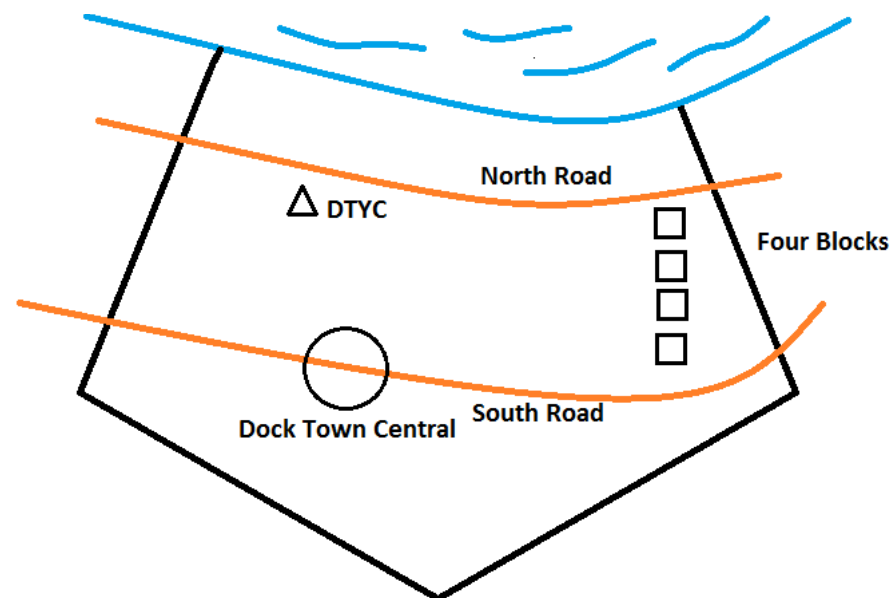


Figure 2.3: Map of Dock Town

Group numbers would vary from just 2 or 3 up to as many as 20. Very often these groups would be just passing through the area, whilst on

other occasions groups will have gone to these streets with the specific intention of hanging out, mainly outside one of the numerous convenience stores or bookmakers. On occasions we stopped and talked with young people, while on other occasions we observed at a distance and continued on our way. The issue of youth work professionals, or indeed researchers, ‘intruding’ in young people’s space is a point which is of particular relevance to a discussion of young people’s public space experiences, and one I will return to at various points throughout my discussions. Regardless of whether we talked to the young people or not, my focus was always on attempting to make a mental note of who we saw, where we saw them and any other details which might be of relevance to building a profile of young people’s public space experiences, as is illustrated by the following excerpt from my fieldnotes:

‘As we arrived at North Street we could see that there were a few boys hanging out in the shop/ restaurant area at the junction. We stood and talked for a few minutes and then I suggested that we get some chips and sit on some benches close to the junction to see what the young people were doing...As we sat we could see that the young people were hanging out outside the betting shop. We didn’t notice any clear reason for them to be there other than so they could watch the football on the TV but I wondered if they might be betting on the games or even running drugs for an older adult inside. I saw no clear answer to these questions in the time that we were there but concluded that it was something we should keep an eye on’ (Detached Observations, 05/11/09).

The third location we tended to meet with or observe young people hanging out was in the public spaces along the River Thames. The Thames creates the northern boundary of Dock Town and the riverside areas which were once bustling docks are now a mixture of older style warehouse conversion apartments and more recently developed council and private housing. Running alongside the river, and negotiating its way around numerous riverside apartment blocks, is the Thames path. The path provides a space to walk and take in the views across the river to the high rise buildings of the capital’s financial district, and

along the river to the historic centre of the City. In addition to the path itself there are various riverside squares and seating areas where adults and young people tended to spend time.

There was a marked contrast between what might be described as the more affluent sections on the city end of riverfront and the areas further away from the city with much higher concentrations of council housing. Ironically the converted warehouses and tenement buildings which at one time housed the capital's poorest of the poor, the reason that DTYC was first established in the area, are now home to more affluent city workers who keep the various bars and restaurants dotted around the narrow side streets in business. Our focus was on the areas further away from the city which, generally speaking, tended to be more poorly lit and on the whole quieter, but locations where we were more likely to find young people passing through or hanging out.

Being more exposed to the elements the riverside areas were less attractive locations for young people to hangout over the cold winter months. As the weather got milder in the spring, however, it was more common to come across small groups of young people either passing through or hanging out along the riverside. On a number of occasions we met one particular group of young people who had gone to the river to fish. While it was clear that a couple of the group were actively fishing there were others who were not fishing and appeared to enjoy hanging out with friends in this location.

'From here we went up to the river where we met with some of the same fishing group as on Monday night. The older white male (30s) was there, 3 younger white males (14-16) and shortly after we arrived two white females (12-14) arrived... We chatted again with the older man for a bit about the fishing, what they had caught, what size it was, if they were going to eat it etc. He had some eels this time but had put them back in again. Two of the younger boys were just hanging out and one had a rod and fishing gear with him. Again we just made some general chat. I talked again with x about his work experience at the City Farm' (Detached Observations, 21/04/10).

Fishing appeared to be a popular activity amongst adults and young people in Dock Town and on a number of occasions we observed small groups with a mixture of adults and young people fishing along the river. Fishing was not the only activity that young people engaged in along the riverside. It seemed that the romantic nature of the location was not lost on young people and it was not uncommon to find couples of young people walking along or sitting by the river. As a team of youth workers engaging with couples was a much more sensitive process, given that young people would not thank us for ‘ruining the moment’ to talk to them about local youth facilities or their public space experiences. For this reason on some occasions the potential to collect data, or the quality of data, was sacrificed in the interest of respecting young people’s space.

‘We walked up to the river and in the area where the boat taxis are moored we spotted a few black young people gathered on two benches. There appeared to be two males and two females. The boys appeared to be older (20s), although this wasn’t very clear, and the girls appeared to be a little younger (17/18). We had a bit of a look but it was hard to see them properly because they were under some trees’ (Detached Observations, 26/04/10).

Over the 7 months that I spent working with the detached team, and visiting the locations discussed here, I was able to collect a significant amount of observational data relating to young people’s experiences of Dock Town’s public spaces. There were, however, a number of factors which limited the depth of the data collected over this period which are worth exploring.

2.5 Challenges of street based observations

Before looking at the significant contacts we established over the period of the detached work, and the data I took from these contacts, it is worth noting a number of key factors which limited the team’s ability to establish contact with as many young people as it would have liked to. The first key point to make is that detached youth work

is inherently an unpredictable form of youth work. More so than any other form of youth work, or perhaps any form of work with young people generally, it involves meeting young people where they are at and on their terms; these are central principles of the approach. The problem with such an approach, of course, is that even well planned efforts to engage with young people can be inconsistent and unpredictable.

As part of my research planning process I had expected that the detached team would establish consistent contact with enough young people to be able to ask some of these street based contacts to participate in focus group discussions, but this did not turn out to be the case. While we did engage with a reasonable number of young people, which enabled me to make some very valuable observations, the engagements were not strong enough to be able to ask these young people to participate in focus group discussions. I would identify two key reasons for this lack of opportunity to progress the research. The first I have already noted above, which was the particularly cold weather we experienced over the winter months. While this weather did not prevent young people from coming out, it did limit the amount of time they were willing to spend hanging out in public space and, therefore, the frequency with which we engaged with them, as this reference from one of the review sessions carried out by the detached team highlights.

'There was a consensus that there were periods during the cold winter months when the detached work produced little if any productive outcomes. The fact that it was one of the coldest winters in recent years did not help. It was suggested that starting a project at a different time of the year would have been preferable. However, now that groups of young people have been engaged it may be easier to maintain contact through the winter months next year. If the detached work was to continue running through next winter it was suggested that it would be a good idea to bring some hot drinks out in the van and to use them as a way of maintaining contact with young people' (Detached Review, July 2010).

The second limiting factor related to another street based project, the ‘Young Advisors’, operating in the Dock Town area at the same time as our own. The specific focus of the Young Advisors was to get young people involved in organised youth provision which was, generally speaking, off the streets. I will talk in more detail below about the specific nature of this work and the bearing it might have on young people’s public space experiences. The point to note here, however, is that this team, which had far greater staffing resources available to it than ourselves, is likely to have impacted on the number of young people we met and their willingness to engage with us. This point became clearer to us over the course of a number of months when our attempts to engage with young people were more regularly met with hesitation or disinterest. As the months went by we were more frequently met with the response “*I’ve signed up already*”, meaning that the Young Advisors had already taken their details so that they could link them with a youth provision they were interested in.

Despite these limitations, we did manage to establish a broad range of contacts with young people in most of the areas we visited, out of which I was able to draw data relating to the ways in which young people in Dock Town interact with public space. This data provided a very useful backdrop for some the more detailed and personal accounts captured through the interviews and focus groups.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on providing an insight into the context within which data collection was conducted. This was considered important given the ethnographic approach adopted. Working from the general to the more specific the chapter started with a brief insight on the history of Dock Town. The researchers own historical connection with the area was identified and discussed, paying particular attention to the implications of the researcher’s previous connections with Dock

Town for data collection. The underlying principles of detached youth work were discussed and their relevance to the data collection process identified. Some of the challenges associated with working with a partner organisation in collecting data were identified, in particular in relation to the role challenges it raised in the context of this research. An overview of the day to day work that the researcher engaged in alongside staff from the partner organisation was discussed. This included an overview of typical routines and locations visited but also the types of young people encountered. The chapter finished by acknowledging that while the street based observations were a useful source of data, they were not without their challenges which were discussed.

3.0 Exploring Key Concepts- violence, fear and public space

The following chapter will deal with a selection of literature which has been drawn on to inform the underlying approach within this research. There are five main sections within this chapter, the first of which considers the challenge of defining and measuring violence and also identifies a definition of violence which will be drawn on within this research. The second section reviews a broad range of publications, research reports and grey literature concerned with the related issues of gun, gang and knife related violence. As a result of widespread concerns that incidents of street violence amongst young men in the UK are spiralling out of control, the second half of the 2000s and the early years of the 2010s have seen the publication of dozens of reports, investigations and enquiries investigating gun, gang and knife related violence. These documents try to put some shape on levels, types, causes and possible responses to street violence amongst young people in the UK. Whilst clarifying certain misconceptions, much of this literature also serves to further highlight the complex nature of the problem.

My focus in reviewing this literature was on identifying points which were of particular relevance to a discussion of young men in London, however, such is the nature of this literature that much of it is concerned more generally with urban areas in England and Wales (Scotland and Northern Ireland often being seen as sufficiently different to warrant a separate focus). Within the literature I found both clarity and complexity and I have attempted to convey both within my discussions below, as both are equally important elements of the picture. Drawing on insights from section two, the third section of the literature review will discuss a number of factors which are commonly identified as impacting on young men's experiences of violence, both as victims and as perpetrators. The fourth section considers the relationship between fear and violence, giving particular

consideration to how the nature of this relationship relates to young men's experiences of street violence.

The final section of my literature review focuses primarily on literature from within the subject area of social geography. It considers the changing nature of UK public spaces and the ways in which these changes are impacting on young people's experiences of urban public spaces, and how these experiences might relate to their involvement in street violence. In discussing acts of violence it is often assumed that there is clarity and general agreement in relation to what an act of violence is, yet this cannot be assumed. I will start my discussions, therefore, by considering the challenges associated both with defining and measuring violence.

3.1 Defining and measuring levels of violence

Central to any attempt at measuring violence is the challenge of defining it. That is, how can one expect to accurately measure something without first being clearly able to identify what that thing is, or indeed what it is not. The centrality of power in any understanding of violence is emphasised by Arendt (1970) who suggests that "*violence appears where power is in jeopardy*" (p. 34). Weber (1922) makes this point more specifically in relation to the state's relationship to violence suggesting that it is the ability of the state's administrative staff to successfully maintain a monopoly over the effective use of physical force that enables it to maintain its grip on power by imposing its system of governance on the masses. Elias (1978) explores the development of the state's monopoly of organised violence through a period in medieval and modern Europe. Focusing on developments in France, he describes a 'Civilizing Process' through which a dispersed system of power and governance was displaced by a more centralised system to which a relatively stable monopoly of violence and taxation, and accompanying systems of governance, were central.

Bauman (1989) explores the role that state bureaucracy plays in mass acts of violence such as the Holocaust. He suggests that it can make people feel better to dismiss the actions of Holocaust perpetrators by labelling them as mad or sick. In fact, he suggests that, for the most part, this was not the case and, instead, he emphasises the dehumanising process through which people are turned into bureaucratic objects; *“the design gives it the legitimation; state bureaucracy gives it the vehicle; and the paralysis of society gives it the ‘road clear’ sign”* (p. 94). Importantly, Bauman emphasises that such atrocities are recurring features of inequalities in human society and, as such, suggests it is essential to maintain a critical eye on state and bureaucratic power. Bourdieu (1991) explores the relationship between societal inequalities and language. He suggests that linguistic systems of classification order the world, and hence people within it. Further, he suggests that ‘Symbolic Violence’ is perpetrated when, through political struggle, these systems of classification come to be accepted as the natural order. Symbolic violence results in certain sections of society being simultaneously suppressed whilst also being blamed for the conditions of their existence.

Whilst the relationship between violence and power is well established within the literature, the issue of definition is less clear. Bufacchi (2005) suggests that within the violence literature there are two broad concepts of violence, ‘minimalist’ and ‘comprehensive’. The minimalist concept refers to violence as an interpersonal act of force, usually involving the infliction of physical injury, while the comprehensive concept more broadly refers to violence as a violation which infringes, transgresses, or exceeds some limit or norm. From a ‘minimalist’ perspective then, when a young man is stabbed the act of violence that has been perpetrated is the physical act of the blade being thrust by one person into another. A more ‘comprehensive’ view of violence, however, might place a greater emphasis on wider societal inequalities in causing the recurrence of such incidents within

a particular community. As Englander (2003) notes, definition has important implications both for what counts as a violent act but also how its causes are understood.

Bäck (2004) suggests that defining violence is both a philosophical and moral issue. Exploring the relationship between violence, force, aggression and morality Bäck proposes that violence ‘in the basic sense’ signifies an aggressive activity to which moral judgements apply. This link between an aggressive act and moral responsibility is also evident in the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) particular interpretation of the term ‘intentionality’ within its definition of violence:

“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”
(Krug et al 2002, p. 5)

The WHO definition of violence corresponds with Bufacchi’s (2005) ‘comprehensive’ concept of violence but also incorporates those physical acts of force which correspond with a ‘minimalist’ concept of violence. It is this definition that will be the working definition of violence used within this research. Alongside this definition WHO has developed a ‘Typology of Violence’ (Figure 3.1) which shows how the various forms of violence incorporated into the WHO’s definition relate to each other.

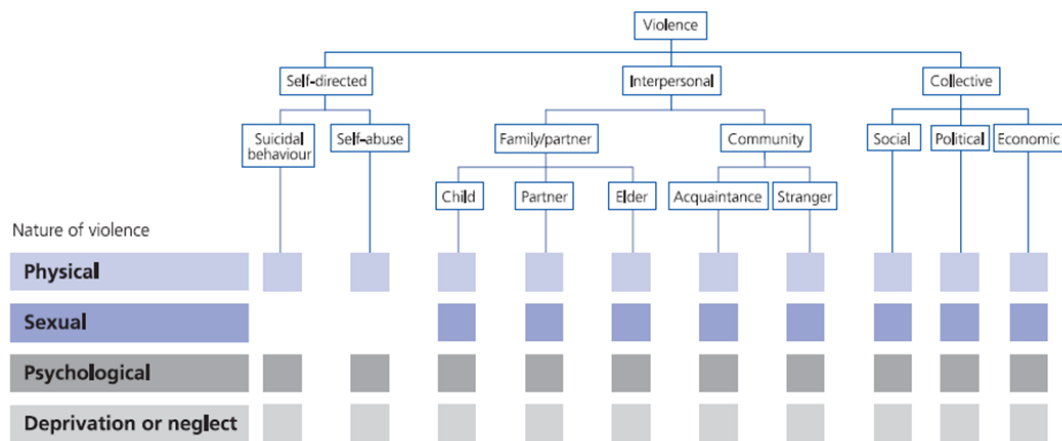


Figure 3.1: WHO Typology of Violence

Without discussing every aspect within this typology I would draw attention to the particular strand which is most relevant to my discussion of street violence. Drawing on WHO’s sub-headings above, the acts of street violence that were of interest within this research were interpersonal acts of physical violence committed by young people, acquaintances and strangers, in the community. In the context of this research ‘community’ refers to outdoor public spaces (typically streets, parks and sports areas). Within my discussions I will generally use either of the terms ‘street violence’ or ‘physical violence’. Additionally, although my focus is on this specific form of violence, it is recognised that a better understanding of the causes of this form of violence will need to consider its relationship to other forms of violence. A discussion of a selection of the wider literature relating to violence, therefore, is of value in contextualising a more specific discussion of street violence amongst young men on the streets of London in the mid to late 2000s.

The body of literature dealing with the issue of violence is extremely broad and the range of perspectives from which violence is considered is equally broad, including: domestic violence (Stanko, 1985; Hanson and Belmont, 2005; Campbell, 2007; Keeling and Mason 2008; Wright, 2011); large scale conflict or war (Benson-Brown and Poremski, 2005; Ashford and Dauncey, 2006; Fry, 2007), gender

related violence (Miedzian, 1991; Archer, 1993; Hatty, 2000; Messerschmidt, 2000; Giles, 2004; O' Toole et al, 2007; Seidler, 2010), political violence (Clutterbuck, 1981; Human Rights Watch, 1995; Keane, 2004; Coady, 2008; Parry, 2010), race related violence (Thompson, 1988; Panayi, 1996; Dench et al, 2006; Jiwani, 2006; Skove-Nevels, 2007; Garfield, 2010), religious violence (Milton-Edwards, 2004; Blom et al, 2007; Lange and Fierro, 2009; Miller, 2010; Pahl, 2010; Emanuilov and Yashlavsky, 2011), victimisation (Palin-Davis, 2006; Green and Roberts, 2008; Rich, 2009; Wolbert-Burgess et al, 2013), practitioner interventions in violence (Kemshall and Priotchard, 1999; Corcoran and Cawood, 2003; Shipway, 2004; Ford et al, 2010; Ramsbotham, 2010; Byrne and Senehi, 2012) and, importantly, youth violence (Adams et al, 1998; Tastad, 2003; Hoffman, 2004; Kirsh, 2006; Mullins, 2006; Pitts, 2008; Ness, 2010; Goldson, 2011; Messerschmidt, 2012b).

Whilst the breadth of this literature is too wide to cover all of it here, there are a number of general points worth noting before discussing particular aspects of the literature in more detail. As the previous discussions of definitions of violence suggested, acts of violence may take many forms. This range in types of violence is reflected in the literature, however, interpersonal acts of physical violence are the most commonly referred to across the literature. Another point of note is that the literature is overwhelmingly concerned with acts of violence perpetrated by men. Concern, therefore, in relation to tackling the perpetration of violence is overwhelmingly a concern with the violent behaviour of men. Following on from this point, there appears to be a tension in relation to the literature focusing on victims of violence. There is an acknowledgement across much of the literature that men are significantly represented as both perpetrators and victims of interpersonal physical violence at the hands of other men, yet the literature relating to victims of violence is overwhelmingly concerned with female and or child victims (where child is generally referring to younger children as opposed to young

people). In particular, young people who are victims of violence receive very little focus within the literature. Whilst there is a small body of literature which focuses on women's involvement as perpetrators of street violence, this literature tends to caution against overestimating or sensationalising the extent of women's involvement as perpetrators. One consistency across the literature, however, is the concern in relation to young people as the perpetrators of interpersonal acts of physical violence in public spaces. A number of more specific insights on violence offered within this literature will now be explored in more depth.

The literature drawn on has been chosen on the basis that it provides an insight into both the wider patterns of violence in society in addition to the ways in which these patterns structure or constrain the actions of particular individuals or groups, especially young people. Much, though not all, of the literature discussed is written from a US context and while there are some very important insights to be drawn from this literature, a large proportion of it also serves to reinforce the significant differences between young people's experiences of street violence in the US and in the UK. Harrison-Moore (2003) for example highlights the high levels of serious youth violence in many US schools. Whilst there have been isolated incidents of this nature in the UK, the issue of shootings in schools, and related preventative measures such as security guards and metal detectors, are not a daily feature for schools in the UK in the way in which they are for some schools in the US. This in part relates to the availability of weapons, and specifically guns, in the US but also to differences in the nature and extent of gang cultures across both countries. Wilkinson (2003), for example, suggests in relation to the US context that '*adolescents consistently report that guns are easily obtained, frequently carried, readily used, deemed necessary for self-defence and survival, and influence teenagers' views of routine social interactions*' (p. 3). Harcourt (2006) also emphasises the centrality of notions of protection to guns and gun carrying among American Youth, and

especially those who are gang involved. Given the wider symbolic significance within US society of gun carrying and its association with self-defence it is unsurprising that Harcourt (2006) should suggest that the incarcerated male youths he interviewed attached such protective significance to gun carrying. Despite these reservations there is still much to be taken from the US literature both in relation to the broader understanding of violence and the more specific issue of young people's experiences of violence.

In their analysis of the range of theories and theoretical perspectives drawn on to understand or explain violence, Byrne and Senehi (2012) use the analogy of a number of blind people attempting to describe an elephant through touch. They suggest that, like the blind people feeling their way around a particular section of the elephant's body, each theoretical perspective on violence only tends to focus on a particular aspect of the overall 'animal'. They suggest that '*violence is a complex phenomenon rooted in the interaction of many factors, so it is important to use an ecological framework to understand the complex interplay of personal, situational, socioeconomic, political, psychocultural, and historical factors that combine to cause violence*' (p. 16). Whilst this analysis presented by Byrne and Senehi (2012) is arguably an oversimplification of the differing perspectives on violence which are, in some cases, informed by fundamentally differing ontological and epistemological positions, their underlying emphasis on considering the 'micro-macro linkage' has resonance with the overall approach adopted within this research.

In Anderson's (2004) discussion of the 'Cultural Shaping of Violence' it is suggested that an improved understanding of violence must come not from either individual or social explanations but from a combination of both. Rogers' chapter in this same book focuses on the experiences of children growing up in a culture of violence in Northern Ireland and suggests that they become accustomed to the violence and in doing so come to expect it. The many historical

accounts of the different periods of violent conflict in Northern Ireland suggest that the way in which acts of violence are constructed by perpetrators, police, politicians and the media impacts significantly on the way in which these acts of violence are ultimately interpreted by communities, and the children and young people growing up in them (Fay et al, 1999; McKittrick and McVea, 2000). This point was perhaps most clearly highlighted in 1981 when 10 imprisoned members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) died while on hunger strike protesting their right to be labelled as political prisoners, as opposed to criminals. Whilst these prisoners set out to construct, or reconstruct, their cause as a political one, the refusal of the then Conservative government, led by Margaret Thatcher, to engage in negotiations with ‘criminals’ resulted in a more emotive labelling of the hunger strikers as martyrs. Both sides of the political divide in Northern Ireland were fortified by this and Northern Irish society was arguably further polarised by the events surrounding the hunger strikes. Many commentators attribute the subsequent rise in young IRA recruits to the alternative construction of the ‘cause’ made possible by these events surrounding the hunger strikes.

The issue of vulnerability of cultural identity has been central to the armed struggle in Northern Ireland and has been drawn on by organisations like the IRA to mobilise support for its violent ‘cause’. This is a point which is also highlighted across the wider violence literature. de Jong (2002), for example, looks at the impact of ‘Trauma, War and Violence’ on mental health in Northern Sri Lanka and suggests that *‘the central feature in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka as in many parts of the world (the old USSR and Yugoslavia, India, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and Spain) has to do with group identity or ethnic consciousness’* (p. 219). de Jong suggests that when individual or group identity is threatened it invokes a deep sense of anxiety or insecurity, to which he suggests that groups and individuals will react with considerable emotion. Similarly, Seidler (2010) suggests that where cultural identity is particularly fragile certain

aspects of cultural identity, such as ethnicity and masculinity, will be invoked in exaggerated ways to account for criminal violence. Seidler suggests that violent offenders draw on the resources that are available to them at the time, such as violent masculinities, in accounting for criminal violence. This relationship between vulnerability and the mobilisation of available cultural resources is a theme which has particular resonance with the literature which focuses on young people and their experiences of violence, and in particular street violence. This relationship between vulnerability and acts of violence underpins the arguments presented by those authors who suggest that the use of incarceration and punishment to tackle violence is counterproductive.

Drawing on the experiences of serious violent offenders Gilligan (1996) highlights the social dimensions of the shame and guilt experienced by individuals who are incarcerated for criminal acts of violence. Gilligan (1996) draws on his extensive experience working with violent offenders within prisons to explore offender experiences of shame and guilt, and to consider the impact that incarceration has on violent behaviour. In exploring the violent histories of many of the most violent offenders he has worked with Gilligan (2000) suggests that *'if punishment did inhibit or prevent violence, then these men would not have become violent in the first place, for they had already experienced the most severe punishments that it is possible to inflict on people without actually killing them'* (p. 749). He suggests that the incarceration system as it is currently structured (in the US) only serves to compound experiences of shame and guilt leading to ever more violent, murderous and suicidal extremes. Harcourt (2006) is similarly questioning of the role of incarceration in reducing violence, however, he places a stronger emphasis on the way in which it reinforces for offenders how dangerous the world is and, therefore, how necessary guns are as a means of defence. Harcourt (2006) goes on to offer a number of policy interventions which might be more effective in challenging the idea that guns afford protection such as *'a*

focus on youth conflict resolution, parental and school supervision, safety monitoring in schools and public areas, architectural redesign of schools, practice based alternatives and counselling' (p. 234). Zimring and Hawkins (1998), however, caution that amidst public fears of troublesome and violent youth, tax payers are much more likely to pay for measures which favour social control than youth development; a point which is also made by Stanley Cohen (1985) in his analysis of approaches to social control in the UK context.

Dorpat (2007) notes that although it is no longer common practice for most states to cut off limbs or whip prisoners, some of the alternative current measures are equally violent and harmful because they are so prolonged and because they are often veiled in the language of rehabilitation; violence he suggests causes violence. As with Harcourt (2006) then, Dorpat (2007) advocates non-violent approaches to the rehabilitation of offenders. Garfield (2010) focuses more specifically on the disproportionate impact that violence and the criminal justice system have on young Black men, suggesting that Black men and violence have become inextricably linked calling *'into question their humanity, for they are socially and culturally positioned in our society as inferior beings'* (p. 2). In revealing this positioning of young Black men in US society, Garfield (2010) emphasises the importance of constructing alternative racial and gender identities which offer a sense of manhood less linked to violence. Rich (2009) draws on his extensive experiences working as a doctor with young Black men injured through incidents of interpersonal violence. Through his accounts of the experiences of these young men Rich (2009) seeks to challenge what he suggests is an assumption that *'young black men don't just get shot, they get themselves shot'* (p. 3). Though less theorised than many of the above-mentioned texts, the impact of Rich's (2009) account lies in his effort to reveal the deep humanity of his patients; a humanity which he suggests is being overlooked. Squires (2011) perhaps most effectively sums up the link

between young people's experiences of violence in the US and in the UK:

'Criminal Justice interventions have become heavily implicated in sustaining the predicament of marginalised youth as their socially excluded status and identity is reinforced and recycled through increasingly frequent encounters with the police, new tiers of community justice agents, criminal justice disposals and an intolerant climate of public fear and alarm. These are precisely the conditions that fostered the weaponisation of American youth. The real danger is that similar processes are increasingly evident in the UK too' (p. 157).

I will look in more detail later within this chapter at the literature relating more specifically to the UK context to assess the extent to which it suggests, as Squires warns could be the case, that similar processes are increasingly evident. However, before doing this I will look at data relating to the prevalence and trends of violence in the UK to give an indication of the scale of the issue of young people's involvement in street violence.

The data presented in the following section provides a general overview of levels of serious violence in England and Wales over the first decade of the 2000s. This covers the period in which my data was collected and the 8 to 9 years preceding it. The British Crime Survey (BCS) suggests that overall levels of crime in England and Wales have been decreasing since a peak in the mid-1990s. Figure 3.2 provides an overview of overall levels of crime from 1981 to 2009/10, which is broken down by categories of offence. This suggests that, in line with the pattern of overall crime, levels of violence have been decreasing since the mid-1990s.

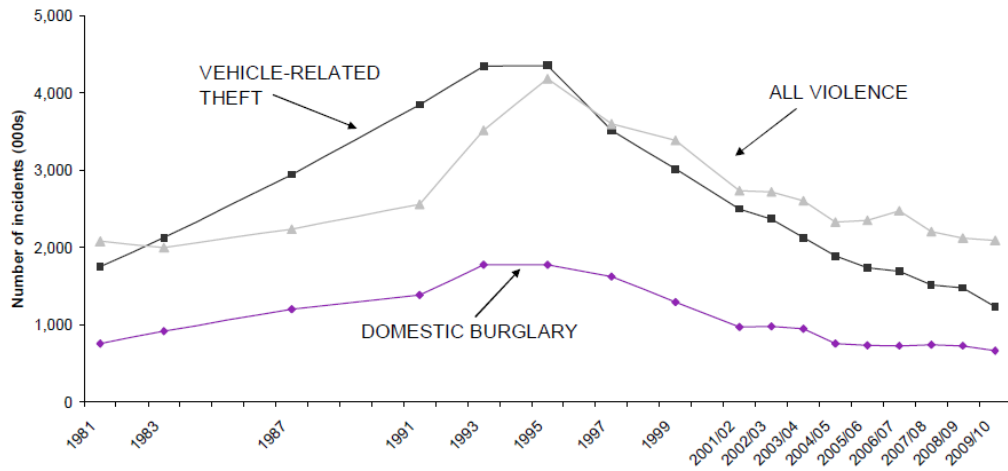
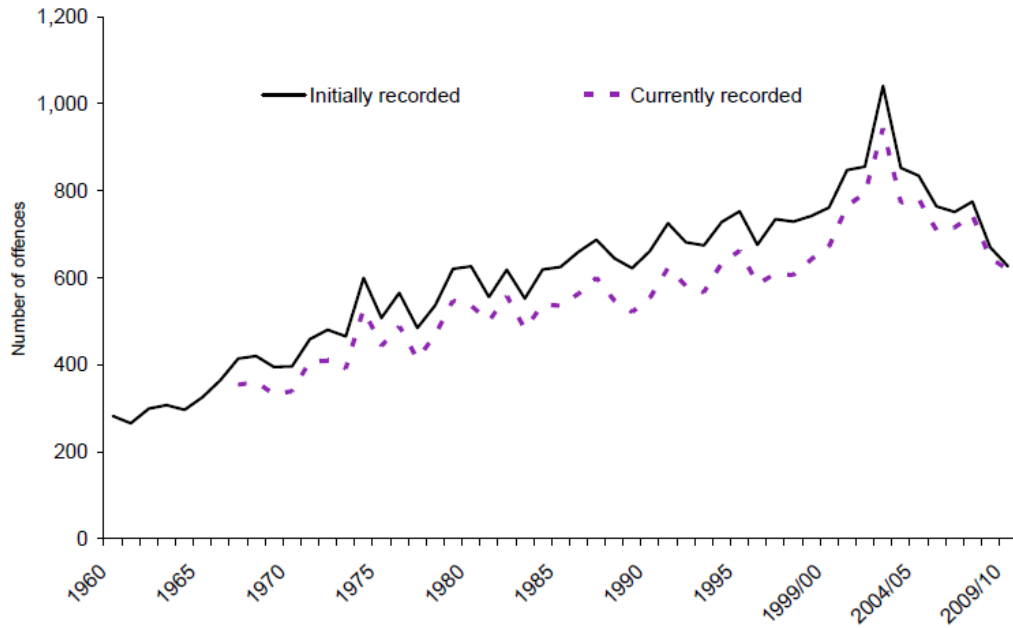


Figure 3.2: Trends in overall crime including violence, 1981 to 2009/10 (Based on BCS data) (Home Office, 2011b)

Homicide statistics have been cited as a good indicator of levels of serious violence given that they are unlikely to go unreported, as opposed to other acts of serious violence which may not be reported. Figure 3.3 shows homicide levels for England and Wales dating back to the 1960s. Although recorded homicide levels are currently approximately twice what they were in the 1960s, when adjusted for skews such as the Shipman murders, these levels have been steadily decreasing since the early 2000s.



1. Year 2005/06 includes 52 victims of the 7 July London bombings.
2. Year 2003/04 includes 20 cockle pickers who drowned in Morecambe Bay.
3. Year 2002/03 includes 172 victims of Dr Harold Shipman.
4. Year 2000/01 includes 58 Chinese nationals who suffocated in a lorry en route in the UK.

Figure 3.3: Homicides recorded by police in England and Wales, 1960 to 2009/10 (Home Office, 2011a)

Despite the general reduction in homicides and serious violence over the last decade, the numbers of young people represented within these figures, both as perpetrators and as victims, remains disproportionately high. Figure 3.4 indicates homicide victims by gender and by age from 2007/08 to 2009/10. The first point of note is that the vast majority of homicide victims are males, this is consistent with the figures for victims of serious violence more generally. These figures also indicate that the 16-20 age group has the highest proportion of homicide victims. The overall representation of young people in the homicide statistics is even more pronounced if the 16-20 and 20-29 age groups are taken together.

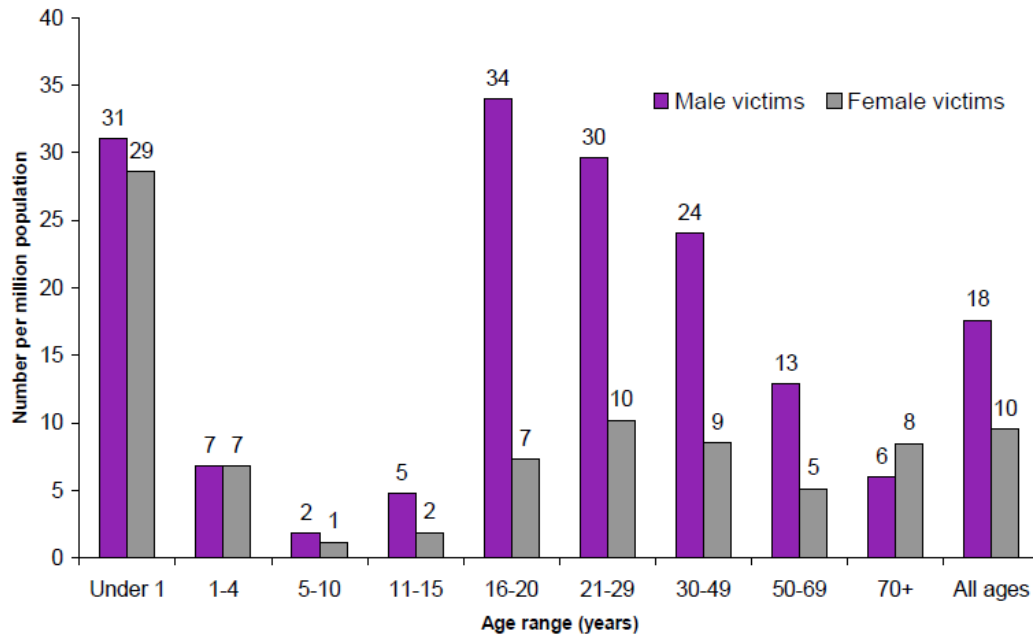
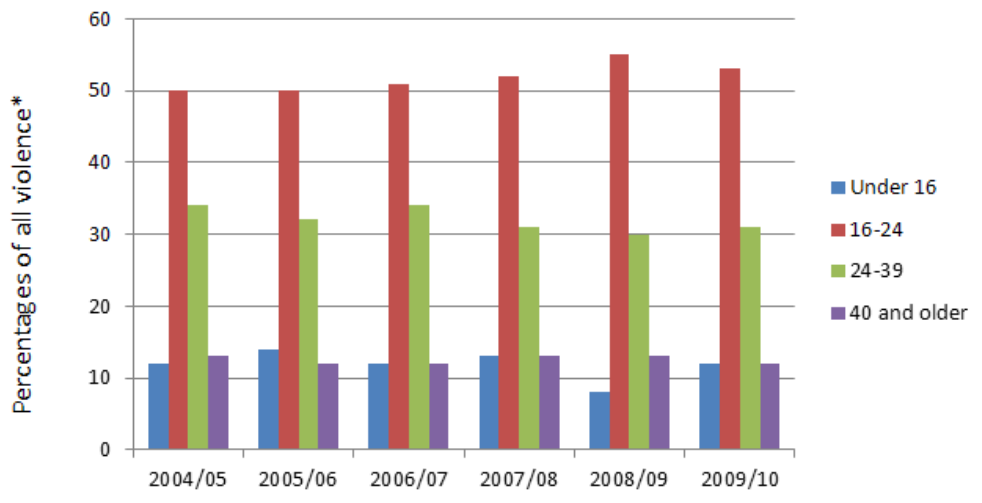


Figure 3.4: Offences recorded as homicide per million population by age of victim, combined years 2007/08 to 2009/10 (Home Office 2011a)

Statistics relating to perpetrators of violence in any year are complicated, firstly, by the fact that many violent acts go unreported and, secondly, that official records indicate the year in which a person is convicted as opposed to the year in which the act was perpetrated. However, data from the British Crime Survey questionnaire provides an insight into the profile of offenders which is not impacted by these issues. Figure 3.5 shows a breakdown for violent offenders by age from 2004/05 to 2009/10. Young people in the 16-24 age group are significantly over represented in these figures, and further analysis of both the BCS data and recorded crime figures suggest that offenders in any of these age groups are overwhelmingly male.

‘As with victims of overall violent crime, offenders of violent incidents were most likely to be young and male. In around half of violent incidents (53%) the offender was believed to be aged between 16 and 24 years and nine out of ten (91%) involved male offenders’ (Home Office 2011b, p.59)



1. 'All violence' includes wounding, robbery, assault with minor injury and assault with no injury.
2. Figures add to more than 100 as more than one offender could be involved.

Figure 3.5: Offender by age in violent incidents, 2004/05 to 2009/10 (Based on BCS data) (Home office, 2011b)

While the issue of gun related deaths and injuries tends to draw a lot of attention in nation media coverage, figures dating back over a ten year period suggest that shootings account for only a small proportion of homicides, with most homicides being attributable to ‘sharp instruments’, as indicated in Figure 3.6.

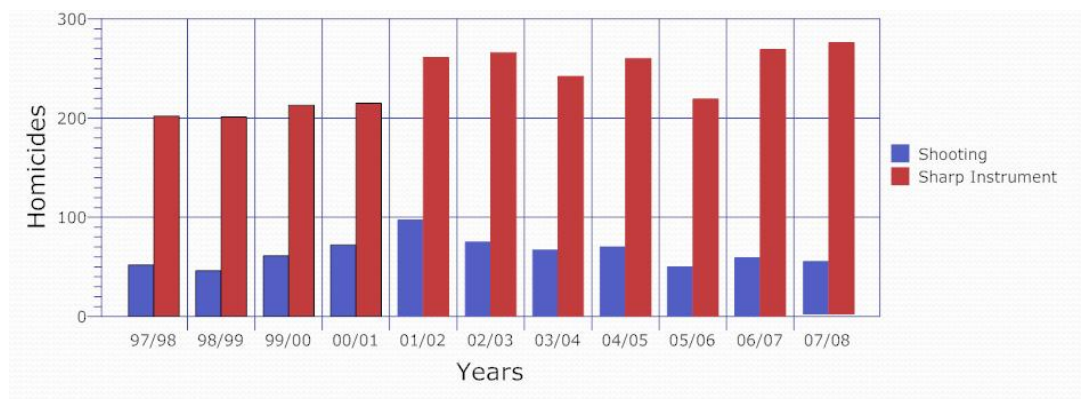
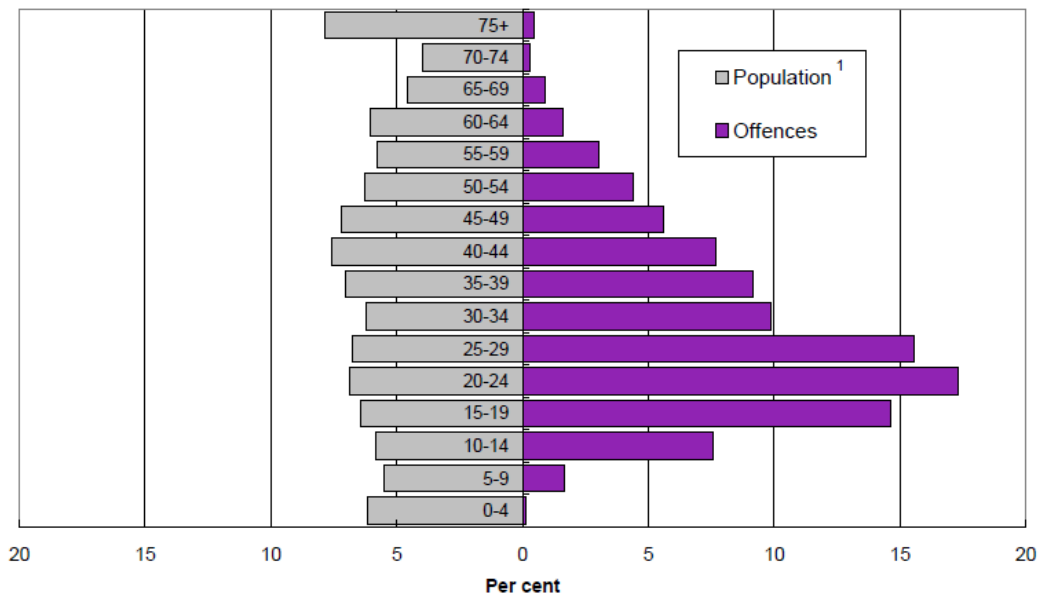


Figure 3.6: Homicides by apparent method of killing (Drawn from consecutive ‘Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence’ reports)

Despite the generally low levels of gun crime in the UK, both in comparison to other Europe countries and more widely at a world

level, it is worth noting that of those homicide victims that are attributable to firearms young people are, again, over represented (see Figure 3.7).



1. The population figures are based on mid-2009 estimates from the Office for National Statistics.

Figure 3.7: Age profile of firearm victims, excluding air weapons, compared to population profile for England and Wales, 2009/10 (Home Office, 2011a)

The figures above indicate that despite a general pattern of reducing levels of crime and violent crime in England and Wales over the last 10 years, young people, and young men in particular, remain consistently highly represented as both perpetrators and victims of violent crime. Overwhelmingly, these serious acts of violence are attributable to the use of sharp instruments. There are however, some important limitations in the extent to which the sources of the data above can provide an accurate representation of young people’s experiences of violence. These points are discussed below and are followed by a review of a broad range of grey literature which is intended to gain a clearer insight into specific aspects of young people’s involvement in serious violence, as victims and perpetrators.

As the title suggests, police recorded crime figures are a summary of crimes recorded by police. Recorded Crime figures can provide useful information on issues such as: crime trends or patterns, police

workload or as a local measure of the effectiveness of policing practices. However, police recorded crime figures are widely recognised as being a very limited reflection of levels of crime for a variety of reasons (Booth et al, 2008; Eades et al, 2007; Lockhart et al 2007). I will look here at two of these limitations, which are of particular relevance to the discussion of young men and street violence.

The first and most fundamental draw-back of recorded crime figures is that they do not reflect unreported crime. Hospital figures, for example, point to inconsistencies between the numbers of young men injured through knife related incidents and the reporting of these incidents (Booth et al, 2008). In communities where relations between young people and the police are particularly strained, or where there is a lack of trust between young people and police, the issue of under-reporting is likely to be more pronounced. The result of such under-reporting is that Recorded Crime figures tend not to present an accurate picture of the numbers of young men involved in violent incidents, both as victims and as perpetrators.

The second major criticism of recorded crime figures is that they can be significantly skewed by changes to recording procedures or policing policy. Golding et al (2008), for example, note that “*changes in police recording practices – notably to the counting rules in 1998 and the introduction of the national crime recording standard in 2002 – have led to artificial shifts in violent crime statistics*” (p. 7). One approach to dealing with these and other limitations of Recorded Crime figures has been to conduct surveys which question representative samples of the national population about their experiences of crime, the most established of these surveys is the British Crime Survey (BCS).

The BCS is a national crime survey which questions a representative sample of people from across England and Wales, currently standing

at over 51,000 interviews, about crimes that they have experienced over the last year. It tries to gather information about the circumstances in which incidents occur and the behaviour of offenders in committing crimes. One of the BCS's strongest points is that it has the ability to gain information which, for a variety of reasons, does not appear within police recorded crime figures. It also provides information about people's feelings and attitudes towards crime.

However, a major critique of the BCS, in particular in relation to the issue of street violence amongst young men, is the fact that it did not, up to 2008, survey people under 16 years of age (Booth et al, 2008). This is a significant limitation to the BCS's ability to present an accurate picture of fear of crime across the population as a whole, particularly given that a large proportion of victims of violent crime are aged under 16 years. Despite this drawback, however, the BCS is still considered to be a valuable measure of violent crime, in particular given its ability to illuminate aspects of criminal activity which are not visible through Recorded Crime figures.

There are two additional surveys worth discussing which focus more specifically on young people's experiences of crime: the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS) and the MORI/Youth Justice Board Youth Surveys (YJB-YS).

Like the BCS the OCJS is a national representative survey which attempts to gather information about national crime trends in England and Wales. Unlike the BCS, however, a specific aim of the OCJS is to monitor trends in offending among young people (of 10-25 years). It is a longitudinal survey which attempts to gather information relating to patterns of offending over time by asking interviewees questions about the nature of their offending.

The OCJS provides the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of crime initiatives by monitoring offending over time, however, an

obvious flaw with this approach is that the relevance of its outcomes are dependent on the accuracy and consistency of interviewees' reporting. It is likely that the disjointed or chaotic lifestyles of those young men who are most involved in serious criminal activity will have a negative impact on their representation within the data over time. The OCJS also focuses on young people's offending patterns and tells us less about young people's experiences as victims, a point which the Youth Justice Board Survey attempts to deal with.

The YJB-YS aims to examine young people's (11-16 years) experiences of crime, both as offenders and as victims. It draws its population from young people in mainstream education across England and Wales, and uses self-complete questionnaires to gather data. As the report itself notes, the fact that participants are drawn from mainstream schools limits the insight it can provide into the most serious offenders as there is a good likelihood that they will not be in mainstream education. However, one of the main positive features of the YJB-YS is that it provides an insight into young men's experiences as victims of crime, an area where little or no insight can be gained through any of the previously discussed surveys. One final point to note in relation to both of the two youth focused surveys is that given their relatively recent introduction (early 2000s) both can offer only a limited level of trend analysis.

With the limitations of these measures of crime in mind, and their likely influence on much of the information reviewed, I will discuss the literature reviewed under the three most commonly cited 'categories' of youth related street violence; gang, gun and knife related violence. Much information, and misinformation, has circulated in relation to each of these categories of violence and, as such, a key focus will be to provide some sense of what the literature says about the prevalence of each, and the extent of young men's involvement in them, as perpetrators and as victims.

3.2 Categories of Youth Violence

Within much of the literature assessing levels of street violence amongst young people in the UK the concept of violence is not problematized to any great extent and a discussion of the meaning of violence, with only a few exceptions, is notably absent. The concept of violence within many of the documents draw on Bufacchi's minimalist definition of violence. 'Street violence', therefore, in much of the literature relating to gang, gun and knife related violence tends to refer to acts of interpersonal physical force committed by young men in public spaces. While discussion within some of the literature suggests that authors would encourage a more inclusive definition of violence (Westoby 2008, Pitts 2008, Parkes and Connolly 2011), the question of defining violence is notable by its absence.

A common theme throughout the research reports and grey literature reviewed was the difficulty associated with measuring levels of violence, and the resulting caution with which certain forms of 'evidence' should be treated. Golding et al (2008), for example, note that "*conclusions based on recorded crime figures and the BCS [British Crime Survey] should be treated with a great deal of caution*" (p. 8), while Lockhart et al (2007) draw attention to the "*various ways to portray gun crime statistics, many of which can be manipulated to 'create' trends*" (p. 1). Despite these limitations, police recorded crime figures and the BCS are drawn on heavily across a range of sectors, at both a national and local level, to justify particular approaches to reducing levels of physical violence amongst young men.

As has been discussed above, violence is perpetrated by groups and individuals for a wide variety of reasons, and its effects are felt by victims in an equally varied way. Such is the desire within the literature, however, to place some clear parameters on the issue of serious youth violence that it is invariably categorised under one of a

number of headings, the most common of these being gang, gun or knife related violence (Hales et al, 2006; Young et al, 2007; Booth et al, 2008).

A greater understanding of these categories can play a useful role in understanding the way in which violence is being perpetrated and experienced by young men. However, an over emphasis on them may limit our ability to understand the causes of the individual acts of violence subsumed under them. This point in mind, having discussed each of the categories of gang, gun and knife violence, I will look more closely at a number of risk factors which are identified as impacting on the likelihood that young men will become involved in street violence.

3.2.1 Gang related violence

A clear and perhaps unsurprising conclusion within the gangs related literature is that young men who become actively involved in gangs are more likely to be involved in violent incidents (Bullock and Tilley, 2008; Booth et al, 2008; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2009). Younger gang members are identified as particularly at risk as their eagerness to prove themselves is often used by older members to further their own interests, such as settling scores or manipulating control of local drugs markets (Pitts, 2007; Young et al, 2007; Booth et al, 2008; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2009).

Pitts (2007) suggests that physical violence is inherent in gang related activity because of the close ties between gangs and illegal drugs markets, proposing that physical violence is used by gang members to regulate an unregulated drugs market. Put simply, the use of physical violence helps to get the job done. For this reason, police measures in tackling more powerful drug dealers can often have the effect of increasing levels of physical violence, as gang members compete to fill the gap that has been created in the drugs market.

Perhaps one of the most discussed points in relation to gang violence is the extent of the problem, a factor which is significantly influenced by the way in which a gang is defined (Bullock and Tilley, 2008; Booth et al, 2008; London Safeguarding Children Board, 2009). The following definition offered by Hallsworth and Young (2006) was drawn on by a number of sources:

“A gang is a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group’s identity” (p. 4).

Based on the key features outlined within this definition, much concern is expressed about the over definition of peer youth groups as gangs (Booth et al, 2008; Ralphs et al, 2009). Ralphs et al (2009) draws attention to the role that police intelligence gathering practices play in identifying certain non-gang involved young people as gang involved, purely on the basis of who they are seen to associate with. They suggest that gathering intelligence in this way is both an inaccurate method for identifying gang members, and that it can impact negatively on the educational and employment opportunities of those young people who are incorrectly identified as gang involved.

Bullock and Tilley (2008) meanwhile highlight the challenges associated with targeting preventative interventions around the risk of gang involvement, concluding that *“preventative interventions to tackle shootings would be better focused around aspects of harmful individual or group behaviour rather than on ‘gangs’ and ‘gang membership’ per se”* (p. 38). Even for those who can be clearly identified as being involved in gang related violence *“there are many connecting issues [and] any reduction of the issue to a simple ‘prism’ such as ‘gangs’ is problematic”* (Westoby, 2008: 4).

3.2.2 Gun related violence

Much concern has been voiced about levels of gun related homicide in the UK and there is good reason for this concern, given that crimes involving the use of firearms doubled in England and Wales over the late 1990s and early 2000s (Hales et al, 2006). However, this figure is not as straightforward as it might initially seem, and I would note three key points which help to place this increase in firearms related crimes in context. The first point is that while this increase appears large, it is an increase on what are very low levels of gun related crime by international standards. Crimes involving firearms consistently account for a very small proportion of total recorded crime in England and Wales, just 0.3% in the recording period 2009-2010 (Home Office, 2011a). In the same recording period, only 7% of homicides involved the use of a gun, as compared with 34% of homicides involving 'sharp instruments' (ibid). Britain's gun control legislation is amongst the tightest in the world, and correspondingly, its levels of gun related homicides are also amongst the lowest in the world (Krug et al, 1998).

The second point is that in instances where guns are used in crimes the gun is often used to threaten, but is not discharged. A number of documents reviewed suggest that, far from being encouraged to discharge weapons, there are, in fact, strong disincentives discouraging those in possession of an illegal firearm from discharging that weapon (NCVYS, 2007; Booth et al, 2008). The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) (2007), for example, suggests that weapons are often owned by one individual who loans or rents it out to others. When an illegal firearm is used to cause death or injury it becomes less desirable to use, and a less profitable rental, because of the possibility of it being linked with other crimes. This can provide a sufficient disincentive such that, in many cases, a gun will be used only to threaten, without being discharged. There are of course other factors which influence the likelihood of a weapon being discharged, such as the likely

compliance of the victim and the possibility that the weapon is an imitation and is not capable of being discharged.

This brings me to my final point. Interviews conducted by Hales et al (2006) with recently convicted Firearms Act offenders aged 18-30 provide a valuable insight into the market for and use of illegal firearms. One of the key points which they draw attention to is the increased availability of imitation and converted imitation firearms. They suggest that this increase in availability has resulted in a corresponding increase in their use in crimes, in particular amongst “*younger offenders who appear more likely to use those firearms recklessly*” (ibid: 113). A central strand in the government’s response to the use of replica firearms in violent crimes has been the introduction of legislation intended to restrict the sale and conversion of these weapons.

The measures contained within the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 (in particular Articles 36-41) aimed at reducing the availability of imitation firearms highlight the importance of supply related responses to tackling gun crime. That is, an important measure in tackling gun related violence is the identification and reduction of sources of weapons. This is not to play down the significance of non-supply related factors, rather it is to highlight a key distinction between the way in which gun and knife related violence tend to be understood and dealt with.

3.2.3 Knife related violence

Knife related violence cannot be said to be influenced by supply related factors in the same way that gun related violence is, given the ready availability of knives in most kitchen drawers and supermarkets. In understanding and tackling knife related violence amongst young men then, a greater emphasis tends to be placed on those non-supply related factors which influence young men’s decisions around carrying

weapons (Lemos, 2004; Young et al, 2007; Children's Commissioner 2009a).

Painting an accurate picture of the level of knife related violence nationally is a particularly difficult task, which is complicated by a number of factors. Not least of these is the fact that up to the recording period 2006/2007 police were required to record violent incidents by the scale and type of injury and not the weapon which caused the injury (Booth et al, 2008). Although this situation changed from 2007/2008, it still provides only limited scope for analysing knife related violence trends over time.

Despite the difficulties associated with gaining accurate data on knife related violence, there are a number of key points which can be drawn from the documents reviewed. Perhaps the most important of these points is that the majority of homicides each year, including those amongst young men, involve a sharp instrument of some sort (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Homicide by apparent method of Killing, England and Wales, 1997/98-2007/08 (Home Office, 2009) (Higher 'Poison or Drugs' homicides 02/03 linked to 172 homicides committed by Harold Shipman).

Apparent method	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08
Sharp instrument	202	201	213	215	261	266	242	260	219	269	270
Blunt instrument	68	65	70	77	60	48	73	66	60	45	66
Hitting, kicking etc	103	89	95	102	145	150	137	127	111	141	163
Strangulation	62	78	56	147	78	67	67	64	57	54	57
Shooting	52	46	61	72	97	75	67	70	50	59	53
Explosion	1	2	4	2	1	2	–	2	53	1	–
Burning	28	32	13	18	29	22	28	32	27	29	27
Drowning	6	6	6	9	12	7	24	12	4	9	6
Poison or drugs	17	47	53	33	35	202	20	29	31	26	20
Motor vehicle	13	14	11	16	19	21	22	22	14	6	12
Other	38	43	40	68	40	48	36	41	25	41	52
Not known	19	23	53	14	31	45	60	59	72	62	37
Total	609	646	675	773	808	953	776	784	723	742	763

While the statistics in Table 3.1 relate to the entire population, the trend towards higher numbers of knife related homicides evident across the first 10 years of the 2000s is also reflected in corresponding increases in young men’s representation within these figures (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2009). Young men’s increased involvement as victims in non-fatal knife related incidents is also evident, primarily supported by stab-related hospital admissions (ibid).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the reports reviewed point to a link between increases in the number of young men carrying knives and their involvement in violent crime and knife related homicides (both involving the use of physical violence). Following on from this, those enquiries which explored the issue of young men’s motivations for carrying weapons consistently highlighted feelings of fear and the need for protection as motivating factors (Children’s Commissioner, 2009c; Silvestri et al, 2009; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2009). Fear was not, however, the only factor cited as influencing young men’s decisions to carry or use weapons and, in fact, most of the documents argue that a full understanding of the

causes of street violence can only be gained by considering how a number of inter-related risk factors impact within specific contexts.

3.3 Risk, Vulnerability and Violence

Figure 3.8 is informed by Seidler's (2010) analysis of 'crime, culture and violence' and is a simplified graphical representation of the complex relationship between sociocultural factors, individual variables, vulnerability and violence. An individual or group's vulnerability, or their ability to deal with challenging or difficult circumstances, is shaped by both sociocultural factors and individual variables. An important criterion through which vulnerability is assessed by individuals and groups is risk, which might be actual, or statistical risk, or perceived risk. That is, vulnerability for an individual or group, given a particular social context and set of personal variables, will be heavily informed by perception of risk, which may only in part be determined by the statistical likelihood of harm. Within the literature there are a number of factors that are said to impact on the risk young men are at, be it their exposure to risk or their perceptions of risk. The following discussion is intended to provide an insight into a number of these influences.

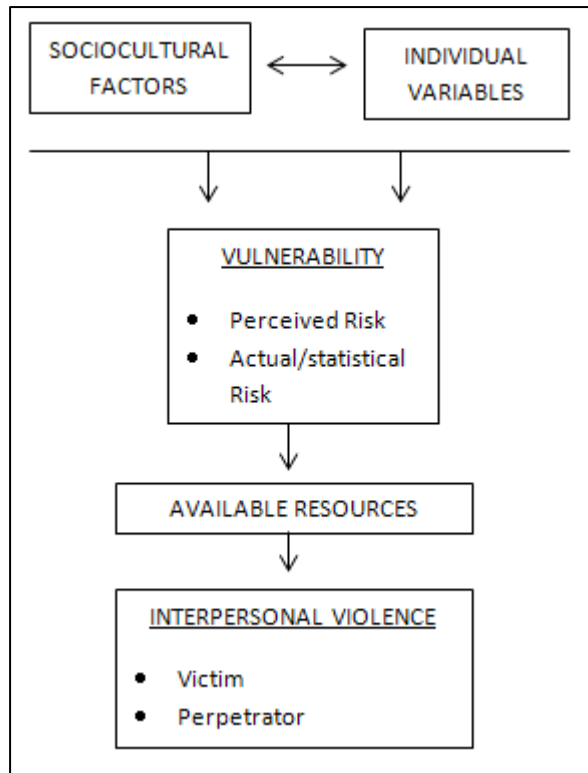


Figure 3.8 Representation of relationship between sociocultural factors, individual variables, vulnerability and violence

Within the literature reviewed there were a number of commonly cited risk factors, which were said to impact on the likelihood that young men would become exposed to and involved in street violence. It should be noted, however, that the risk factors discussed below are neither intended to be an exhaustive list nor do they constitute a straightforward tick-box guide to identifying those most at risk of involvement in street violence. Rather, this discussion is intended to, firstly, draw attention to the complex nature of the relationship between risk, vulnerability and violence for young people and, secondly, to highlight some of the most commonly identified issues within the literature reviewed.

3.3.1 Social and family context

The most frequently cited feature of young men’s social conditions which was said to impact on their involvement in street violence was poverty. The social and environmental conditions resulting from

poverty were said to exacerbate the likelihood that young people would become involved in physical violence; “*Research shows that high rates of crime and violence mostly affect disadvantaged areas...violence causes fear and stress and being exposed to it, as a victim or by seeing someone else being victimised, makes people more predisposed to commit [physical] violence themselves*” (Silvestri et al 2009, p. 24). In this sense, poverty could be said to expose young people to a form of social violence which, in turn, heightens their exposure to physical violence, both as victims and perpetrators. So entrenched is the relationship between poverty and violence deemed to be by Westoby (2008) that he warns against “*focusing on manifest visible violence*” to the detriment of our understanding of “*systemic violence that leads to intergenerational poverty*” (p. 4) and, ultimately, the re-occurrence of physical violence within certain communities.

The sentiment of Westoby’s point is echoed within a number of sources which cite young men’s involvement in violent gangs, and related conflicts over questions of ‘respect’, as stemming from their pursuit of a sense of status and achievement which is unattainable to them through ‘legitimate means’. Silvestri et al (2009) make this point quite clearly in stating that “*inequality, lack of opportunity, poverty and (relative) deprivation are conducive to thwarted aspirations. The development of criminal careers can therefore also be understood as a way of satisfying material aspirations*” (p. 7). In being drawn into criminal activity young men are more likely to become involved in what Pitts (2007) describes as “*the apparently irrational and excessive violence surrounding the drugs business*” (p. 43) most of which he suggests is in fact “*instrumental, designed ‘to get the job done’, and not simply reducible to the psychological proclivities of individual gang members*” (Pitts, 2007: 43).

While the heightened levels of gang related violence within disadvantaged communities has a very direct impact on those young

men who become gang-involved, it also has a significant impact on the many young men living in these communities who are not actively involved in gangs. This impact is felt by non-gang involved young men in two ways, firstly they have a heightened exposure to and, therefore, risk of becoming victims of gang violence. Secondly, “*where neighbourhoods are threatening, weapon carrying may make young people feel safer. However, the presence of weapons may escalate conflicts and increase the likelihood of injuries or death*” (Silvestri et al, 2009: 7).

The effects of living in a disadvantaged community do not, however, impact on all young men in the same way. There are aspects of young men’s family conditions which are cited as having a significant impact on the way in which they are able to deal with the violence they experience. Parkes and Connolly (2011), for example, highlight the influential role that families can play in either encouraging or discouraging young people from engaging in retaliatory violence, when they have been the victim of a violent attack.

Families are also said to play a central role in influencing young men’s educational achievements. Where families are able to provide a safe, stable and supportive environment, young men are more likely to achieve educationally and stand a better chance of avoiding the thwarted aspirations described by Silvestri et al (2009) above. This point is further reinforced by the observation that “*the rates of knife carrying increase markedly for young people excluded from mainstream education*” (Booth et al, 2008: 16).

Where family relationships are too problematic or destructive, and children or young people enter the care system, the risk of them becoming involved in gangs or gang related violence is heightened further (London Safeguarding Children Board, 2009). Whilst there is only limited information about why looked after children and care leavers are particularly at risk of involvement in gang related

violence, the sense of belonging which gang members often refer to is likely to be particularly appealing to looked after children, who are very often lacking in self-esteem and are particularly isolated from family and friends (ibid).

A final but important point to note in relation to social and family conditions is the heightened risk presented for Black and ethnic minority young men. Young men from these backgrounds are consistently over-represented both as victims and perpetrators of violence (Children's Commissioner, 2009c; Gibbs and Hickson, 2009; MOJ, 2011). While a number of reports highlight this over-representation, few deal in any detail with the underlying reasons for it, or explore ways in which it might be dealt with. This is an aspect of young men's involvement in violence which requires significantly more attention than it has received to-date.

3.3.2 Fear

Lockhart et al's (2007) research into public opinions of gun and knife crime revealed that 45% of those polled believed that their area was not as safe as it had been five years earlier. Other research highlighted disproportionately high levels of fear in urban areas, with the highest levels of fear being in London (Children's Commissioner, 2009c). Within those enquiries which focused specifically on young people, a consistent theme which emerged was their safety concerns (Lemos, 2004; Ralphs et al, 2009; Silvestri et al, 2009). It would be surprising if this was not the case given that young people are so disproportionately at risk of becoming victims of street violence.

The significance of young men's experiences of fear is the impact it appears to have on weapons carrying. As was noted above, self-protection was consistently cited by young people as a reason for carrying a knife (Lemos, 2004; Owen and Sweeting, 2007; Silvestri et al, 2009; Parkes and Connolly, 2011). In addition, there was a high correlation between the perception of a problem with knives in an area

and knife carrying amongst young people, with young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds being twice as likely to state that knife crime is a problem compared with their white counterparts (Children's Commissioner, 2009b). This insight raises questions about responses to knife crime which, in attempting to raise awareness about the dangers of knife carrying, run the risk of altering perceptions, heightening fears and, ultimately, causing an increase in the numbers of young people carrying weapons (Silvestri et al, 2009; Children's Commissioner, 2009b).

In addition to influencing the likelihood that young men will carry weapons, fear also has a significant impact on their negotiations of public space. Parkes and Connolly (2011) note the importance of social networks in enabling young people to more effectively negotiate risk, a point which is echoed by Ralphs et al (2009). However, Ralphs et al (2009) also draw attention to the process through which non-gang involved young men can become labelled as gang-involved on the basis of who they are seen to associate with. This process of guilt by association can be compounded in areas where heightened levels of fear restrict young men's movements outside their community, making them more likely to be seen associating with gang members within their areas (ibid).

Finally, the sheer number of reports, enquiries and policy documents focusing on young people's involvement in guns, gangs and knife violence produced over the last 5 to 10 years suggests heightened levels of fear amongst adults both *for* and, importantly, *of* young people. However, the question of why the adult population should be so fearful of young people receives only limited attention in the literature relating to youth violence. So, while I am inclined to agree with Silvestri et al (2009) that a more effective response to the issue of street violence amongst young men requires a better understanding of their insecurities and fears, I would suggest that progress in this

area also requires a clearer understanding of adult insecurities and fears.

3.3.3 Being ‘a victim’

As has been noted above, young men, and particularly young men from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, are consistently over-represented as victims of violence. The dividing line, however, between victim and perpetrator is not a straightforward one. Many young men who become perpetrators do so because they themselves have experienced violence as victims. Owen and Sweeting (2007) provide a very useful set of pathways which offer a basic framework for understanding the different ways in which young men might move from being a victim to being a perpetrator. Importantly, these pathways offer potential insights into the most appropriate support or intervention to offer. Three core pathways from victim to offender are proposed: retaliatory violence, displaced retaliation carried out by the victim and the victim befriending offenders.

Acts of retaliatory violence can enable young men to maintain respect and credibility by presenting themselves as perpetrators. In his research into gangs in Waltham Forrest Pitts (2007) describes the importance of ‘respect’ and suggests that “*to be disrespected means to be ‘fair game’ for anyone who wants to make a name for themselves*” (p. 48). Others also emphasise issues of respect and reputation more generally for young people, emphasising the significance these concepts hold in proving street credentials or attaining a sense of status or achievement (Silvestri et al, 2009; Parkes and Connolly, 2011).

In instances when retaliatory violence is not an option, either because the perpetrator is not known to the victim or because the victim is not ‘capable’ (in terms of personal or group strength/resources) of inflicting retaliatory violence, displaced retaliation can serve the purpose of enabling the victim either to save face or to vent the sense

of anger, frustration and powerlessness that comes of being a victim (Owen and Sweeting, 2007).

Where victims do not engage in retaliatory or displaced violence they may choose to befriend the perpetrators in order to protect themselves from further victimisation. Whilst the process of befriending does not directly involve violence, victims may, through their association with the offenders, be drawn into violence themselves. The low status that befrienders would be likely to have within a group or gang, combined with a likely eagerness to impress, may leave them more susceptible to being manipulated by dominant group or gang members.

3.3.4 Media representations

There are two key themes evident within the literature in relation to the portrayal of young men within the media. The first of these relates to the way in which young men tend to be portrayed, and the second relates to the impact this is said to have on their involvement in street violence. I will deal with each of these in turn here.

A consistent observation within most of the literature reviewed was the negative media portrayal of young men, and in particular Black young men. Importantly, this negative portrayal was said to be at variance with actual levels of violence (DCLG, 2007; Clarke et al, 2008; House of Common Home Affairs Committee, 2009). Research conducted by 'Women in Journalism' (Bawdon, 2009), which specifically looked at the portrayal of young men in the media highlighted that for all the coverage about teenagers, boys voices are rarely heard directly in the press, and that of the papers analysed for a given period, only 16% of stories about teens and entertainment were positive; only 24% about teens and sport were positive. This combination of voices not being directly heard in the media and a high proportion of negative coverage was also echoed in other sources which dealt more generally with the portrayal of young people (Ipsos MORI, 2006; Booth et al 2008, Martin et al 2010).

In determining a motive for the consistently negative portrayal of young people, Minton (2008) points to the old adage ‘fear sells’, a perspective which is also supported within a number of other sources (Booth et al, 2008; Martin et al, 2010). In their discussion of the impact of negative media representations of young people, Martin et al (2010) suggest,

“the few studies that have attempted to define and measure public opinion in relation to youth crime have found a tendency for the public to overestimate: the scale of youth crime; the number of young people involved in offending; the proportion of overall crimes committed by young people; and the seriousness of offences (especially in terms of violence)” (p. 5).

It is very difficult to assess the extent to which media representations are shaping, or being shaped by, adult perceptions of young men, although it is unlikely that the predominantly negative media coverage will promote a balanced view amongst adults.

Consistent negative portrayals of young men were said to heighten levels of fear and, more specifically, the likelihood that young men would choose to carry a weapon in order to protect themselves (Booth et al, 2008; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2009; Women in Journalism, 2009). Ironically, as discussed earlier, the choice to carry a weapon for ‘protection’ has the effect of making young men more likely to be involved in street violence, either as victims or as perpetrators.

3.4 Summary

It is worth reflecting on the key points drawn from the literature discussed so far. The first point identified was the challenge of defining and measuring levels and types of violence. It was noted that measures of violence are inherently shaped by the way in which violence is defined. The definition offered by WHO (2002) was identified as the definition which would be adopted within this

research. For the most part much of the literature was focused on a more narrow definition of violence; violence as an interpersonal act of physical force. A number of approaches to measuring levels of violence in England and Wales were reviewed and whilst the limitations of these measures were highlighted it was recognised that they do provide a valuable insight into a broad set of categories through which young people's experiences of street violence might be better understood. The discussion of literature on knife, gun and gang related violence provided an insight into young people's actual involvement in each of these categories of violence. Finally, I looked at some of the most commonly cited risk factors identified within the literature as influencing young people's exposure to, and involvement in, street violence: social and family context; fear; being 'a victim' and media representations. These risk factors were not presented as being mutually exclusive with some young people, or many in certain communities, being exposed to more than one.

An important point which has emerged from the discussions thus far is the significance of social context in shaping young people's exposure to and experience of street violence, both as victims and as perpetrators. I will turn my attention now to the question of social context by exploring a selection of literature which focuses on young people's contemporary experiences of urban public spaces in the UK. This discussion will also contribute to the development of a theoretical framework for understanding these experiences, which will be explored in greater depth within subsequent chapters. Before discussing this literature, however, it is important to take some time to establish a better understanding of the concept of fear, given its significance within my discussions.

3.5 A Tale of Fear and Violence

*'A mouse took a stroll through the deep dark wood,
A fox saw the mouse and the mouse looked good,*

*Where are you going to little brown mouse?
Come and have lunch in my underground house,
It's terribly kind of you fox but no,
I'm going to have lunch with a Gruffalo,
A Gruffalo, what's a Gruffalo?
A Gruffalo, why didn't you know?
He has terrible tusks and terrible claws, and terrible
teeth in his terrible jaws,
Where are you meeting him?
Here by these rocks, and his favourite food is roasted fox!
Roasted fox, I'm off! Good-bye little mouse, and away he
sped...
Silly old fox, doesn't he know there's no such thing as a
Gruffalo!' (Donaldson 1999)*

This extract from the children's story the Gruffalo provides a number of interesting insights on the nature of fear which are also evident in the wider fear literature. A point which is particularly worth noting is the nature of the relationship between violence and fear. The story of the Gruffalo, and in particular the accounts of fear within that story, hinge on what are for the most part implicit threats of violence. That is, the offer of lunch in fox's underground house is understood by the mouse, and the reader, as a threat by the fox to eat the mouse for lunch. The mouse's counter threat of violence is also an implied threat. The mouse constructs a fear inducing creature, the Gruffalo, who enjoys eating roasted fox. If, as has been discussed previously, we accept the deep rooted relationship between power and violence, then we might also understand fear as a central resource in the manipulation of power and, more specifically, social control; as Altheide (2002) suggests '*directing fear in a society is tantamount to controlling that society*' (p. 17).

The sources of literature focusing on fear might broadly be divided into two categories: those that focus on more individualised

experiences and explanations of fear (Marks, 1978; Gray, 1987; Marks, 1987; Brantley, 2007; Muris, 2007) and those that adopt a more socio-cultural perspective (Glassner, 1999; Robin, 2004; Füredi, 2006; Svendsen, 2008; Pain and Smith, 2008; Linke and Taana-Smith, 2009). However, within both of these categories most of the literature acknowledges the complex and interconnected relationship between individual, group and societal fears. Individual fear, that is, informs levels of fear within the wider group or society which, in-turn, feedback into individual experiences of fear.

Svendsen (2008) captures something of this complexity of fear in his attempt to answer the question ‘what is fear?’. He identifies fear as an emotion, although he acknowledges the similarities in English between feelings and emotions. He suggests that part of the complexity of understanding fear is the fact that it has biological, physiological and social aspects. There are, however, a number of features of human fear identified by Svendsen (2008) which offer some clarity. He notes that humans are distinguished from animals by being able to fear objects which are not immediately present and which do not present a direct threat to us. This feature of human fear is rooted in our ability to imagine the threat that an object might present to our safety. Fear is typically associated as being accompanied with a flight or attack instinct but this does not have to be the case. Just as a person might feel love for another but not express it, so too we might fear another person but choose not to show it in case, for example, revealing our fear made matters worse; *‘emotions motivate action but do not determine it’* (p. 30).

This raises the questions of what mediates an individual’s perceptions of, and actions in relation to a particular emotion. Svendsen (2008) notes that the emotions of fear and anger are typically accompanied by very similar physiological states. The difference in whether an individual experiences one or the other of these is dependent on the context, or more particularly their interpretation of the context.

Svendsen (2008) uses the concept of 'Habits' to set out his perspective on fear. He suggests that '*habits form the 'backdrop' for that which consciousness is directed towards*' and they determine '*what we normally look for in a situation of a particular type*' (p. 45). Svendsen (2008) suggests that fear might therefore be understood as a '*culturally conditioned habit*' (p. 21).

The same complexity that Svendsen (2008) grapples with is reflected in discussions of fear across the literature. There are, however, a number of key themes which are of particular interest in placing young people's experiences of fear in context. The first theme relates to the political nature of fear; the second explores heightening levels of fear in the UK and across the western world more generally; and, finally, the impact that these heightened levels of fear are having on particular groups. I will explore each of these themes in-turn, the first of which is an extension of my introductory point above.

Whilst fear is a naturally occurring emotion which serves an important function in protecting us from predatory animals in the wild, it also serves more political ends whereby it is mobilised by certain groups or sections of society as a resource to either reinforce their positions of power or to destabilise the power base of other individuals or groups. Robin (2004) suggests that political fear can be understood as '*people's felt apprehension of some harm to their collective well-being - the fear of terrorism, panic over crime, anxiety about moral decay - or the intimidation wielded over men and women by governments or groups*' (p. 2).

Leonardo and Porter (2010) highlight the inherently political nature of efforts to tackle fear in their discussion of race dialogue within educational settings. They suggest that the pursuit of sanitised or politically correct public race dialogues serves the purpose of creating '*a safe space where whites can avoid 'looking racist''*' (p. 139) and, in doing so, avoid the less safe and more uncomfortable challenge of the

underlying tensions presented by racial inequalities. The reduction or elimination of fear, therefore, must always be linked to questions of whose fear is to be reduced or, as Leonardo and Porter (2010) suggest, the question of ‘*safety for whom?*’ must always be asked.

Erickson (2010) places a similar emphasis on the importance of dialogue and discourse in understanding the politics of fear and in identifying ways in which such fear might be resisted. Erickson (2010) cites the significance of US President Roosevelt’s call for the realisation of four fundamental freedoms at the outbreak of the Second World War: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. Erickson (2010) suggests that placing fear at the heart of the security agenda establishes a fear paradox in which the reduction of fear becomes a central concern, yet this same emphasis ensures that the fear of what might happen becomes etched into the population’s psyche; ‘*in retaining the use of this logic of fear, we are not fixing the problem, but perpetuating it*’ (p. 2).

Skrimshire’s (2008) discussion of the relationship between fear and hope suggests an important difference between Roosevelt’s emphasis on fear and more contemporary constructions. Skrimshire (2008) suggests that not only are contemporary societies marked by a politics of fear but that this culture of fear is defined by an ‘*abandonment of the imagination of the future*’ (p. 191). Robin (2004) offers a similar emphasis in suggesting that one of the defining tensions in contemporary cultures of fear is that it is easier to believe in cruelty and fear than in freedom and equality, despite the fact that freedom and equality are what inspire us to challenge and struggle against the oppressive outcomes of political fear. There are, however, more recent developments in relation to terrorism which have had a seismic impact on cultures of fear around the globe. Any consideration of contemporary efforts to struggle against or challenge oppressive outcomes of political fear must be understood in the context of these developments.

A second theme within the fear literature relates to heightened levels of fear in Western societies, and a significant focus within this literature is the impact of terrorist attacks on people's experiences of fear. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on the 11th September 2001 in which almost 3,000 people were killed have had a significant impact on North American cultures of fear which have, in-turn, reverberated around the world in the form of the 'war on terror'. Linke and Taana-Smith (2009) suggest that the war on terror led to '*unprecedented state-legitimated terror against phantasmatic others*' and that '*US visions of the "axis of evil" or the figure of "the terrorist" are as illusive as reactive - fuelling popular desire for fortified borders*' (p. 3). The impact of these events has been experienced widely and has shaped experiences of fear at national, regional and local levels. One of the most significant outcomes, however, is summed up quite simply by Pain (2008) as '*fear is on the up*' (p. 1). Chomsky (2009) makes an important point, however, in relation to terrorism and the 'construction' of the terrorist. Terrorism, he suggests '*is not the weapon of the weak. It is the weapon of those who are against "us" whoever "us" happens to be*' (p. 28). Chomsky (2009) suggests that throughout history the ability to construct the other side as the 'evil terrorist' has been an essential resource in a country's ability to wage wars that can be presented as just. The fear of terrorism that has gripped many western nations, and its citizens, might then be considered a fear of their own making.

Füredi (2006) suggests that we are more than ever before, living in a culture of fear and he outlines three principle features of this culture. Firstly, he suggests that there has been a shift in the moral reaction to harm. Bad things happen, Füredi suggests, but contemporary society finds it difficult to accept the randomness in tragic events. The quest to find meaning in unfortunate but ultimately meaningless and random accidents, which might historically have been perceived as 'acts of God', has led to a culture in which it is assumed that someone must be

to blame. In support of his argument Füredi (2006) cites efforts within the medical establishment in both the US and the UK to remove the word 'accident' from its vocabulary.

The second of Füredi's (2006) features of the culture of fear is that safety has become an end in itself. Füredi suggests that Western society has become obsessed with safety and, more specifically, with the elimination rather than the management of risk. Every action within the modern work place, for example, is risk-assessed, the management of personal safety has become a growth industry, participation in sporting activities cannot be considered without first acquiring the appropriate safety equipment and children are prevented from interacting with the natural world for fear that their safety might be compromised. Safety, Füredi argues, has come to be prioritised over any experiential value that might be gained through taking risks. Rather than making the world a less fearful place these measures appear to be heightening sensitivity and fears in relation to aspects of our environment that never featured as a source of fear in the past.

The final feature of the culture of fear identified by Füredi (2006) relates to the changing narrative of harm. Füredi suggests that the narrative drawn on by individuals or groups in response to challenging or difficult situations is informed by the particular cultural and historical contexts within which that narrative is constructed. Füredi highlights this point by contrasting responses to significant floods in Britain, one in the 1950s and the other in the 2000s, and suggest that in the context of 21st century culture '*when we face adversity we do so as vulnerable individuals who are unlikely to cope on their own*' (pp. 19-20). The emphasis, therefore, in periods of adversity in 21st century Britain tends to be on the hardship and trauma experienced by individuals rather than, as was the case in the 1950s, a determination to overcome through collective action. Linking back to the previous discussion of the importance of context to interpretation of emotions, the context of post war 1950s Britain resulted in a particular

interpretation of the emotions evoked by hardship which was distinctly different from what might be expected as a result of contemporary experiences of hardship.

Svendsen (2008) emphasises the role of the media in amplifying our experience of emotions; *'it is tempting to say that the media play such a pivotal role that a danger or catastrophe become 'real' only when it gets press coverage'* (p. 19). He argues that such is the amplification of fear, referred to by Cohen (1972) as moral panics, in modern Western societies that fear has become the lens through which everything is viewed. Similarly, Altheide (2002) highlights specific changes in the media industry and considers their impact on the creation of fear. He discusses, amongst other aspects of media culture, changes in journalistic interviewing towards an impact format which is more suited to prime-time TV interviewing. Heightened levels of societal fears, suggests Altheide, is an important consequence of these changes. The question of what the literature says about how these heightened levels of fear are experienced by particular individuals and groups in society is the focus of the third theme identified in the literature and is what I will now turn my attention to.

In addition to highlighting the dominant culture of fear in Western societies and the general impact that this is said to have on social life in those societies, much of the literature also looks more specifically at how particular groups within and outside those societies experience fear. A significant proportion of this literature is concerned with experiences of fear in public space and a central concern across this literature is the question of equality and the extent to which the culture of fear discussed above is experienced differently by different sections of society. Pain and Smith (2008) suggest that *'there is a strong relationship between marginality and fear, as the contours of anxiety within cities tend to follow typographies of inequality'* (p. 4). Within the literature which focuses on marginality and fear in public space the experiences of women feature highly.

A particular focus within this literature is on women's experiences of using male dominated and masculine spaces, and the related issue of women's vulnerability to, and experiences of, crime within these spaces (Stanko, 1990; Valentine, 1991; Duncan, 1996). To be a victim of a crime is a disempowering experience but to be the victim of a crime committed by a man in a masculine space represents a much more significant threat to women's sense of safety and identity in public space. Sandberg and Rönnblom (2013) note that whilst the last two decades have seen significant developments in relation to the understanding of, and women's actual experiences of, fear in public space, this issue still presents significant tensions, even in what might be considered a 'progressive' town in a 'progressive' country. They explore the public space experiences of women in Umea in Sweden over an 8 year period when a serial rapist was operating. Their analysis of interview data suggests that *'respondents were positioned between a traditional discourse of women as vulnerable and scared, and a modern gender-equal discourse whereby women were supposed to feel self-assured'* (p. 199). The tension, they suggest in adopting a gender-equal discourse was that it did not leave an opening for women in relation to how they might handle fear of men's violence; the gender equal woman is 'self-assured' and does not fear men's violence, or at least does not discuss this fear. This public silencing can feed a sense of individual responsibility of victimhood – by being fearful women are made to feel culpable.

Other areas of research in the literature focusing on gender related experiences of fear in public space include: the role of self-defence literature in reinforcing fear of violence (Hickley, 2011), links between fear in public and private spaces (Whitzman, 2007), transgender individuals' experiences of fear in public space (Doan, 2009) and the creation of safe public spaces in response to homophobic violence (Corteen, 2002). This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the research in this area but it is illustrative of the

general focus of this literature, which has over the last two decades highlighted the experiences of groups or sections of society that have experienced marginalisation in public space. This is understandable given that these groups also represent a significant proportion of those who are victims of violence in public spaces. However, given the equally high proportion of men, and young men in particular, who are victims of violence in public space there is a clear argument for more research and a greater understanding of men's, and particularly young men's, experiences of fear in public space (Moore and Breeze, 2012).

Cockburn (2008) suggests that many of the measures introduced in the UK to tackle fear of crime have a populist make up and are often aimed at reducing adult concerns in relation to young people, concerns which are often not based in rational assessments of actual risks. Young people, Cockburn argues, are more likely to become victims of violence yet there is only a limited understanding of their experiences of fear in public space and particularly how this fear might influence their actions as perpetrators of violence. Whilst less is known specifically about young people's experience of fear in public space, some insight might be gained from the growing body of literature relating to the social geographies of children and young people, which I will now turn my focus to.

3.6 The Geography of Youth Violence

Taken at face value the distinction between public and private space would appear to be a reasonably unproblematic one; private space is that space which is privately owned, all other space being public space. However, as Nancy Duncan (1996, p.127) argues, despite being interwoven into the British legal system and embedded in our culture "*the binary distinction between private and public spaces and the relation of this to private and public spheres is highly problematic*". The image that emerges from much of the literature in this area is not one of public and private spaces shaped by the textured edges of

bricks and mortar, rather one which is shaped by a far less tangible mix of power, control and dominance. Duncan (1996) argues that it is not possible to define all space as being either strictly public or strictly private. Rather, that the line between the two is blurred and shifting. The front line between these spaces is, in essence, a battle for territory, through which men seek to label space as private and therefore retain oppressive power relations over women and children. For Duncan the generally accepted boundaries placed on private space are in fact the result of a 'political arrangement' (ibid, p.134), intended to maintain the oppressive power relations which men currently enjoy within private spaces. Duncan calls for a breaking down of the public/private space dichotomy in the interest of those, in particular women and children, who would suffer at the hands of those men who would abuse their position of power within the private sphere. Stanko (1994) links the power imbalances within the private sphere to wider issues of inequality, suggesting that not only are men in a position to abuse their position of power in the home but that criminology pays little attention to the resulting oppressive violence experienced by women.

There are a number of important points to draw from the feminist analysis of the public/private space divide which are of relevance to the discussion of young people's public space experiences. Firstly, historically there has been a pattern of unequal power relations within the private sphere, which favoured men over women and children. Secondly, men have, either deliberately or through apathy or inaction, abused their position of power within the private sphere. Thirdly, that the unequal power relations within the private sphere have been reinforced by wider social institutions. The last and perhaps most important point to make is that these unequal power relations have shaped women's experiences of domestic violence, both the likelihood that they would experience it and the support they would receive should they experience it. Feminist geographers' questioning of the public/private divide has provided an important resource for those

who would seek to challenge the view that the issue of domestic violence is a *private* matter, best left to husband and wife to resolve. A similar deconstruction of young people's experiences of public space could prove useful in challenging conventional/accepted understandings of young men's experiences of violence in public space.

3.6.1 Young People: 'matter out of place'?

Ever since the emergence within British culture of the distinct grouping of 'young people' or 'youth', commentators have observed societal fears and concerns both for the well-being of this group and, perhaps more commonly, concern for the threat this group represents to the well-being of society (Cohen, 1972; Goetschius and Tash, 1967; Hall & Jefferson, 1993, Roche et al 2004). Cohen's classic study (Cohen 1972) of 'Moral Panics' surrounding Mods and Rockers in the 1960s explored the interaction between young people's behaviour, media coverage and wider societal concerns. He described an 'amplification process' which serves to heighten societal concerns. This process starts with the reporting of a deviant act within media sources, which draws public attention and results in greater coverage of a range of similar incidents, which might not normally receive media attention or the attention of the wider public. This heightens levels of police, media and public interest in subsequent incidents. The deviant group is said to "*perceive themselves as more deviant, group themselves with others in a similar position, and this leads to more deviance*" (Cohen 1972, p.18). Judges and politicians come under pressure to deal more harshly with the deviant behaviour and this, in turn, further heightens public fears and contributes to the amplification spiral.

Douglas' (1966) work on questions of 'dirt' and 'pollution' provides a valuable conceptual resource in exploring the origins of adult concerns in relation to young people, as described by Cohen (ibid). Douglas (1966) suggests that there is a commonly held belief that

notions of pollution in primitive societies are highly symbolic, while in developed societies they are founded more on scientific notions of hygiene. However, Douglas (ibid) rejects this view asking;

“Are our ideas of hygienic where theirs [primitive societies] are symbolic? Not a bit of it: I am going to argue that our ideas of dirt also express symbolic systems and that the difference between pollution behaviour in one part of the world and another is only a matter of detail” (pp. 34-35).

‘Dirt’, according to Douglas (ibid) is identifiable as such because it is ‘*matter out of place*’. Yet in order to be able to identify something as being out of place a system must exist to determine where ‘things’ should be. That is, “*where there is dirt there is system*” (ibid, p. 35). Whether young people’s presence in public space might be viewed as ‘dirt’ or ‘matter out of place’ has been the focus for a growing body of literature within the subject area broadly described as social geography (taken here in its broadest sense to include literature from a range of geography related subject areas, such as cultural geography, urban geography, urban sociology and children’s geographies). A significant focus within this literature is the impact of the changing nature of urban public spaces on particular minority groups, children and young people being one of those minority groups. In discussing this literature my focus will be firstly on what it says about the changing nature of UK urban public spaces and secondly how this is said to impact on young people.

3.6.2 The changing nature of public space and excluded minorities

Although not all of the literature makes explicit what is being referred to by ‘public space’, the use of the term across the youth related literature is reasonably consistent with those spaces proposed by Matthews et al (2000): “*all public outdoor places where children are found, such as roads, cul-de-sacs, alleyways, walkways, shopping areas, car parks, vacant plots and derelict sites*” (p. 281).

It should be noted that the term ‘children’ is used in numerous ways within the literature. In places it is used as a broad heading which encompasses all age groups up to the age of 18, whilst in other instances ‘children’ is used to refer to a younger group and in distinction from the older category of *teenager, young person or youth*. My intention has been to focus on the literature which deals specifically with the category of young person; however, where relevant, the broader category of child or children has also been drawn on for its relevance to young people.

Ever since the very first trading stall or market was established it seems reasonable to suggest that places of commerce have been on the front line in the divide between public and private space, and that the use of norms, rules and expectations to govern such spaces has been common place. A homeless beggar would have been no more welcomed at London’s famous Borough Market when it first began trading over 250 years ago than he or she would be today. What is different today, perhaps, is the extent to which behavioural expectations have been refined, with behaviour which might be considered unpalatable being increasingly either managed within or managed out of public space. It is exactly this question of the historical changes in public space usage which Karsten (2005) explores in her comparison of historic and contemporary daily use of urban space by children in Amsterdam. Although, as Karsten acknowledges herself, there are methodological limitations to such a comparative study, particularly the tendency for some to look on the past with rose tinted glasses, this research does provide a useful insight into changing perceptions of children’s presence in public space over a 60 year period. Karsten draws the conclusion that “*public space has been transformed from a space that belongs to children (childspace) into one meant for adults and accompanied children only*” (p. 287).

Although the US context of Childress' (2004) research might limit the relevance of some of its insights on teenage territoriality to the UK context, it raises important questions in relation to property ownership. Childress draws attention to the important distinction between teenagers and adults in their relation to private property. Unlike adults, teenagers (for the most part) do not have the ability to own, modify or rent private property and can, therefore, "*only choose to occupy and use the property of others*" (Childress 2004, p. 196). She identifies a number of controlling factors- such as the drive to make spaces profitable, corporatisation and insurance limitations- which are gradually encroaching into what might otherwise be liminal public spaces open to appropriation and modification by young people as part of what she views as an important "*counter-positioning of experiential and modern cultural norms*" (p. 199).

Changes in relation to the corporatisation of public spaces in the UK are perhaps most sharply seen through the development of malls or shopping centres which began to appear in the 1950s and have, since then, continued to spring up around the country. A tour of the country today would reveal few self-respecting towns or cities which could not boast at least one large shopping centre or retail-park. Through his study of two of London's shopping centres, Jackson (1998) explores the nature of the shopping experience within these centres and attempts to make some more general assessments of the impact shopping centres like these are having on shopping culture more generally in the UK. Jackson concludes that the shopping experience in the modern shopping centre amounts to shopping made safe for the middle classes and that within this new managed environment 'questions of access, exclusion, surveillance and control are all too present' (Jackson 1998, p.188). A similar picture of the shopping centre experience is presented by Matthews et al (2000), who describe the shopping centre (or shopping mall) as a 'hybrid' place where young people could hangout in a relatively safe and secure space but, in doing so, had to subject themselves the "*panopticon of the adult*

gaze” (p. 291), where many adults “*perceive the public and visible presence of young people...as uncomfortable and inappropriate*” (p. 292).

Fyfe and Bannister (1998) attempt to explore the impact that the rise of the out of town shopping centre is having on town centres and, in particular, the extent to which CCTV has been used as a tool to make town centres ‘safe again’. Using the particular example of the introduction of CCTV in Glasgow town centre Fyfe and Bannister (ibid) highlight the way in which CCTV has been used to exclude certain individuals or groups who might detract from the shopping experience for those with more spending power. In the interest of generating business, town centres are placed in competition with out of town shopping centres, each trying to create a space or a shopping experience which will not offend the sensibilities of the paying customer. Similarly, Millie (2008) highlights the increasing importance of aesthetics for town centres in attracting business back from out of town shopping centres. However, she also makes an important connection between aesthetics and efforts to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). Perceptions of what counts as ASB are, Millie (ibid) suggests, “*strongly influenced by sensory, or aesthetic cues*” (p. 383). However, Millie suggest that what counts as aesthetically pleasing from a public space perspective is largely determined by adults (Cockburn 2008) who, linking back to the discussion of Mary Douglas, invariably see young people’s presence in public space as matter out of place. For Millie (ibid) this means that young people are invariably the subjects of measures aimed at tackling ASB. Having looked within this section at the changing nature of public space and more specifically the emergence of particular public spaces within which youth presence is seen as problematic I will now focus on the processes which are said to be excluding young people from those spaces.

3.6.3 The process of exclusion

In his discussion of a group which he refers to as ‘Street life People’ (street drinkers) Moore (2008) provides a valuable insight into both the process by which certain ‘troublesome’, unwanted or aesthetically displeasing groups come to be removed from particular public spaces. More specifically, Moore (ibid) highlights the way in which he sees the previous (New Labour) Government’s policing agenda pressuring police to adopt exclusionary tactics in dealing with ‘street life people’, which he reports they did reluctantly. He suggests that New Labour’s community policing policies were facilitating or even promoting ‘the eliminative ideal’ by giving certain sections of the community the power to dictate policing practices.

Rutherford (1997) suggests that “*the eliminative ideal strives to solve present and emerging problems by getting rid of troublesome and disagreeable people with methods which are lawful and widely supported*” (p. 116). He uses this concept to explore the processes of exclusion at work during a number of significant points in history. One of these points being the 5 years preceding the Holocaust in Germany when Rutherford (ibid) suggests the eliminative ideal was applied to removing certain unwanted individuals from German society under the auspices of ‘*preventative crime control*’. Rutherford (ibid), as with Bauman (1989), suggests that the importance of this period in creating the conditions for later atrocities to unfold is significantly understated by historians.

It is possible to see aspects of the eliminative process at work in Goldsmith’s (2008) research documenting young people’s experiences of ‘cameras, cops and contracts’ on a council estate in southern England. Goldsmith (ibid) highlights the counterproductive nature of some of the measures put in place to tackle young people’s behaviour, in particular through the use of CCTV cameras, Anti-social Behaviour Contacts (ASBCs) and ‘stop and search’ measures. Goldsmith (ibid) suggests that as a consequence of these behaviour management

practices the young people being targeted are increasingly spatially marginalized within their own community.

Bannister and Kearns (2012) suggest that “*anti-social behaviour policy has fed negative stereotypes of youth and positioned young people as a metaphor for deeper social malaise*” (p. 1). An ambiguous definition of ASB (MacKenzie et al, 2010) combined with New Labour ASB policies aimed primarily at tackling (adult) anxieties about crime levels (as opposed to actual crime) (Bannister and Kearns, 2012) has led to many young people being subjected to ASB measures simply for hanging around in public spaces (Pickering et al, 2011). A central point emphasised both within the ASB literature and the wider youth focused social geographic literature is the social, cultural and political significance of public spaces for young people. As such, public spaces are central to young people’s identity construction. Therefore, whether exploring the experiences of young people hanging out in a parking lot in Wisconsin (Childress, 2004), children’s street play in Amsterdam (Karsten, 2005), skate boarders in Newcastle (Rogers et al, 2005) or youth territorialism in ‘locations across Britain’ (Bannister et al, 2012) questions of adult power and control of public spaces, and the resulting marginalisation of young people has been evident throughout. However, the literature which focuses more specifically on ‘youth participation’ would suggest very mixed progress on questioning adult hegemony and challenging the underlying power dynamics which are undermining young people’s place in public space (Rogers et al, 2005; Gallagher, 2008; Percy and Smith, 2010).

3.6.4 Gendered public spaces

Much has been written about the gendered nature of British urban public spaces, and in particular the masculine nature of these spaces (Stanko, 1990; Rose, 1993; Stanko, 1994; Duncan, 1996; MacDowell, 1999; Buckingham, 2000; Valentine, 2001, Paechter 2007). Most of this literature is written from a feminist perspective and focuses on

the ways in which women are disempowered, marginalised or excluded as a result of this gendering. Much less, however, is written or understood about how young men's constructions of masculinity are structured by their experiences of the masculine urban spaces they occupy. The literature in this area tends to focus more on children's experiences of play spaces or on spaces within public institutions, such as schools. Paechter (2007), for example, considers how 'boys' and 'girls' construct masculinity and femininity in outdoor play spaces and emphasises the significance of the spatial arrangement of play spaces, and adult intervention in these spaces, in informing children's collective constructions of particular masculinities or femininities. She highlights the dominance of hegemonic masculinities within children's play spaces and advocates greater intervention in order to open up the possibility of alternative constructions of masculinity or femininity. Epstein et al (2001) make a similar point in relation to the sports cages they observed in two primary schools. They suggest that the spatial organisation of the 'cages' resulted in the marginalisation of both girls and those boys who were either not interested in or not good at football. Similar to Paechter (2007), they highlight the impact that gender conscious teacher management of such spaces can have on gendered power relations.

Mac an Ghail (1994) identifies schools as '*crucial cultural sites in which material, ideological and discursive resources serve to affirm hegemonic masculinity, while producing a range of masculine subject positions that young men come to inhabit*' (p. 179). Mac an Ghail emphasises that masculinities are constantly being constructed and re-constructed through '*discursive practices within which the male students are positioned and in turn position others*' (179). Messerschmidt (1993), through his analysis of various pieces of ethnographic and life-history research, highlights the way in which different forms of crime serve as ways of 'doing' masculinity, emphasising the importance of class and ethnicity in this process. The message that comes from the work of both Mac an Ghail (ibid) and

Messerschmidt (ibid) is that national institutions, such as the education system, construct forms of masculinity, including violent masculinities. There is a broad range of literature which considers masculinity construction within school settings (Sewell, 1997; O'Donnell, 2000; Martino and Meyenn, 2001; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Alldred and David, 2007), which provides a valuable perspective for considering young men's masculinity construction in public spaces. However, as Messerschmidt (1994, p. 88) notes '*masculinity is a behavioural response to the particular conditions and situations in which we participate*' and, as such, a more specific understanding of the 'particular conditions' of young men's masculinity construction in urban public spaces is needed. This will be an important point of focus within this research, and the work of R.W. Connell an important theoretical resource.

R.W. Connell has been central to the theorisation of masculinities over the last 20 years. Her work on masculinity challenged what had been a much narrower conception of masculinity (Giddens, 2009), by proposing the existence of multiple masculinities. Connell suggests that:

"The history of masculinity, it should be abundantly clear, is not linear. There is no master line of development to which all else is subordinate, no simple shift from 'traditional' to 'modern'. Rather we see, in the world created by the European empires, complex structures of gender relations in which dominant, subordinate and marginalized masculinities are in constant interaction, changing the conditions for each others' existence and transforming themselves as they do" (1995, p. 198).

Central to the theory of masculinity construction is the relationship between gender and power and a key concept in this relationship is hegemonic masculinity. Given Connell's emphasis on multiple forms of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity does not refer to a single dominant masculinity, rather, it is the pattern of gender relations which, within a particular historical and cultural context, "*guarantees*

the dominant position of men and subordination of women” (Connell 1995, p. 77). Hegemonic masculinity works, in part, ‘*through the production of exemplars of masculinity (e.g., professional sports stars), symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them*’ (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846).

In their review of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), and more recently Messerschmidt (2012a), highlight the variety of ways in which the concept has been applied within the masculinities literature. They suggest that the term has increasingly been used more loosely and in some cases has strayed from its intended focus on “*the pattern of practice...that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue*” (p. 832). In particular, Messerschmidt (2012a) suggests that inconsistent appropriations of the term have resulted in dominant forms of masculinity within particular cultural contexts being identified as hegemonic masculinity even though they “*may actually do little to legitimate men’s power over women and...[conversely] masculinities that legitimate men’s power actually may be culturally marginalized*” (p. 71).

If Hegemonic masculinity refers to particular dominant forms of masculinity, then subordinated masculinity refers to those forms of masculinity which are positioned at the bottom of a gender hierarchy amongst men. While gay masculinities are the most recognisable subordinated masculinity they are not the only ones. Since Connell’s early work in opening up the field of masculinities there has been extensive research and writing around the variety of ways in which men do masculinity in particular contexts, and the categories that might be used to group or order these masculinities. Examples of the variety of established and emerging categories of masculinities include the local, regional and global dimensions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, 2002, 2008; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Mac and Ghail, 1994; Messerschmidt, 2012), protest

masculinity (Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), oppositional masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993, 1994) and dominant, dominating and subordinate masculinities (Connell, 1995; Messerschmidt, 2012a).

Connell suggests that his theory of hegemonic masculinity can be used in analysis of violence (Connell, 2002) and more specifically in analysis of violence in young people's lives (Connell, 2005). He suggests that,

“used with awareness of historical context -and not as a catch-all formula- it may help explain the cultural embedding and specific shape of violence in communities where physical aggression is expected or admired among men” (2002, p. 93).

This research will draw on Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and the broader body of masculinity literature in considering the 'specific shape of violence' amongst young men in Dock Town.

3.7 Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed in the first half of this chapter highlighted that whilst young people are over-represented as perpetrators of violent crime, they are also over-represented as victims. The social geography literature explored in the second half of the chapter suggested that this victimisation is experienced in the context of gendered public spaces where young people are increasingly marginalised. Insights were drawn from feminist geographers' analysis of domestic violence. Whilst the intention here was not to draw direct parallels between victim experiences of domestic violence and street violence, it is suggested that the feminist approach to exploring the socially constructed nature of domestic violence might also prove useful in developing a greater understanding of street violence. This point will be explored in greater depth within my next chapter.

4.0 Methodology

A central task of this chapter is to outline the stages encountered, and key decisions made, in progressing from an initial research question to identifying the most appropriate methodology, research methods and approach to data analysis. These questions were not considered in isolation from each other, they were all informed by the social constructionist perspective on street violence outlined within chapter one. Both the choice of methodology and the approach to discussing it within this chapter are reflective of this perspective.

Before discussing the ethnographic approach adopted within this research it is important to pick up on a point raised in Chapter 2 relating to the dual roles assumed within data collection, that of practitioner and researcher. Cullen et al (2012) suggest that many accounts of practitioner research describe a process through which research is conducted by practitioners in order to improve their own practice. They suggest, however, that this is a limited understanding of practitioner research as it does not accommodate the broader range of purposes served by practitioner-researchers, beyond the realm of personal practice. Within this research I worked alongside youth workers, as a qualified youth worker myself, to gain a better understanding of young men's experiences of street violence. While staff development was not my primary concern, it was expected that an improved understanding of young men's involvement in street violence would contribute to youth worker understandings of, and responses to, this issue. As such, this research fits with what Cullen et al (2012) describe as the broad purposes of practitioner research: "*the production of new knowledge that can advance practice*" and "*the generation of knowledge to develop theory*" (p. 11).

If practitioner research was to be divided into the broad categories of practitioners who draw on research to improve their practice and researchers who draw on practitioner roles to enhance their research,

then this research would sit more comfortably in the second of these categories. Regardless of this emphasis, however, the underlying tension of having to maintain the dual roles of practitioner and researcher was evident within this research. Wilkinson (2000, p. 125) notes the tension that arises for ‘teacher-turned-researchers’ who struggle to prevent prior assumptions from inhibiting their ability to observe the research setting afresh. Whilst Wilkinson emphasises the need to move beyond these previous assumptions he also notes the values they can have in providing a ‘privileged position’ from which to observe. While the professional role of street-based youth worker enabled me to have a ‘privileged position’ from which to observe young people, this role was also at times in tension with my research role.

One example of this would be the team’s work with young women. From a research point of view my priority was observing and talking to young men and while I was not ruling out talking to young women, my priority was young men. From a youth work perspective, however, the stated aims of the project guided the street-based team to work with both young women and young men. The extent to which I should have been more proactive in encouraging the other youth workers to try to develop work with young women, to the possible detriment of my research, was a challenging point of reflection. Campbell et al (2007) highlight the importance of ethical considerations within practitioner-research, and young women’s potential exclusion from the street-based work as a result of my pursuit of a ‘young men’ focused research agenda was an important ethical consideration.

A significant resource in managing this ethical concern were the aims, objectives and programme plan set out by the team at the start of the project. These were the priorities for the street-based youth work and provided a reference point for the workers to reflect on. I was proactive in ensuring that review sessions were held over the course of the street-based work when the youth workers reflected back on the

aims they had set out. This created an important space where the distinction between the research and youth work agendas could be reasserted. Just as the project planning provided a point of re-orientation for the youth work priorities, the research aim and research question provided an important point of reflection for data collection. This reflection was not a one off or even occasional task but an on-going feature of my daily reflections over the course of data collection.

4.1 The Ethnographic Approach

Bryman (2012) highlights the variety of ways in which the term ethnography is used and its relationship to participant observation. He suggests that ethnography is sometimes referred to as a method, at other times a methodology, but it is also used to refer to the outcome of a piece of research. Gobo (2012) proposes that ethnography is a methodology involving two research strategies: participant and non-participant observation. For Gobo then, “*in ethnographic methodology the pivotal cognitive mode is ‘observation’*” (p. 5), and what differentiates different approaches to ethnographic research is the level of ‘participation’ with the participants and the contexts being researched. This analysis resonates with Bryman’s (ibid) suggestion that the term ethnography emerged as a term which was favoured by some researchers, as opposed to participant observation, because it was seen as a more inclusive term; more aligned with notions of researcher immersion than is implied by use of the term observation.

Ethnography’s historic roots lie in nineteenth-century Western anthropology. In the early stages of its development it was closely aligned with ethnology which focused on historical and cultural comparisons of non-Western societies. The data collectors of the time were typically travellers and missionaries who produced rich descriptions of the cultures they encountered, which then formed the basis of the comparative and theoretical analysis carried out by

ethnologists. Over time these separate elements of the research process came to be conducted by anthropologists who began collecting their own data by spending periods of time ‘immersed’ in fieldwork locations. Ethnography, therefore, came to refer to the combination of data collection through immersion in a fieldwork location and the theoretical analysis of the data produced from this period of immersion. Anthropological ethnography has over time been firmly established as a social research methodology.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) identify five key features for ethnographic research which provide a useful framework for highlighting its distinguishing features, and which I will draw on here in discussing the suitability of the ethnographic approach to this piece of research. The five features identified are:

- The researcher works under conditions that are not created by the researcher;
- The data will come from a range of sources;
- Data collection will be relatively unstructured;
- The data will be drawn from relatively few cases;
- Analysis will produce verbal descriptions, explanations and theories based on the interpretation of meanings, functions and consequences.

The notion of the researcher ‘immersing’ him or herself within the setting being researched, as is typical of ethnographic research, was of central importance to gaining an insight into young people’s subjective experiences of violence in public space. It allowed me not only to observe directly young people’s experiences, but also to talk to young people about these experiences. There was also the additional benefit of being able to reflect on my own experiences of the spaces that young people occupied and the conditions under which they experienced them. Whilst it was important that I did not mistakenly accept my own experiences as being the same as young

people's experiences, these insights offered a degree of understanding of young people's experiences which helped to open the my mind to lines of enquiry that might have otherwise remained unconsidered.

This approach, however, also raised the question of the extent to which my presence as researcher influenced young men's accounts of violence and, potentially, their actual experiences of violence. Undoubtedly, my presence as researcher did impact on the way in which young people behaved and the way in which they related to the each other and their environment. An important focus within my data collection then was not just on observing young people as actors independent of me but as young people 'hanging out' in public spaces in the company of a researcher and a team of youth workers. For this reason it was important that my data included observations in relation to my background and that of the youth work team, including their organisational background. This information was integral to my observations of young people's behaviour.

Through its ability to draw data from a range of sources, the ethnographic approach facilitated both direct observations of young people's lived experiences in public space, but also the ability to collect data relating to the wider positioning of young people within those public spaces. In addition, therefore, to observing young people's behaviour in public space and talking directly to young people about their experiences, I talked with a wide variety of adults who were either living or working in the community. This included individuals such as community members, police, shop owners, council officials and other youth workers. Contact with these people enabled me to consider not just young people's subjective experiences of public space, but also other accounts of the space and of young people which were likely to ask wider questions of the role of power and control in shaping those experiences.

Hammersley and Atkinson (ibid) suggest that data collection should be relatively unstructured, or at least be sufficiently flexible to adapt and respond to changing priorities. Making contact consistently with young people in public spaces can be difficult given the unstructured and often unpredictable nature of ‘hanging out’ (Whelan, 2010). For this reason, it was important that my research approach had the ability to adapt to changing circumstances in order to increase the prospects of meeting and establishing enough of a rapport with young people. This flexibility was facilitated both by the use of an ethnographic approach but also in the choice of the specific professional setting. I will discuss this second point in more detail later.

There are clear benefits and limitations of a research approach which ‘*focuses on relatively few cases*’. On the one hand, critics of the ethnographic approach would suggested that such a focus reduces or even eliminates completely the ability to generalise about the wider population, whilst, on the other hand, ethnographers would argue that such a focused approach offers the possibility of a more intimate knowledge of the data and, therefore, more confident conclusions in relation to the limited number of cases which are studied (Brewer, 2000, Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The benefit of an ethnographic approach, therefore, lies in the ability to gain a detailed understanding of particular social contexts. The pitfalls of failing to give sufficient consideration to the uniqueness of specific social contexts are well illustrated by looking at a particular example of a US gang violence intervention.

In the 1990s the city of Boston in the United States was experiencing significant problems with youth violence, in response to which an initiative known as ‘Operation Ceasefire’ was established. The initiative proved to be effective in reducing youth homicides in the city by almost two thirds (National Institute of Justice, 2001). This success drew national attention to the work in Boston and a model known as the ‘Boston Ceasefire Model’ was soon being applied to

other US cities. The achievements seen in Boston were, however, not duplicated in these other cities and the reasons for this relate to the issues of transferability discussed above. One report notes that *“Operation Ceasefire was a ‘relationship intensive’ intervention based on trust and the ability of a diverse set of individuals to work together towards a common goal. Unfortunately, the description of Operation Ceasefire that generally circulates in criminal justice circles oversimplifies the Boston experience, which is a recipe for frustration and eventual failure”* (Braga 2005, p.7).

What the Boston experience highlights is that the issue of urban street violence is a complex one and one which is shaped by a wide range of factors, impacting both on the actions of perpetrators of violence and the actions of those who would seek to influence those perpetrators. A response to the issue of violence amongst young men in London, therefore, must be drawn from an in-depth understanding of the particular cultural and historic contexts within which the violence, or any response to it, is located. Ethnographic research, with its detailed but small scale focus, provides an ideal research vehicle for acquiring such a detailed insight.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (ibid) the ethnographer’s detailed attention to relatively few cases should produce verbal descriptions, explanations and theories based on the interpretation of meanings, functions and consequences. Theory should, therefore, emerge through an on-going iterative process through which the data is in continual dialogue with emerging ideas. This approach is in keeping with Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) process of ‘grounded theorising’. The specific approach to theorising the data within this research was developed through a dialogical process between the data and theory. There was, therefore, a resonance between the ethnographic approach, with its emphasis on ‘interplay’ between theory and data at every stage of the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), and the grounded theory emphasis on *“building*

theory from data” (Corbin and Strauss 2008, p. 1). As such, the ethnographic approach offered the possibility, at least, that each stage of the research process, from data collection to the production of ‘descriptions, explanations and theories’, would be drawn from young people’s subjective experiences of street violence.

There are some important critiques of ethnography which should be explored before discussing in more detail how this methodology, and related methods, will be used within this research. Brewer (2000) suggests that there are two broad critiques of ethnography: the natural science critique and the postmodern critique. I will address both here in order to outline my perspective on each. The natural science critique stems from the positivist informed proposal that the social sciences should be modelled on the natural sciences. That is, the social sciences should “*address problems similar to those of the natural sciences; they should search for social causation when explaining human activity and aspire to deductive explanations; they should deal with systems as wholes*” (Brewer 2000, p. 19). Some ethnographers have sought to respond to this critique by developing more ‘scientifically rigorous’ ethnographic methods designed to capture a fixed reality, such as the laboratory styled observational approach adopted within ergonomic ethnography in the 1940s (Gobo, 2008). Whilst the positivist tradition retains a foothold within sections of the increasingly diverse range of approaches to ethnography, it remains marginal to those approaches more closely linked to the humanistic model of social research (Brewer, *ibid*). This approach to ethnography has been heavily informed by ‘Interpretative’ sociological approaches concerned with the subjective experiences of research participants which emphasise researcher proximity to the researched.

It is the later of these perspectives with which this research is more closely aligned, however, there is an important second critique noted by Brewer (2000) which has also been significant in informing my

particular approach. Postmodernism, in its most extreme form, views all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, as relative and, as such, the process of research as being merely concerned with the construction of particular version of reality, informed by the researchers own perspectives. The postmodern critique of ethnography questions the view of the ethnographer as having a “*‘special’ and ‘privileged’ access to insider accounts of people’s world views*” (Brewer 2000, p. 23). Some postmodernists have attempted to incorporate this ontological position into new ethnographic approaches which “*instead of understanding the other more fully...[should] gain a fuller understanding of themselves, by uncovering their prejudices, ideology and tacit knowledge*” (Gobo 2008, p. 62). I have talked in Chapter 1 about the influence of social constructionism and postmodernism on my understanding of street violence and this perspective has also informed the particular ethnographic approach adopted. However, as Gobo (ibid) suggests, there is a danger within the more extreme postmodern approaches to ethnography of winding up in a “*self-reflexive dead end*” (p. 63). My approach therefore is more closely aligned with critical realist approaches to ethnography such as those advocated by Kincheloe and McLaren (1994), Carspecken (1996), Allen (2001) and Fairclough (2001). Of particular interest are those approaches which are informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Coffin et al, 2010). Underpinning these approaches is a concern with explaining the relationship of social structure and social action through discourse analysis. A closer exploration of Fairclough’s work on CDA provides a clearer insight on how CDA has informed my approach.

Fairclough (2001, 2003) proposed 3 dimensions to Critical Discourse Analysis: text description, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. The relationship between these dimensions of analysis is graphically represented in Figure 4.1. Fairclough (2001, p. 2) views “*the power to control discourse...as the power to sustain particular practices with particular ideological investments in dominance over*

other alternative (including oppositional) practices". The 'Critical' therefore in Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to a questioning of the sometimes hidden connections between language, power and ideology in order to reveal the ways in which they produce and sustain unequal power relations (Fairclough 2001).

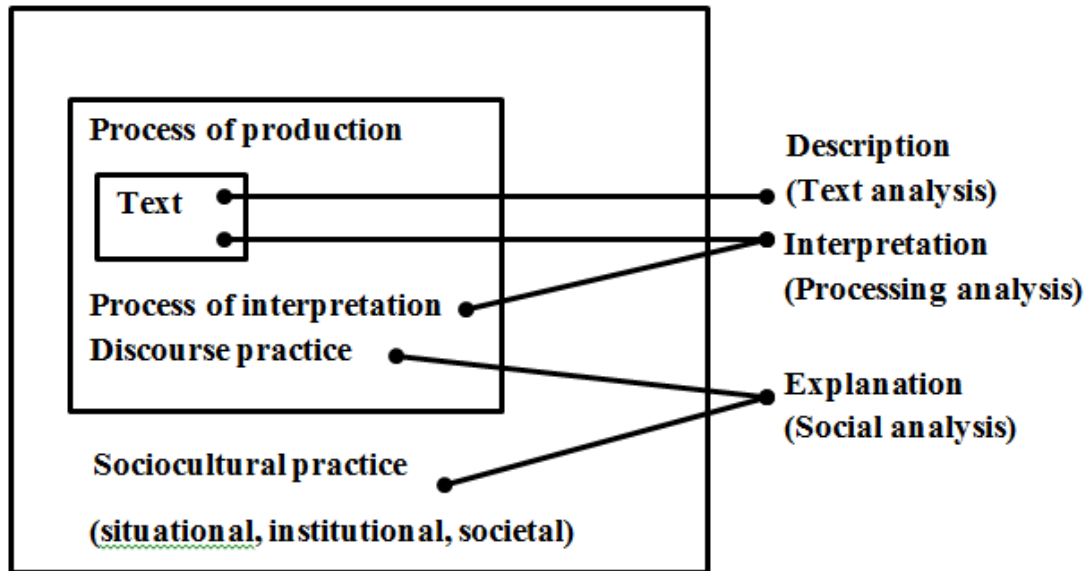


Figure 4.1: Fairclough's levels of analysis (adapted from Fairclough 2001)

While Fairclough's primary focus is on written or spoken texts he acknowledges that texts do not need to be linguistic and that within cultural analysis "*any cultural artefact- a picture, a building, a piece of music- can be seen as a text*" (2001, p 4) . While he suggests that there are some potential pitfalls in such an approach he also acknowledges its merits, particularly citing the need to bring together CDA with ethnographic analysis in pursuit of a critical ethnography (ibid). Parker's (1992, 1998, 1999) insights on varieties of text have provided a useful link between Fairclough's focus on written and spoken texts and the wider variety of cultural artefacts observed through ethnography. Specifically Parker highlights ways in which descriptions of cultural artefacts might be used to create 'texts' that could be analysed discursively. Within this piece of ethnographic research, in addition to written and verbal texts, the text of public space has been explored. This has included observations such as the

colouring of play spaces, the design of play equipment, line markings on the ground, park bench design and the layout and location of signage around Dock Town.

There was a danger in describing and interpreting the various texts observed during data collection that a discrete grouping of individuals- young people, public officials, policy makers, public space designers- might be identified as the sole authors of these texts. However, Fairclough (2001), informed by Foucault, suggests that “*there is a sense...in which the speaker or writer is a product of her words*” (p 87). However, unlike Foucault, Fairclough emphasises the dialectical nature of this relationship suggesting that “*the subject is both created and creative*” (ibid). The view of ‘subjects’ as being positioned by certain discourses, whilst also having creativity within that constrained subject position has been central to the approach adopted within data analysis. In particular, Davies and Harre’s (1990) and Willig’s (1999) insights on subject positioning have been drawn on in exploring this dialectic relationship. Fairclough’s approach to conducting CDA, in addition to the use of positioning theory and ‘Critical Textwork’, will be explored further within the data analysis section below.

4.2 The data collection process

As an ethnographic researcher, central to the data collection process was the task of locating myself within the lived environment of the ‘subjects’ I was researching, in order to observe their interactions within those spaces. For the purposes of making these observations of young men in London I chose to locate myself within a particular London community over a set period of twelve months. Bryman (2012) notes a criticism that is increasingly being made of ethnographic researchers who have become constrained by the standardisation of research projects within many universities, particularly at PhD level. Increasingly rigid time constraints make it

more and more difficult for researchers to ‘immerse’ themselves within a setting for a sufficient period of time to justifiably identify their research as ethnographic. I was no exception to these constraints and while I managed to complete twelve months within the research setting, my sense was that this could have been longer. An important benefit, however, stemmed from the previous professional experience I had gained in Dock Town. This experience made the process of familiarising myself with the area and with key individuals easier. Despite the time constraints, over the twelve month period I was able to collect a broad range of data from a number of ‘observational perspectives’. Before discussing these observational perspectives, it is worth providing an initial overview of the research methods used, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Data collection took place over a twelve month period in a South London Borough from the start of November 2009 to the end of October 2010. Over this period three core research methods were employed: participant observation, interviews and focus groups. Participant observation involved working alongside a team of street based youth workers for a period of eight months and spending time in and around a youth club setting for the full twelve months. There was a total of seventy-four hours of street based observations completed over this time and approximately an additional eighty hours of club based observations.

Over the course of the street based observations I had contact with approximately eighty young people, primarily young men. Within the youth club setting I had more regular contact with approximately twenty young people and less frequent contact with about another twenty. Over this time I also attended nine local meetings involving a mixture of council officers (approximately twenty) and local residents (approximately thirty). In addition to the informal conversations that I had with young people in the youth club and on the streets, more focused interviews were conducted with ten young men. Lastly, three

focus group discussions were run with young people at three different locations involving a total of seventeen young people (nine male and eight female).

Whilst the primary source of observational data stemmed from auditory observations (what I heard) and visual observations (what I saw) it is important to note that the full range of senses were put to use, such as using the sense of smell to notice that a young person had been smoking cannabis or drinking alcohol; an important observation which might be difficult to pick up on using visual and auditory observations alone. As the majority of my observations, however, were auditory and visual I will focus here on discussing these in a little more detail.

To ensure that I gained a broad range of auditory observations I spread my focus across what I describe as primary, secondary and tertiary sources. Primary sources being those conversations that I was directly involved in, secondary being those conversations I overheard and tertiary sources being those conversations or discussions that I had relayed to me by third parties. I recognise that these categories are not mutually exclusive; I may have had a conversation with a person who told me about another conversation he or she had overheard. The point, however, is not to identify a water tight categorising of my observations but to emphasise that I attempted to remain alert at all times, whether within the youth club or out on the street, to the potential for data to come not just from those conversations I had planned to have but also the variety of unplanned, chance or overheard discussions I encountered.

My visual observations were many and varied, although there are a number of broad categories into which these observations could be divided. Firstly, I observed people, both individuals and groups, paying particular attention to young people. Secondly, I observed physical spaces, with particular attention being paid to the layout or

construction of public space and, finally, I observed the interaction between individuals and groups, and the spaces they occupied. That is, I observed the way in which people's interactions were shaped by the spaces they occupied and how, in turn, the spaces they occupied were shaped by human interactions within and around those spaces.

4.2.1 Observational perspectives

As mentioned above, my observations during the data collection process were made from multiple observational perspectives. These observational perspectives were both physically located perspectives but also socially located perspectives. That is, my ability to meet, observe and talk to young people was shaped by the physical spaces I frequented, and young people's presence or lack of in those spaces, but also by the social context of my presence in those spaces. For example, whether young people perceived me as a researcher, a youth worker, a community member or an undercover police officer significantly influenced their willingness to talk to me, the topics they were willing to talk about and the way in which they talked about those topics. In moving between different observational perspectives over the course of the data collection process the nature of the relationships I had with participants was altered and this was reflected in the data I gathered. As was suggested above, the ability to gather data relating to young people's public space experiences from a number of perspectives was viewed as adding to the richness of the data. It is, however, important to clarify how my location in these different perspectives impacted on my relationships with young people and, ultimately, the nature of the data collected.

My street based observations involved working as part of a team of youth workers who made contact with young people on the streets for 2 hours a night, two nights per week. It is important to note that I accompanied a team of 'detached' youth workers. This is important in as much as a key principle of detached youth work is to engage with young people 'where they are at' and 'on their terms' (Tiffany, 2007).

From a research perspective, this offered a unique opportunity to observe young people's behaviour in public space in a less intrusive manner. One of the central features of detached youth work, which distinguishes it from what might be described as 'generic youth work', is that it aims to achieve a degree of organisation and institutional detachment and in doing so to gain a clearer understanding of, amongst other things, young people's disengagement from mainstream services (Whelan, 2010). This meant that the detached team I accompanied was more open to meeting with and talking to young people without attempting to influence their presence in or use of public space.

Had I, for example, conducted my observations alongside a police team, I would have been likely to see a very different side to young people's interactions in public space. The fractious relationship between many young people within working class communities and the police is well documented (Squires, 2008), and the estates I visited in Dock Town were no exception. Were I to have accompanied a team of police officers then, at best it would have made the task of initiating conversations with young people strained, perhaps more defensive and even hostile.

Over the course of the 13 months of research I also spent a significant proportion of time in and around a youth club setting, out of which the street based team operated. Whilst some of the young people I made contact with during the street based sessions did not attend the youth club many did, and the time spent in and around the club provided an opportunity to further develop relationships and discussions with these young people. Observing and talking with young people both in a street setting and in a youth club setting added to the richness of the data by providing two different perspectives from which young people's experiences could be observed. In both settings, the street and the youth club, my observations were recorded through written

journal entries, made as soon as was practically possible after my observation sessions ended.

Whilst it was anticipated that the street and club based sessions would provide some useful discussions and observations relating to young people's public space experiences, there were limitations to how far conversations with young people on street corners or within youth club sessions could be developed, given the likely existence of a range of distractions. For this reason, where more consistent contact was established with particular young people, or groups of young people, I sought to invite them to take part in focus group discussions or informal interviews. I identify the interviews and focus group discussions as a second observational perspective because young people's participation in them required a transition from 'their space' to 'my space' or to 'research space'. In asking young people to make this transition I also needed to alter my relationship with them from the previously described youth worker relationship to a more clearly defined, and perhaps more rigid, research role. This transition altered the nature of my relationship with the young people and the nature of our conversations. That is, young people appeared to be more aware of 'going on the record' and, for some, this seemed to result in a more formal interaction with me. This change was evident in the tone of their voice, their body language and the language they used in responding to my questions. Before discussing the focus groups and interviews in more detail there are two introductory points to discuss.

Firstly, data from my interviews and focus groups was gathered using observational notes written retrospectively, I did not use a recorder. I would cite three core reasons for this decision.

- Young people were being asked to talk openly and honestly about sensitive issues, such as occasions when they may have chosen to carry a weapon or times when they felt particularly vulnerable, or when they might have made other young people feel vulnerable. It was considered that the presence of a tape

recorder would hinder the participant's willingness to provide open and honest responses (Venkatesh, 2009).

- Whilst it was acknowledged that by building rapport with interviewees it would have been possible to alleviate any possible concerns about the presence of a tape recorder (Gobo, 2008), it was anticipated that the dynamic and unpredictable nature of engaging with young people on the street or in youth club settings would make this process difficult. Many interviews were conducted 'on the spot', when young people happen to be around. Such engagements did not lend themselves to the familiarisation process required for interviewees to become more at ease with the presence of a recorder.
- Finally, the transcription and analysis of interview material can be extremely time consuming and result in an over focusing on auditory observations arising out of interviews, to the detriment of a broader set of observations.

There were, however, a number of not insignificant limitations presented by choosing not to record my conversations. Firstly, without a recording it was not possible to listen back to discussions in order to, for example, listen again to particular responses; to listen again to the way in which a point was made; to hear again the tone of voice or specific choice of words used in responding to a question. Only with a recording would this level of analysis be possible. A second and related limitation of not recording was that in not recording conversations there is a much heavier reliance on memory as a record of what was said and how it was said.

Al-Yateem (2012) suggests that *'Audio and video recording offer much, but they can affect the quality of data, therefore it is imperative that an alternative method – such as note-taking – is considered if there is any suggestion that the data will be significantly affected'* (p. 34). The key phrase here is *'if there is any suggestion that the data*

will be significantly affected'. My own practice experience over an eight year period working with young people in disadvantaged London communities suggested that the use of a recorder presented a significant risk of doing exactly that.

During my years working as a youth worker in London I was regularly asked by young people if I was 'CID' (Criminal Investigation Department). That is, because they did not know me, or know me well enough, I was placed in the category of 'probably police' and 'not to be trusted'. It often took a long time to overcome initial feelings of distrust and with some groups I never felt that I was able to get over this block. Given this background, my concern about asking young people if I could record my conversations with them was that it would either result in them not talking to me or being much more cautious about what they would be willing to talk about. That is, I felt that my data would have been significantly affected by the presence of a recorder and therefore chose not to use one.

Returning to the second more general point in relation to the approach adopted in conducting interviews and focus groups, it is worth noting that the young people were not paid or offered an incentive for their participation. This decision was not purely down to a lack of resources, rather it was a deliberate decision taken to avoid the type of skewing of participants' feedback that can result when an incentive is offered (Aronson and Mills, 1959). Having clarified these two points I will now take a closer individual look at the way in which my interviews and focus groups were run.

In an attempt to remain consistent with an ethnographic approach interviews were conducted in an informal manner, perhaps more accurately described as extended conversations than interviews. They will be referred to here as interviews, reflecting the one to one nature of the discussions. Although no two interviews were the same there were a number of common features and a brief overview of these

common features provides a useful insight into the approach adopted. Typically, my interviewees were male aged between 14-19 years. I generally came into contact with interviewees either through my work with the street based youth work team or through my presence within the youth club setting. In the course of getting to know interviewees, through casual conversations during a game of football on the street or a game of pool in the youth club, I will have explained about my research and will have offered more detailed information.

In some instances the request for the young person to take part in an interview was an on-the-spot, spontaneous request whilst on other occasions this was a much more pre-planned process. In either case the key factor influencing the decision of who to talk to was the desire to hear about the experiences of a variety of young men, who were likely to have had equally varied experiences of the public spaces around Dock Town. That is, I wanted to ensure I talked with young men of different ages and from different, economic, ethnic, religious backgrounds. The section below on 'participants' provides a more detailed outline of the process I went through in identifying interviewees.

Where possible interviews were conducted in the quieter rooms or areas within Dock Town Youth Club where background noise and distractions were minimised; the comfort of the young interviewees was my primary concern. On occasions, however, initial negative responses from some interviewees suggested that they were more relaxed and at ease amidst the hum drum of the main club area. Where this was the case I did not push the point of moving to an alternative location, instead conducting the interview to one side out of ears shot of other club members. In commencing the interviews I explained, briefly, the nature of the research. Here my aim was to remind the young person of the purpose of my research and to give them the opportunity to ask any questions they might have about its purpose, intentions or usage.

Questioning within the interview was reasonably open, similar to the ‘unstructured interviews’ described by Choak (2012). The following outline of interview questions was used as a guide for my discussions only, where it seemed more appropriate to deviate from this guide, I did that. To start with I encouraged the interviewee to locate themselves within their local geographic community by asking them about growing up in their community: Whether they always lived there? If not what brought them to the area? What were their early childhood memories of their area? These questions were intended to be reasonably easy questions to answer, to get the interviewee talking and to start to explore some of the interviewee’s early associations with public space in Dock Town.

Having ‘broken the ice’ with this initial line of questioning I began to focus more on the interviewees’ public space experiences by asking them to talk about the parts of Dock Town where they felt safe. From here I began to encourage them to consider areas outside Dock Town by asking them about when they first started to travel out of the local area. They were asked about where they travelled to and whether these were positive or negative experiences? Where the interviewee identified an area, or areas, where they felt unsafe they were asked to talk about what it was that they thought made that space unsafe, and similarly for those spaces that they perceived to be safe spaces. Finally, interviewees were asked to talk about things they did to deal with feelings of fear in public space.

Central to this line of questioning was the task of finding out more about the interviewees’ public space experiences, and the prompts above were intended to draw this information out. However, on some occasions interviewees took discussions in a direction which deviated from the planned line of questioning, towards aspects of their public space experiences which they saw as being important, such as talking about issues of racism, experiences of moving to the UK from other

countries or weapons carrying in schools. Where this happened flexibility was allowed in the interest of producing data which was consistent with what the young people themselves saw as being important. Thus unstructured interviewing allowed me to gain a wider understanding of how young people viewed public space in this area than had I taken a semi-structured or structured approach to interviewing.

As with the interviews, the focus groups offered the opportunity to develop focused conversations with young people around their public space experiences. Specifically, it was expected that the focus groups would provide an insight into how, in a group context, young people talked about fear and marginalisation in public space and resources that they use in managing these concerns. It was expected that the group dynamic of the focus group (Alldred and David, 2007) would produce variations in young men's accounts of Dock Town's public spaces. That is, there appeared to be some topics that young men were more willing to talk about within interviews and, conversely, there were other topics that young men appeared to be more willing to talk about within focus groups. For instance, young men were more willing to talk about their experiences of personal vulnerabilities in public space within interviews, whilst in focus groups admissions of vulnerability were the subject of jeering from other young men. The differences between the accounts of personal vulnerabilities provided by young men in these different contexts was an important point of reflection within data analysis and highlighted the significance of context in young men's constructions of vulnerability, and their actual physical responses to vulnerability.

As an aid to encouraging young men to get involved in what could be perceived as an exposing topic of conversation- fear in public space- I used a tool variously referred to as social, sketch or place mapping within my focus group discussions (I will use the term social mapping). Social mapping provides a more participatory and perhaps

less intimidating way for research participants to convey the meanings that public space holds for them. In a review of two case studies involving the use of social mapping with young people Travlou et al (2008) suggest that:

“The use of place mapping appeared to assist in this [active engagement in the interview process] by making students feel more at ease with the research questions and removed the focus from the adult researchers. It created a domain where the teenagers could share their perceptions and (re)construct the dynamic relationship of their social interactions in place” (p. 321).

Using printed maps of the local community the young people participating in the focus groups were asked to work individually marking on the maps what they saw as safe areas and what they saw as being unsafe areas, or areas where they were more likely to experience fear (See Appendix 3 for examples). Additionally, they were asked to add comments that might further explain the particular labels they had applied to different areas. Having completed this individual exercise they were asked to share their observations with the wider group. This feedback was noted on a flip chart and used as a prompt for discussion within the group. In addition to drawing out new perspectives on fear in public space, the focus groups also offered an opportunity to explore perspectives which had already been expressed within a different context. As with the street and club based observations and the interviews, focus group discussions were not tape recorded. Whilst it is acknowledged that the more formal setting of a focus group might have lent itself to tape recording it was felt that it could have undermined the full participation of focus group members and potentially limited the range of conversation they would have been prepared to have, such as talking openly about personal experiences of violence (particularly as perpetrators of) or negative encounters with the police or other local officials.

Drawing on the ‘strengths and limitations’ noted by Travlou et al, there are a couple of points in relation to the particular features of my

approach worth noting. Firstly, in the interest of all young people having an input into the mapping process all participants were asked to complete individual maps. Picking up on Travlou et al's emphasis on the importance of group dynamic in the mapping process, however, the individual mapping exercise was followed with a group exercise where individual insights were pooled to incorporate the important group element. Secondly, Travlou et al note that a mapping exercise can, for young people who are less familiar with maps, be an intimidating and confusing process. The maps presented to participants were produced on two scales to assist participants in orientating themselves either by using local street names and features on the small scale maps or by larger features such as the River Thames or main roads on the large scale map. Additionally, the maps used were printed from 'Google Maps' on the basis that this was a style of map that the young people would be familiar with and which was not too cluttered with unnecessary detail. Time was also taken at the start of the mapping session to ensure participants had familiarised themselves with the maps and key locations, such as the youth club, where they lived, the tube station etc.

It is important to note that the data collected within the focus groups was my observations of the young people's interactions and discussions. That is, while the maps and flip charts produced by the young people provided specific information about particular areas within Dock Town that were perceived to be safe and unsafe, my primary interest was not necessarily on the specifics of these locations but on how the young people constructed notions of fear within this context and how this might have differed from the perspectives recounted in other contexts.

In addition to this direct contact with and observations of young people there was a range of other individuals, 'locally significant actors'. The perspectives of these individuals on young people's public space experiences were of interest within the data collection

process in order to develop my answer to the element of the research question concerned with the resources that young people drew on in managing marginalisation and fear in public space. Many of these 'locally significant actors' were directly responsible for providing support services of various kinds to young people in Dock Town. The perspectives they offered were intended to compliment or add to, rather than be a substitute for, young people's direct accounts of their own public space experiences. I came into contact with these individuals primarily through my role as a member of the detached youth work team, however, my presence in and around the youth club setting more generally also brought me in contact with a range of individuals whose perspectives on young people's public space experiences added to the data.

In total the more formal meetings with significant actors amounted to nine over the twelve months of data collection. Two of these were larger group meetings involving fifteen or more people while the other eight involved smaller numbers of between one and eight people. One meeting was a local public meeting while all of the rest were either regularly scheduled meetings or one off meetings which I had to specifically request attendance at. Although the range of individuals, organisations and agencies that I have grouped under the heading of 'locally significant actors' is very varied, it is worth noting a number of the more significant of these.

There are a number of benefits to the data collection process that came through my contact with various youth workers and youth work organisations during my data collection. Firstly, through the experience that these workers had in working with young people in the local community they were able to act as gatekeepers, enabling me to make contact with new groups of young people. Secondly, many of these workers had direct experience of talking to young people about their experiences of the public spaces around Dock Town. Conversations with these workers served to draw my attention to

issues worth exploring in more detail when meeting with young people directly. Finally, my conversations with these workers provided an insight into some of policy discourses which were shaping professional responses to youth presence in Dock Town's public spaces. In this sense they contributed to my formulation of answers to research questions about young people's views of public space but also of the resources that young people might be likely to draw on in dealing with fear or marginalisation in public space.

Besides organisations and individuals whose primary role was the provision of some form of support service or resource to young people, there were a variety of other individuals, agencies and organisations whose work brought them into varying levels of contact with young people, and the level and nature of the contact I had with these individuals was very varied. The individuals I include in this category range from private sector employees such as local shop keepers, shopping centre employees or leisure centre employees, to statutory sector workers such as librarians, anti-social behaviour officers, community wardens or police. Of all of these, the group that appeared to have the highest levels of contact with young people, and young men in particular, was local police and community support officers and this gave rise to a particular challenge within my data collection.

Detached Youth Workers have traditionally had something of a mixed relationship with the police. Whilst on the one hand detached youth workers recognise that attempts to support young people who are in trouble with the police, or indeed those who are not, requires at least civil relationships with local policing teams, such is the animosity between young people and police, in some communities, that an over-association with the police can jeopardise detached worker relationships with young people. This is something I understand from my own experience as a Detached Youth Worker. As my primary concern was to gain an insight into young people's subjective

experiences of Dock Town's public spaces, it was important that I maintained a healthy distance from the police in order to ensure that it did not jeopardise my contact with young people, and their willingness to talk openly and frankly with me about the issue of street violence.

Spending time on the streets with the detached team also provided the opportunity to observe and engage directly with adult members of the community. Some of these engagements came through formal contacts with community members at local community meetings, whilst others came through less formal contacts such as casual encounters on the street. These contacts provided a range of insights into the nature of the relationship between adults and youth members of the community and provided yet another alternative perspective from which young people's experiences could be observed.

It was expected that the data collected through the alternative perspectives offered by 'locally significant actors' would serve two key purposes. Firstly, it would help to draw attention to aspects of young people's public space experiences which might be explored in more detail with the young people themselves and, secondly, it was also expected that they would provide an insight into the way in which youth presence in Dock Town's public space was constructed by the adults who worked and/or lived in that space with young people.

4.2.2 Participants

As in any ethnographic research, sampling was limited to those young people who happen to be in the areas I visit at the times I visited them. However, a complete lack of any sampling control measures might have resulted in not meeting with any young people at all. For this reason I adopted a purposive sampling approach in order to develop my understanding of how young people experienced Dock Town. In order to give me a better chance of collecting this data I set these basic initial parameters:

- The use of an initial information gathering period at the outset of my data collection to identify the locations most likely to provide contact with young people.
- Prioritising contact with young men in the 14 to 19 age group, given that this grouping represents both the highest perpetrators and the highest victims of violent crime in London (Young et al, 2007, Booth et al, 2008).
- To establish more regular contact with a number of groups of young people, preferably at different locations and, where possible, to run informal interviews and/or focus group discussions with these groups.
- To have contact with an ethnically diverse mix of young men

Across the broad target group of 14-19 I sought to engage with a varied mix of young men, reflective of the equally varied local youth population and the range of young people who were, either directly or indirectly affected by street violence. From the perspective of ethnicity I sought to establish contact with a range of young men who were reflective of the diverse ethnic make-up of the local community. Broadly speaking this meant making a conscious effort to talk with young men from a range of ethnic backgrounds, such as White British (and other White non-British such as Irish or Eastern European), African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian.

As was discussed above, the dividing line between perpetrator and victim is not a clear cut one and many young people who are victims of violence in one context might be perpetrators in another, as argued in Chapter 3. It was considered important, therefore, to talk with a variety of young people regardless of their reputed involvement in or experience of street violence. Thus my purposive sampling sought ethnic diversity and, in addition, a central feature of my approach was remaining flexible, in order to be able to respond to new ideas, perspectives or lines of enquiry which arose as the data was collected.

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the research participants. The range of individuals I had contact with was very broad as was the range of settings within which I had contact with them. With some individuals my contact was quite brief whilst for others I had regular weekly contact throughout the whole of the data collection period. The notes in each case provide an insight into the background of the individual or group and the nature of my contact with them.

Table 4.1: Descriptions of Participants

Name*	Male/ Female	Age	Ethnicity**	Relevant notes/background
Young People				
Dock Town Youth Club (DTYC) Young People				
Tom	M	18	BA	A young person who had spent a period of time hanging out with a gang called the Peckham Boys in a neighbouring area. T appeared to be working hard to distance himself from trouble on the street.
Alan	M	17	WB	A very intelligent young person. A had achieved well in school but had been experiencing difficulties at home and was made homeless for a period over the course of the research.
Freddie	M	17	WB	A young man who attended the club on and off but we tended to have more contact with him on the street where he appeared to be involved in low level drug dealing.
Suzie	F	17	WB	An enthusiastic club member who enjoyed her sport. Was planning to start a sports science degree in Loughborough
Brian	M	18	BA	A very involved member of the club who appeared to stay away from any criminal activity but as a result of his sociable nature appeared to be well known and liked in the local community. Was hoping to be signed by a football club.
Ralf	M	22	BA	Came to the UK to live with a relative but struggled in school

				because of language difficulties. Relationship with relative broke down and he spent a number of years when he was involved in street crime- stealing and dealing drugs. He appeared to be much more settled in the time that I was in contact with him.
Julian	M	18	BC	A very charismatic young man who had a strong personality and a strong physical presence and this seemed to afford him a lot of influence with other members. J talked about having carried weapons when on the street, in the past.
Calum	M	14	WB	A younger club member who had been asked to leave school for his violent behaviour. C had experienced bullying from others on his estate and he appears to spend a lot of time in the club to avoid the vulnerability of the streets
Mary	F	17	WB	Mary suffered with mental health issues as a result of which she was in and out of hospital. She tended to go through extremes of being very friendly and helpful to being disruptive and even aggressive. Mary was one of the few girls that talked about having carried a weapon.
John	M	19	WB	J was in a leadership role in the club but was very withdrawn and struggled to fulfil this role. J appeared to be trying to deal with gender identity issues and this appeared to have a negative impact on his confidence.
Danny	M	16	BA	D was a reasonably quiet person who was involved in various programmes in the club. He did not appear to have any significant experiences of street violence
Rodney	M	16	BA	R was slightly younger than some of the other members that he hung around with. He appeared to be a good student and generally well behaved young person although he

				appeared to like to push boundaries and challenge staff in the club.
Jim	M	18	BC	J was an intelligent individual who was interested in music and seemed to work hard at his school work. He seemed to be well connected with a number of different groups without being strongly associated with any one group.
Edward	M	18	WB	E had a mild learning difficulty as a result of which he appeared to make things up a lot. He had spent time in the army cadets and often told exaggerated or completely fabricated stories about his experiences with guns and violence.
Chris	M	19	BC	C was a likeable individual who had previously been in trouble with the police. He appeared to be using his involvement with the youth club as a way of moving on from these past experiences.
Ron	M	17	AB	R was a young man from an Asian background who appeared to be achieving very well in school. His parents seemed to be very strict with him and he had not had any significant experiences of street violence. He attended the club mainly so that he could complete his Duke of Edinburgh Award and improve his CV.
Lewis	M	17	WB	L's attendance at the club was quite intermittent. This was in part his choice but also because his behaviour was often disruptive which resulted in him being asked to take 'time out'
Gerry	M	17	WB	G was a very likeable and enthusiastic young person who generally brought good humour to the programmes he was involved with. L had not had any significant experiences of street violence.
Bella	F	17	BA	B was a reasonably regular attender at the club. B took part in the Duke of Edinburgh programme, she was a good

				student and was hoping to study architecture in University.
Clive	M	20	WB	C was a friendly but relatively quiet club member. He had a keen interest in music and volunteered each week to teach young members music production skills.
Helping Hands Focus Group				
Luke	M	15	WB	During the focus group L recounted a number of occasions when he had experienced violence from other young people. When the other members laughed at him he appeared to try to reposition himself as not having been afraid.
Pete	M	15	WB	P talked about his experience of gangs in the local community. In particular he talked about what might be described as 'pop up gangs' when groups of young people would decide to give themselves a gang name and think that they were tough.
Angie	F	15	WB	A talked about an argument that she had at school with another girl which escalated to the point that the other girl became violent. A was appreciative of adult intervention on this occasion
Jane	F	15	WB	J appeared to be a more confident girl who talked about hanging out in Elephant and Castle. Despite a recent stabbing there she seemed confident that once you handle yourself properly you will be safe.
Young Advisors Focus Group				
Jake	M	18	BA	J was introduced to me as 'having history', which I understood to mean that he had had issues with the police in the past. J recounted a numbers of stories relating to his experiences of street violence and he dominated much of the discussions in the focus group.
Hannah	F	19	BB	H talked about experiences of girls gathering at a particular location to settle arguments after school.
Ella	F	18	BB	E talked about feeling safe in busier parts of Dock Town and in particular emphasised the value of

				friendly or helpful shop keepers in making a place feel safer.
Dawn	F	18	BB	D emphasised the value of CCTV in making public space feel safer. Commented on a friend's cousin having been shot close to Dock Town.
Claire	F	19	BA	C was very quiet throughout the focus group. Was not familiar with Dock Town and, therefore, seemed reluctant to comment.

Street Based Groups of Young People

Four Blocks Estate

General Description

There was one main group that we had more regular contact with on the Four Squares and a number of others that we made occasional contact with. The group we had most regular contact with were all in the 14-17 age group. The group was mainly white British and predominantly male. On a number of occasions we spent time talking with this group but more often we played football with them.

There was a second slightly older group on this estate that we also talked to on a number of occasions but our contact with this group was much less frequent and the group members varied each time we met them. Group members were aged between 16 and 19 years and were mainly white British. Some of them owned scooters and those that did not talked about wanting to buy them. As with all of the young people around Dock Town they were keen football supporters, and keen supporters of the local football club.

When we started running the bike repair project on the estate we came in contact with a larger number of young Black boys. The age range of these boys was quite mixed and varied from as young as 11 or 12 up to the late teens. Accent and conversations suggested that many of these young men would identify as being Black African.

Riverside Estate

General Description

We had contact with a number of small groups around Riverside Estate. Close to the shops on North Road we had contact with a group of 10-15 young people near a football cage. There tended to be a number of females (16-19) in this group. The group was mainly White British and aged between 16 and 19 years. There was also an older male (30-40) who spent time with members of this group. On a number of occasions we met this older white male fishing with two white males (16-19) and one white female (16-19).

On a number of occasions we met with a younger group (12-16 years) in the centre of the Riverside Estate. This was a mixed group of males and females who were mainly white British. Contact with this group was reasonably infrequent.

In a football area on the West Side of the Riverside Estate we had reasonably regular contact with a group of about 10 young people. The group was in the 16-19 age

group and was mostly male, although there was a small number of females who tended to sit on the side of the football area reasonably regularly. The make-up of this group tended to be split between white and Black British.

The Rise Estate

General Description

Although we walked through the Rise most nights it was generally quiet and we rarely made contact with young people. On a couple of occasions we had conversations with young people on this estate but the conversations were brief and there was no follow up contact on subsequent nights.

Dock Town Central Estate

General Description

We made contact with a number of groups on this estate over the period of the research but there was a general distrust and reluctance from the young people to talk with us. For example, on more than one occasion young people began to run when they saw us approaching thinking that we were the police. There was a good quality football and basketball area in the middle of the estate which was well equipped with flood lights but these lights remained off throughout the winter.

The Cobbles Estate

General Description

From my observations and from conversations with young people around Dock Town the Cobbles appeared to be the estate where the most regular and open drug dealing took place. This generally made us wary of approaching groups on this estate and when we did we generally found that young people were slow to make conversation with us. As a result we did not have regular contact with any young people on this estate.

Adult Contacts

DTYC staff

Louise	F	30-40	WB	A Lawyer who volunteered one night a week at DTYC
Helen	F	30-40	WB	Another lawyer who volunteered one night week at DTYC
Joe	M	20-30	WB	A youth worker who led on DTYCs street based youth work
Sonia	F	20-30	WB	A youth worker who did case work with young people, alongside working with the street based team
David	M	30-40	BB	A youth worker who ran an 'exclusion' project for young people who had been excluded from school
Jason	M	30-40	BB	The manager of the youth club
Emma	F	20-30	AB	Lead youth worker on a project working with young people with disabilities
Ella	F	20-30	WB	A sessional youth worker who also spent some time working with the street based team
Fiona	F	20-30	WB	A youth worker who worked part of her hours with DTYC and part

				helping to develop a smaller youth club nearby.
Steve	M	40-50	BA	The chief executive of DTYC
Sean	M	50-60	WB	The administration manager for DTYC who also ran one of the youth work sessions each week
Ronan	M	20	BA	A younger member of staff that I did not have much contact with. His proximity in age and similar background to many of the members appeared to present him with both opportunities and challenges in his working relationship with members.
River Borough Council				
Katie	F	50-60	WB	Area manager for River Borough Youth Service
Tanya	F	30-40	BB	River Borough Manager with responsibility for the service's street based youth work
Dock Town Community Support Officers				
General Description				
Early in the data collection I had a meeting with two Community Support Officers. Both were in the 30-40 age range, one was white British and the other Black British. On a number of occasions after this meeting I saw these officers again, either on the street or at meetings. These subsequent contacts were very brief and tended to consist only of a brief hello.				
Dock Town Council Involvement Meeting				
General Description				
During data collection I attended a youth themed council involvement meeting, along with a number of youth workers and young people from DTYC. In total there were 40-50 people at this meeting who spanned a very broad range of ages, from teenagers right up to people in their 60s and 70s. In addition to the young people from DTYC a number of young people from other youth clubs in Dock Town were at the meeting. The meeting was also attended by local residents, local councillors, council officers and representatives from a variety of local third sector organisations. There was a mix in relation to the gender and ethnicities of attendees.				
Targeted Youth Support Meeting				
General Description				
The targeted youth support meeting was a regular meeting of staff involved in the council's targeted youth support team. I attended this meeting with a youth worker from DTYC early in data collection to make them aware of the street based work we would be undertaking with young people in Dock Town. There were 7 staff members at this meeting, a mixture of males and females and a mixture of White and Black workers.				
Dock Town Youth Providers (DTYP) Meeting				
General Description				
The DTYP meeting was coordinated by a council officer and brought together a range of both council and voluntary sector youth providers from around Dock Town.				

Providers met to share information about new or existing programmes and to explore ways in which they could work together more effectively. There was a mixture of males and females in attendance who represented a range of ethnic backgrounds.

Violence Intervention Project Meeting

General Description

Paul was a white British male who managed a small charity focused on youth work interventions in health related settings. I met with him specifically to talk about a project that he was running which employed youth workers to provide support to young people who came to the emergency ward with knife and gun related injuries.

* All names listed are pseudonyms

** Ethnicity Abbreviations: BB: Black British, BC: Black Caribbean, BA: Black African, WB: White British, AB: Asian British

My discussions above have focused on what I wanted from my participants, the data, and how I intended to go about getting it. However, I have made little mention of ethical considerations and the implications of these for the data collection process. I will now address these in more detail.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

Within this section I will discuss the risk of harm or distress that the data collection process, and the research more generally, presented to participants, or to me as the researcher, and how these risks were managed. An important starting point in this discussion is being clear about why it was considered necessary to carry out the research at all; what made any risks, however minimal they might have been, worth taking?

At a local level it was expected that the research would give youth work providers based in River Borough an insight into the needs of young people within the local community. In particular, it was expected that it would provide direction for organisations looking to carry out preventative work with young people at risk of engaging in knife crime.

For youth work practitioners more generally, and street-based youth workers specifically, the use of social mapping techniques within the research offered an example of an alternative method for exploring and sharing young men's public space experiences with the ultimate aim of better understanding young men's experiences of fear in urban spaces. As argued in Chapter 3, it was expected that an improved understanding of young men's experiences of fear would provide an insight into weapons carrying practices and, ultimately, young men's involvement in street violence.

4.3.1 The 'Gatekeeper' relationship

Dock Town Youth Club (DTYC) could reasonably be described as research partners in as much as they were 'Gatekeepers' for the data collection process. That is, they enabled me to contact and engage with young people in a street setting by allowing me to accompany their street based youth work team. However, DTYC's primary focus within the 'partnership' was the development of a street based youth work programme and, as such, they were not involved in identifying the research problem or questions, designing the data collection process, nor were they involved in analysing the data or determining the final research conclusions. Yet, given their level of involvement it is important to consider the influence they have had and how it might have shaped or informed the research process.

Although DTYC did not set out a list of demands that they wanted in return for facilitating the research, they did have certain expectations from the relationship. The timing of my research was fortunate in that it coincided with the start-up phase of DTYC's street based youth work programme. By facilitating my research, DTYC had my input as an experienced youth worker in the development phase of their street based youth work programme. In addition, they had access to a final research report, which they could use to inform their programme planning, and future funding bids. It would be difficult to argue that the data collection process operated independently of DTYC's

programming and funding priorities, as the very reason I was in a position to accompany DTYC's street based team was that it fit with their current programming and funding priorities. In fact, observations in relation to these priorities became an important part of the data collected. However, there is still an important point to be made in relation to researcher independence. Central to my research focus was an emphasis on prioritising young men's subjective experiences of Dock Town's public spaces. In reflecting on my relationship with DTYC throughout the data collection process, an important point of orientation was the extent to which any demands or expectations they placed on me distracted from the primary focus of the research. Steps were taken in the early stages of the research planning to prevent DTYC staff from interfering with the research focus, however, in the end no such intrusion materialised. At times, in fact, my challenge was to limit the extent to which research priorities were leading the street based work as opposed to the other way around. This was probably a reflection both of the level of trust that DTYC placed in me and a lack of experience within the Detached Youth Work Team.

4.3.2 Managing risks to the researcher

Street based youth work can present additional dangers which are not present, or are present to a lesser extent, in centre based youth work. In order to anticipate and minimise these risks, all of the youth work sessions I took part in adhered to local and national guidelines for detached and street based youth work. This included training for all staff involved, enhanced CRB checks for all staff, the completion of risk assessments and conducting a 'reconnaissance' or information gathering period in the early stages of research ('reconnaissance' being a term commonly used within Detached Youth Work) .

As an organisation with substantial experience in running programmes for young people in a variety of settings DTYC already had policies and procedures in place to deal with potential hazards and risks associated with street based work and I voluntarily opted into these

during my data collection. Central to these procedures was the completion of a risk assessment which I completed together with the youth work team at the outset of the research. This listed all potential hazards and ‘control measures’ in place to minimise any risk to the street based team (including myself as researcher). The list of potential hazards and the ‘control measures’ were reviewed on an on-going basis but in particular after the initial reconnaissance period, when potential hazards were clearer. In addition, the document was reviewed by DTYC’s health and safety officer.

At a personal level, I have over 10 years experience in working as a qualified youth worker with vulnerable groups of young people, and I applied the knowledge and experience gained over this period to ensuring my personal safety throughout the data collection process.

4.3.3 Recruiting and approaching participants

Before any contact was established with participants approval was sought and approved through Brunel Universities Research Ethics Committee (See Appendix 1). The specific areas where I attempt to initiate conversations with young people on the street were chosen through an initial period of information gathering (also referred to within detached youth work as a reconnaissance period), conducted alongside the detached youth work team. The intention of this information gathering process was to identify areas where young people were likely to be found spending time in public space, or ‘hanging out’.

Typically, where groups of young people were identified as being suitable to approach, they were approached by the youth work team (myself included) in order to engage them in conversation (the purpose of such an approach was discussed in chapter 2). From the perspective of the street based team conversational prompts were used to steer conversation towards a discussion of young people’s support needs and, within this broader discussion I attempted to find

opportunities to engage young men in conversations about their experiences of public space. A clear understanding within the youth work team was that should young people convey that they do not want to participate in conversations, however that might be conveyed (verbally or non-verbally), their wishes would be respected.

Where on-going contact was established with groups of young people I sought opportunities to ask them if they would be willing to participate in interviews or focus group discussions, to explore their experiences of public space in more detail. Where these young people were under the age of 18, information was made available for parents outlining the nature of the research and providing relevant contact details should they have any concerns or queries.

At the first point of contact with young people on the street, the full details of the research were not explained as it was considered that this could prove very off-putting and limit many conversations before they had started. However, although the full details were not explained at this first point of contact, neither was this information actively withheld and, as relationships developed with individuals and groups of young people the research focus was much more openly discussed. Young people were offered a flyer containing a summary of the research and a contact e-mail address should they have any questions. Generally later in the process of engagement, where young people were asked to participate in interviews or focus group discussions time was taken to explain the research purpose and process, including participants' right to withdraw from the process at any time and without penalty. All participants, including organisations, were given reassurances that they would remain anonymous in reports of the study and that the discussions would be confidential.

Guenther (2009) suggests that in the current research context where anonymity and the use of pseudonyms in reporting research findings

has become standard practice, there is still a need to justify the decision not to name individuals or organisations. She is particularly critical of what she describes as the 'thin veiling' of participant details, particularly given that in many instances the assistance of online search engines such as 'Google' can be used to quite easily identify research locations, organisations and even participants. Particularly in the case of ethnographic research, the decision to anonymise risks decontextualizing the findings and removing them from the places that are so central to their significance. In the light of this criticism by Guenther (2009) and others (Aldridge et al, 2008) it is important to note a number of points which informed my decision to anonymise in this instance.

There are a number of specific points that I would note in relation to the decision to anonymise participants within this research, however, before noting these there are two more general points worth making. Firstly, despite the ease with which many research locations and participants can be identified, steps taken to anonymise, even when they are thinly veiled, ensure that participants have the choice to insist that they are not the person they are assumed to be, however sure others may be that they are. The second point is that the researcher's responsibility to the well-being of participants does not come to an end when an ethics approval is signed off. That is, the fact that approval for a piece of research has been granted on the grounds that certain measures will be taken to anonymise participants does not mean that the researcher should not continue to monitor and assess their actions in using the data, in particular the potential impact that their actions might have on participants.

In the context of this research there are two more specific reasons for choosing not to name the research location and to give participants pseudonyms. Firstly, the organisation who facilitated my data collection requested that the data be anonymised. This request did not appear to be made as a result of an examination of the pros and cons

of anonymising data. Rather, it appeared to be what the organisation saw as good practice. At the time this seemed to me to be an unproblematic request and not one I felt driven to argue against, particularly given the level of support that the organisation was offering. The second point relates more specifically to individual participants. A central focus of my research was talking to young men about an issue that the literature suggests many young men find difficult to talk about, vulnerability. The offer of anonymity was an important factor in building trust and encouraging young men to talk more openly and honestly both in interviews and in focus groups. All of the points above considered, and acknowledging Guenther's (2009) challenge to think critically about participant anonymity, the choice to anonymise was the preferred option in this instance.

4.3.4 Engaging with vulnerable participants

The term 'vulnerable' might be used to refer to a wide range of individuals for a wide variety of reasons. When it comes to the issue of street violence the entire youth population could be described as vulnerable. That is, statistically, they are the group most likely to become victims of street violence. Within the broad heading of 'young people', however, there are also sub-groups of young people who could be considered to be particularly vulnerable, either because of their increased potential to become victims or perpetrators of violence. Some of the sub-groups to which I am referring include young people from minority ethnic groups, young people who are not in education employment or training, homeless young people and gay, bisexual, lesbian and transgender young people. A central focus of the research was the nature of young people's vulnerability in public space. In particular, I was interested in the fear which stems from this vulnerability and the extent to which this fear might have influenced levels of violence amongst young people. As such, engaging with 'vulnerable' groups of young people was an essential part of my data collection.

Additional care, therefore, was taken in identifying and engaging with young people who might be considered to be particularly vulnerable and consideration given to whether their involvement in the data collection process might present an unnecessary risk to them. Here, my partnership with a team of experienced, well trained and well supported youth workers, whose role it was to provide support to such individuals, was invaluable. Our team's connection to DTYC linked us to a safe space physically and hopefully emotionally in the area.

4.4 Research Feedback

Having secured the participation of certain individuals and organisations in the data collection process, it was considered important to provide feedback on the outcomes of the research once completed. This happened at a number of levels. At a broader level, feedback was offered through conference presentations and publications. Although this did not provide feedback directly to participants, it was considered to be an important part of following through on my part of the bargain. That is, in asking individuals and organisations to engage in the research process, I suggested that their participation would contribute to society's understanding of the research problem. In order to see through this agreement it was essential that I took whatever steps I could to 'promote' the learning outcomes from the research through conference and seminar presentations and publications.

At a more localised and practical level, direct feedback was offered to participating organisations and individuals. In the case of DTYC, feedback was provided in the form of a short summary report outlining the key findings from the research. In the case of many of the youth participants, it was considered that a written report was unlikely to be a favoured form of feedback, so feedback was offered in the form of focus group discussions and, at a more informal level, through follow-up discussions with young people either in the youth

club setting or on the street. In practice, very few young people sought any form of feedback and those that did want feedback sought it through informal conversations during return visits to DTYC.

4.5 Handling and Analysis of Data

The vast majority of data collected took the form of written notes. For the most part these notes were written retrospectively. For example, it was generally not possible to write notes as I walked around the streets accompanying the street based team so observations from my street-based sessions were noted as soon as was practically possible after finishing the session. Sometimes this was brief notes scribbled during a period of time spent in DTYC. At the end of a street-based session I would either sit somewhere in the youth club and write up some notes or, if noise or other distractions made this difficult, I would write notes on the way home in the train. Similarly, with focus groups and interviews, observations were noted in a journal immediately after they ended (See Appendix 2 for sample interview notes, Appendix 3 for sample focus group notes and Appendix 4 for samples of detached session notes). In addition to these notes, any relevant observations from meetings attended or general observations from time spent in and around the area were hand written in my research journal.

As the data collection process progressed, and where time allowed, written notes were transferred to, and ordered in, the qualitative data analysis tool *NVivo*. Once all of the data had been gathered and transferred, *NVivo* was used as a tool to code the data and to assist in the analysis process. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) are at pains to emphasise, data analysis software can only be used as a tool to aid the data analysis process, it will not do the data analysis automatically. The analyses, therefore, are only meaningful if the instructions for them are. There is flexibility in how *NVivo* is used in coding and analysing data so what follows is an outline of how I used

it. This is illustrative both of how NVivo was used as a resource but also of the data analysis process employed in progressing from raw data to the research findings discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. In addition to outlining how Nvivo was used to analyse the data I will also outline more explicitly how Fairclough’s (2001) approach to CDA was drawn on within data analysis and where other theoretical concepts were drawn on.

The approach to data collection can be broken down into three core stages:

- 0-4 months: street based observations, attendance at meetings, presence and observations in youth club
- 4-8 months: on-going street based observations, informal interviews, focus groups, observations in youth club, attendance at meetings
- 8-12 months: follow-up interviews and focus groups

Accompanying each of these stages of data collection was a parallel process of data analysis. I will refer below, therefore, to stages one to three of both data collection and data analysis. The particular focus for data analysis within each of the stages of data collection was intended to ensure that each stage of data collection informed the next stage and that, over the course of the full twelve months, the focus for data collection became more refined and was driven by the research question. An overview of this process can be seen in Figure 4.2.

Data collection stages	Focus within each stage	Overall outputs
0-4 Months	- Descriptive coding	- Themes
4-8 months	- Analytic coding	- Theoretical framework for analysis
8-12 months	- Exploring themes - Reflecting on theory	

Figure 4.2: Stages of data collection and analysis

Stage one of the data analysis was conducted after three to four months of street based observations. Although I was engaged in a constant process of reflecting on my data up to this point, I did not conduct any 'formal' analysis until this point. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, I was very busy at the start of the detached project, attending meetings, compiling a community profile, running training, getting to know the young people and the area better. Secondly, I felt it was important to allow myself a degree of freedom in this period to explore the area without being overly influenced by early stage data analysis. I wanted to avoid narrowing my focus too soon, and in doing so becoming blinkered to new observations and insights.

The first round of analysis involved coding the observational data to descriptive codes, using Nvivo. Within the Nvivo system these descriptive codes are labelled 'free nodes' and can be grouped together as 'tree nodes'. My descriptive codes, or free nodes, were based on my initial observations after reading the data. For example, 'adult perceptions of young people', 'young people's accounts of racism' or 'young people's descriptions of bullying'. Having descriptively coded the data I ended up with a long list of descriptive codes which I then began to order by grouping them into tree nodes. These tree nodes were broad descriptive categories, for example 'Adults', 'Detached Team' 'Young People'. An example of one tree node (Detached Team) and its related nodes can be seen in Figure 4.3. Memos were then added to each of these tree nodes. These memos were the first attempts at a more formal analysis of the data. The analysis, at this stage, was not very detailed but provided a valuable initial insight into patterns within and across the descriptive groupings, and insights into possible links to relevant reading. The important outcome from this first stage of analysis was that it provided some direction for focusing the on-going street based observations and for planning the informal interviews and focus groups.

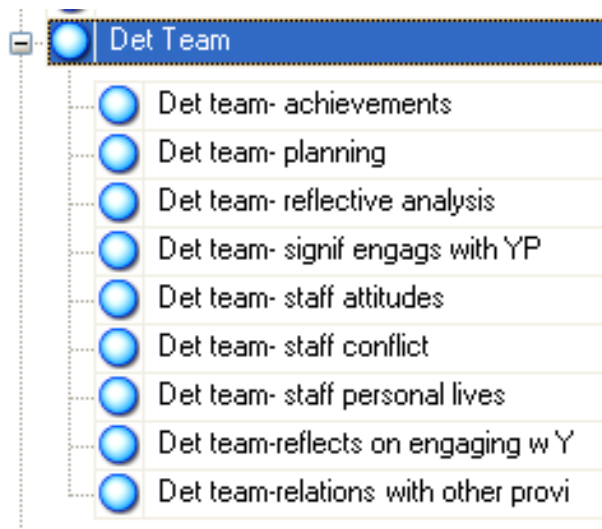


Figure 4.3: Example of tree node and free nodes

Within the second stage of data collection the street-based sessions and club based observations continued. Attendance at meetings and setting up informal interviews and focus groups became a stronger focus within this stage. As with the first four months, over this period I was engaged in a constant process of reflecting on my data, through an 'Ideas Generation' memo and through reflection within my diaries and observational notes. This reflective process, combined with the analysis conducted at the end of the first stage of data collection provided a greater degree of direction in deciding which young people and adults/professionals I needed to prioritise talking with.

By the end of the eight month period I had completed about eighty hours of street based observations, a similar amount of club based observations, run two focus groups, conducted eight informal interviews, and attended numerous meetings with a variety of different professionals. All of the new data gathered over the second four months was coded and analysed at the end of the eight month period. Given the level of activity within this period, the data coded and analysed in stage two represented the bulk of the data gathered over the entire twelve month period.

Where relevant I coded stage two data to existing free nodes and created new free nodes where necessary. A copy of the coded data as it was after the first round of analysis was retained. This ensured that the transition from stage one to stage two of data collection and analysis could be clearly seen, including any impact that insights gained from stage one might have had on narrowing the focus within stage two. Once all of the data was coded to descriptive codes, linked memos were again used to add a layer of analysis to all of the tree nodes. In addition to reflecting back on the research question, data analysis was also used to explore theoretical perspectives that might be suitable in theorising the eventual findings. Within the memos, headings were added to distinguish between analysis made after the first stage and after the second stage. This ensured that the progress in my analysis from first stage to the second stage could be clearly seen.

By the end of the second stage of analysis it was possible to begin to identify analytical themes under which the coded data could be grouped. Within the NVivo system these themes were created as 'sets' into which coded data was added. Memos were again linked to each of these sets providing a level of analysis, in particular discussing the relevance of the data grouped within each set to its theme. It was also clear at this point that there were certain areas of the data where greater depth was desirable, so a number of interviews and one additional focus group were subsequently planned and conducted. Specifically, the interviews were intended to explore further the theme of young men's negotiations of public space, while the focus group was intended to explore further a theme relating to the construction of a 'youth friendly' approach to anti-social behaviour.

Having completed this additional data collection the new data was coded. As with the transition from stage one to stage two, a copy of the free nodes and tree nodes, as they were at the end of stage two, were preserved so that any changes to nodes or analysis after the addition of the final data could be seen. Again, the analysis of the free

nodes and tree nodes was reviewed at this point. This review focused primarily on the nodes and tree nodes which had been altered most significantly by the additional coded data. The key outputs from the data collection and analysis process up to this point were the themed data (including the analysis which informed that theming) and a theoretical framework for explaining the relationships within and across the themes. I will turn my attention now to outlining this theoretical framework in more detail.

It was noted above that Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was drawn on as a key theoretical framework in analysing the themed data. Fairclough (2001) sets out an approach for conducting CDA which has three broad levels of analysis: “*description of text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context*” (p. 91). I will discuss each of these in turn but there are two points which are important to note. Firstly, Fairclough emphasises that his approach is intended as “*a guide and not a blueprint*” (2001, p. 93), so I have drawn on key elements of his approach but have not followed it as a ‘blueprint’. The second point concerns the data which was analysed. Whilst Fairclough emphasises the relevance of, and value in, analysing what he describes as ‘visuals’ as opposed to verbal texts, he focuses primarily on verbal texts. I have drawn on both ‘visuals’ and verbal texts and this has informed the additional theoretical perspectives drawn on, which will be discussed in more detail below. An overview of the theoretical concepts drawn on at each level of Fairclough’s analysis is provided in Figure 4.4.

Theoretical framework for analysis	
Fairclough’s levels of analysis	Additional theoretical concepts drawn on
Description	Critical textwork
Interpretation	Subject positioning
Explanation	Hegemonic Masculinities

Figure 4.4: Theoretical framework for analysis

At the level of text description Fairclough sets out 10 key questions which can be asked in relation to the text being analysed. These questions are grouped under the headings of Vocabulary, Grammar and Textual structures. While these questions were of use in analysing verbal text within the data, of greater use were the three types of value that Fairclough proposes that formal features of the text might have: experiential, relational and expressive. Experiential relates to the way in which the text producer's knowledge and beliefs are evident in the text; relational is concerned with aspects of relations and social relations that are evident in the text; and expressive is concerned with the text producer's constructions of social identity in the text (Fairclough, 2001).

As was noted earlier in this chapter, Parker's insights on varieties of text (Parker 1992, 1999) have been particularly useful in highlighting the relevance of discourse analysis to the ethnographic observations made within this research. He suggests that "*it is better to start with a wish to deconstruct power and ideology and then look at how a study of discourse dynamics could help*" (p. xi). Parker's (1992) 14 steps in discourse analysis provided a useful guide for using observation and description to produce texts for analysis as opposed to more conventional approaches, such as recording and transcribing. For Parker then "*a text is any tissue of meaning which is symbolically significant for a reader*" (1999, pp. 3-4). The examples of varieties of text provided in 'Critical Textwork' (Parker, 1999), and particularly those chapters relating to 'Physical Texts', provided a useful guide in considering the varieties of text within this study. For example, Susan Ford's (1999) chapter showed how treating a garden plan as a cultural text may reveal links to wider struggles for power and status within Victorian society. A similar approach was adopted within this research

in considering how the design and materials used in public play spaces pointed to wider concerns in relation to young people's presence in urban public spaces.

Fairclough's second level of analysis progresses from the initial description of texts to the interpretation of context and text, and emphasises situational context and inter-textual context. The central concern at this level of analysis is discourse processes. Fairclough suggests that "*the values of textual features only become real, socially operative, if they are embedded in social interaction, where texts are produced and interpreted against a backdrop of common-sense assumptions...which give textual features their values*" (2001, p. 117). The aspect of discourse processes which was of particular interest at this level of analysis was subject positioning, because of its relevance in considering both young men's constructions of fear in public space but also how these constructions were constrained by certain dominant discourses. Data analysis of both the conversations I had with adult professionals and the young people themselves suggested that this was an important aspect of young men's experiences of public space and their involvement in street violence. Davies and Harre (1990) proposed that 'positioning' enables a focus on the "*dynamic aspects of encounters*" (p. 44). Similarly, for Fairclough subject positioning is important for its capacity to reveal the "*creativity of the subject*" (2001, p. 140). Representations of young people's involvement in violence are often polarised into those youth who are violent, dangerous offenders and those who are victims or potential victims. Griffen (2004) suggests that "*in general, young men are more likely to be presented as actively 'deviant', especially in aggressive forms, and especially if they are working class and/or Black*" (p. 10). Data analysis of my observations of, and conversations with, young men suggested that their experiences of violence and victimisation were much more complex and unpredictable than they are often represented as being. The use of subject positioning enabled a clearer analysis of how young men negotiated, and re-negotiated, 'safe' positions within

what was a constantly shifting terrain of violence, power and victimisation.

Willig (1999), drawing on Parker (1992), explores discursive constructions relating to sex education and the subject positions contained within them. Within her analysis Willig suggests that there are three core questions which need to be considered in order to identify a discourse and how it positions subjects: firstly, she suggests we need to consider what versions of reality are talked into existence; secondly, how do these constructions (processes through which particular versions of reality are manufactured) position subjects; and thirdly, how do these constructions relate to other discourses. Whilst insights from a range of authors (Davies and Harre, 1990; Parker, 1992, 1999; Fairclough, 2001; Sarantakos, 2005; Bradford and Cullen, 2012) have been drawn on in identifying discourses within the data, and the subject positions they provided, these three questions identified by Willig have provided a basic but important guide to my analysis.

Fairclough's final level of analysis is Explanation. The focus at this level is to,

“portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them” (2001, p. 135)

Fairclough suggests that explanation should be concerned with the reproductive effects of discourse at societal, institutional and situational levels of social organisation. Within his own research Fairclough has concerned himself with the reproductive effects of political discourse (2000, 2001, 2003, 2005). Explanation within this research will also consider the impact of dominant political discourses on young men's involvement in street violence. Additionally, theories of masculinity will be drawn on at the level of explanation in

considering how the construction of violent masculinities at a local level relates to wider questions of gender identity construction within contemporary British society.

The final point within this section relates to the practical issue of how data was kept secure. Once the notes were transferred to NVivo, the data existed in two locations; on paper, within my journals, and in electronic form stored on a pc. Data, in both formats, will be retained confidentially in a secure (locked or password protected) space for 5 years and may be used in planning further research. As part of the process of transferring the data to NVivo participant details were anonymised and in external presentations of this data participants remain anonymous, with pseudonyms to obscure identities. Data that may identify individuals, groups or locations has been altered (and named as having been altered) or omitted.

4.6 Chapter Summary

Violence both shapes and is shaped by society's response to it and so I sought both symbolic and literal accounts of violence and hence direct and indirectly relevant data. The epistemological approach adopted within this research is social constructionist and this chapter contextualises it in relation to Foucault's discourse analysis, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Ethnography. CDA was identified as being influential in developing my methodological approach, however, I also drew attention to a number of other authors within social constructionism whose writings have been influential in developing my analysis and discussion. Ethnography was used for its attention to subjective experiences and the particular cultural and historical context of the young men's experiences. The particular research methods adopted included participant observation, interviews and focus groups and related ethical considerations were explored. Finally, the chapter outlined how those involved in the research received feedback on the analysis.

5.0 Analysis I: The Positioning of Young People in Public Space

This section will focus primarily on constructions relating to young people's presence in Dock Town's public spaces. The focus here will be on how certain constructions of public space position young people and, in particular, the impact that this positioning has on young people's power and sense of belonging in public space. The second analysis chapter will look more closely at how this positioning relates to the subject positions that young people themselves adopt and, ultimately, the impact this is likely to have on their involvement in violence. Within this chapter I will explore aspects of verbal and written texts relating to Dock Town's public spaces. I will also consider non-verbal 'texts' (Parker, 1999) such as the physical text of the spaces that young people occupy. My focus throughout will be on the way in which dominant discourses position young people, the impact this has on young people's power in public space and the power bases served by positioning young people in this way.

5.1 Constructions of youth presence in public space

Over the course of my data collection my analysis of articles relating to young people in both local and national newspapers appeared to consistently represent young people's presence in public space in a negative light. A closer examination of one particular local River Borough newspaper highlights this point.

5.1.1 The physical text of Dock Town's public spaces

As part of the process of planning and preparing for our street based work I spent a number of weeks walking the streets of Dock Town alongside DTYC's team of detached youth workers. During this preparation period, often referred to among Detached Youth Workers as a reconnaissance period, we did not attempt to meet with or talk to young people. From a detached youth work perspective the inclusion

of a reconnaissance period was considered good practice (Tiffany, 2007). The intention for this period was for the team to get to know the area, to observe services or provision for young people that we might not have been aware of and to familiarise ourselves with the places that young people tended to hang out. From a research perspective these sessions were very valuable as they provided me with a good opportunity to observe what Parker (1999) refers to as the ‘physical text’ of Dock Town’s public spaces. There were observable discourses in this physical text which served to ‘hold positions for speakers and reproduce relations of power’ (ibid, p.3). In some instances these public space discourses were explicit, such as the discourse of public safety drawn on by the CCTV signage in Figure 5.1. CCTV is constructed as a means of monitoring public spaces in order to keep *the public* safe.



Figure 5.1: CCTV signage

In other instances these discourses were an implicit element of the text observed, such as the materials used in the construction of certain spaces or the layout of materials within those spaces. Figure 5.2 provides an example of a renovated public square in Dock Town

Central. A range of questions might be asked of the design and layout of this space, such as why the benches were positioned facing away from each other? Why an additional arm rest was placed in the centre of each bench? Why a natural material such as wood was combined with a more industrial grey metal frame? Whilst it might have been interesting to know what rationalities guided the design decisions here, a Foucauldian approach displaces a concern with individual meanings in favour of cultural discourses (Taylor, 2010). The significance of this is well illustrated here: the effects of the discourses that inform the design are visible in the shaping of public space and the meanings constructed for it. The rationale for positioning the benches in Figure 5.2 facing away from each other in another location might have been to capture impressive scenic views, however, as Figure 5.3 shows it is a less than scenic view that greets the weary shopper who chooses to rest their feet at this location.



Figure 5.2: Renovated public square in Dock Town Central



Figure 5.3: View from benches in Dock Town Central

The exact intention of the town planners in the design of this space is uncertain, however, irrespective of motive or intention, implicit in the resulting text is a discourse of public space which positions users of this space in such a way as to encourage certain forms of social interaction and, importantly, discourage others. Extending this insight to young people's use of public spaces, it is expected that a broader analysis of the physical text of Dock Town's public spaces will reveal discourses which position young people in public space and, in doing so, construct a limited range of subject positions which they might themselves actively adopt.

One feature of the text of Dock Town's public spaces which became evident as I walked around the various council estates was the dozens of signs scattered around these estates indicating areas where it was expected that 'No Ball Games' should be played. Figure 5.4 provides a collage of just a few of these signs.



Figure 5.4: ‘No Ball Games’ signs around Dock Town

The use of this form of signage to direct children and young people away from certain spaces, by implicitly criminalising an activity historically associated with children and young people, was common practice around Dock Town. The directive nature of the language used makes it clear that the exclusion of ball games from designated spaces was not open to discussion or negotiation. This use of minimal directive wording is similar to that used in ‘No Parking’ signs. The difference with ‘No Parking’ signs, however, is that parking signs will be accompanied by either additional signage or road markings indicating where and when the parking restrictions apply. Parking related signage forms just part of a range of interrelated measures intended to manage and control the parking of cars around the borough at different times of the day. In the interest of transparency and fairness there are publicly accessible guidelines in place which provide drivers with an understanding of who the restrictions apply to, when they come into force, penalties that apply when they are not adhered to and appeals procedures should drivers feel they have been dealt with unfairly. Importantly, these measures are legally enforceable, a factor which helps to make sense of the local

authority's use of directive and non-negotiable language in its parking signage. 'No Ball Games' in contrast has little legal status and cannot be enforced by councils or by the police (BBC, 2007).

The use of language in signage which is not legally enforceable and, therefore, where a greater degree of negotiation might be expected can be found at the exit to a number of pubs around Dock Town. Although the exact wording tends to vary typically they asks of patrons to 'Please leave the pub quietly. Thank you'. Of note is the use of 'please' and 'thank you' indicating the negotiated nature of the message being conveyed through the signs written text. The language used in such signs is reflective of the publican's limited ability to enforce his/her request; it is an attempt to negotiate a noise level which is acceptable to both publican and patron and, ultimately, considerate of local residents.

In the case of ball games, however, the signs do not indicate specifically the area covered by the signage, the times of operation or penalties which might be incurred. In fact, the very notion that the council might ban all ball games in a particular area is highly questionable, a point which has even drawn the attention of the graffiti artist 'Banksy' (Figure 5.5).



Figure 5.5: Banksy graffiti

One might ask whether the sign applies to the playing of all ball

games in the designated areas. Do the signs, for example, apply to the playing of ball games such as marbles or tennis? Further, it is unclear how the council would go about enforcing this ban; whether it might result in a fine, an eviction order or some other course of action. By applying a blanket ban on the playing of all ball games in many of the public spaces around Dock Town, and by presenting this ban in such a non-negotiable manner these signs draw on a discourse of public space which constructs children and young people's playful presence in that space as problematic. The tone of the signage implies that the solution to *the problem* is to be found not through dialogue, or specification of the precise problem related to ball games, but by moving the problem on.

Dock Town's public spaces were not, however, devoid of areas designated for use by young people, and further discussion of the text of these 'youth' spaces provides a useful insight into the positioning of young people in public space around Dock Town. The first important point to note is that there was a clear distinction between *children's spaces* and *youth spaces*. Whilst it is youth spaces which are of interest here, it is worth discussing briefly some of the key features of children's play spaces in order to highlight the ways in which youth spaces differed. On most of the estates around Dock Town there was at least one children's play area. Whilst there was some variation in the layout and condition of these play spaces there were many common features. They were generally bordered by a low railing, 2-3 feet in height. Inside this railing there was a variety of play equipment along with at least one seating bench which was generally positioned facing the play equipment, presumably so that supervising adults could monitor children at play. The railings, ground covering and play equipment usually drew on a range of bright colours. While the specific equipment varied from one space to the next, they generally had typical play equipment, such as swings and slides, alongside a range of variations on climbing frames, ramps, steps, tunnels etc. The purpose of many of the play pieces, such as the

climbing frames, was sufficiently vague as to allow, or encourage, children using them to explore and experiment in different ways, drawing on a popularised Piagetian ‘child-centred’ discourse of how the environment might allow and promote children’s creative play and hence learning and development (Burman, 1994). Figure 5.6 provides some examples of the variations in these play spaces around Dock Town.



Figure 5.6: Play spaces around Dock Town

The use of children’s spaces was very clearly limited to children and signage at the entrance to most made explicit who should and should not be using them, as is demonstrated in Figure 5.7.



Figure 5.7: Signs indicating age limits for users of play spaces

If children and young people were discouraged from playing in many of the public spaces around Dock Town, and certain play spaces were very clearly designated as *children's spaces*, then the main public spaces that were left for young people to occupy were the various football and basketball courts around Dock Town. These spaces were commonly referred to both by young people and adults as 'cages', a term commonly associated with the containment of wild animals. An observation of the construction of these spaces provides an insight into why they might have been referred to in this way. Like the children's play spaces there was some variation in the specific features of the various cages around Dock Town, however, there were a number of features which were common to most. The cages were generally surrounded on four sides by quite heavy duty metal fencing, normally a minimum of 8ft tall. The high fencing surrounding the cages, though presumably motivated by the practical consideration of minimising damage caused by wayward footballs, basketballs or tennis

balls, had the effect of creating a physical and visual barrier which simultaneously contained those within whilst excluding those without.

Most of the cages were rectangular in shape with a football and a basketball net at each end. The space between these nets being clear of obstacles that might obstruct the playing of basketball or football and many had painted lines on the ground allowing users of these spaces to apply rules relating to the use of and movement through space typically associated with these games. In some of these spaces seating was positioned along the sides in a manner which suggested that they were to be used by spectators observing whatever game was being played out in the centre of the cage. All of these features suggest that these spaces were specifically intended to be used for structured, ordered and competitive activities, typically working class masculine games such as football or basketball. Thus, not mobilising the same Piagetian discourse of play as the creative exploration of a physical space mobilised by the children's play parks. Young people were not being engaged in exploring and using the spaces creatively as they chose; spaces constructed only a narrow range of activities as legitimate (see Figure 5.8).



Figure 5.8: Young people guided not to hang from sports equipment

Importantly, the narrow range of activities which were constructed

within these spaces were, for the most part, activities associated with masculinity. This constructs certain identities and behaviours as expected, limiting the feminine and other non-stereotypically masculine identities available. Typically, when I observed young people in the cages, young women were relegated to the side lines while the boys played football. The impact this had on young people's interactions within these spaces will be discussed in more detail within the next chapter. There are, however, other texts which contributed to the construction of young people's presence in public space which I will explore now in more detail.

5.1.2 Constructions of young people in the local media

River Borough News (RBN), as the title suggests is a newspaper which is dedicated to covering stories within or relating to River Borough. It is a paid for, independent newspaper which is published weekly and has a circulation of approximately 11,000 and estimates it's readership at approximately 30,000 (RBN Website, 07/09/11), within a Borough with a population of approximately 250,000.

An analysis of stories covered by the paper over the period of my data collection (October 2009 to June 2010) highlighted a total of 23 pieces containing the word 'youth' either in the heading or somewhere in the main body of the text. Of these pieces, six either directly or indirectly dealt with the issue of young people and public space. That is, some of these pieces were specifically about young people in public space, whilst others had a different primary focus, but also made reference to young people in public space. While pieces varied editorially as to whether they presented young people in a positive or negative light, all of the 6 referring to young people in public space drew on a discourse of *young people's presence in public space as problematic*.

In some instances this discourse was an explicit element of the story. For example, the headline: '*Stabbed to Death by Pack of Youths*'

(RBN 24/06/2010, line 1). This piece was revisiting an unsolved murder which had happened ten years previously. The reporter drew an implicit parallel between the young people who allegedly committed the murder and a pack of animals. This animalistic discourse is further reinforced within the piece when the perpetrators are described as a '*roaming gang of youths*' (ibid, line 11). There are obvious links between the way in which the young people were described- a '*pack of youths*' seen '*roaming*' River Borough - and the way in which, for example, a pack of feral dogs might be described. The author later provides insights into the mind-set of these young people and the circumstances leading up to the fatal incident, when it is suggested that they '*took to the streets of River Borough, armed to the teeth and bent on violence*' (ibid, line 13). Given that the piece was looking for assistance in solving an unsolved murder, it seems unlikely that the author would have known what the mind-set of the young people was when they left their houses on the day of the murder. The author's assertion then, that the young people were '*bent on violence*' appears to have been made less out of concern for journalistic accuracy, than out of a concern to remain consistent with the wider mobilisation within the piece of a discourse of *young people's presence in public space as problematic*.

Other articles drew on the discourse of *young people's presence in public space as problematic* more implicitly. There were a number of pieces (RBN, 04/02/10; 25/02/10; 29/03/10) which appeared to be editorially positive, or at least neutral, in the way in which they talked about young people in public space. However, a closer analysis of these pieces suggests an implicit emphasis on the removal of young people from public space. For example, the apparently positive piece about a '*School for Musical Youth*' (RBN 29/03/10, line 1) opening in Dock Town. This youth programme was deemed to be a positive development for the community because '*Dance keeps them [young people] fit and off the streets*' (ibid, lines 4-5). Similarly, the impact of the closure of a local community facility, after a break-in, is

measured by the number of young people that might now not be kept off the streets; *'We keep about 200 kids off the street. I hope the people who did this are satisfied'* (RBN 04/02/10, lines 21-22). Young people's involvement in 'positive activities' away from public space is constructed as something positive, not because they might socialise, learn, grow and develop as individuals, rather because their involvement in these activities ensures they are kept *off the streets*. The subtext then is that if young people are not constructively occupied they will end up causing problems on the streets. This is well highlighted in a piece about an *'Anti-Crime Day for Youth'* (RBN 25/02/10, line 1). The piece describes a fun day for young people in memory of a murder victim, the core focus of which was to *'demonstrate there are other routes available to children rather than crime'* (ibid, line 10). Although the account of young people coming together for a fun day appears to be a positive one, the underlying discourse of *young people's presence in public space as problematic* is again evident; if young people are not shown alternative routes, they will gravitate towards crime. Even in what appears to be editorially positive pieces then, there is the reification of a discourse of *young people's presence in public space as problematic*. The pattern within the news pieces examined pointed to a tension between claims, on the one hand, to be meeting the needs of young people themselves whilst, on the other hand, being motivated by the desire to reduce crime, which was assumed to come from the removal of young people from public space. This same tension was also evident in my early discussions with a number of River Borough's council officers.

5.1.3 The construction of young people in Council Officers' accounts

A few weeks into my data collection I attended a local council organised meeting called a Youth Provider Meeting (YPN). This was a termly networking meeting for various individuals *'who work with or provide services for young people'* (Guide to Youth Provision in Dock Town, 2009). The meeting was organised by a council officer who

worked for the youth service and whose role it was to co-ordinate a number of these networks across the borough. I was accompanied to the meeting by two other members of staff from DTYC and introduced myself as a researcher who is currently working alongside the DTYC detached team. The chair for the Dock Town meeting was the council's area youth service manager. Before the meeting started a local performing arts group, whose building the meeting was held in, put on a short performance involving a small group of young people who had been taking part in a programme at the centre. The main meeting discussions were then led by the meeting chair (Katie-Female, 50-60, WB). Within my field notes I comment that '*Katie, in particular, seemed to be looking for 'issues' with young people*'. She started the meeting by inviting each member of the group to introduce themselves and then

'gave the group what might best be described as an intelligence update about problem areas around Dock Town where young people were reported to have been causing problems. She laughs noting that 'things seem to be quiet at the moment'. She looks around the group to see if anyone else had information to share, she reluctantly moved on with the agenda but almost seemed to be disappointed that there were no issues raised by group members' (Field notes, YPN- 26/11/09).

Here The Chair appears to draw on a discourse of *youth presence in public space as problem*. In doing this at an early stage in the meeting, like the first speaker in a conversation, she sets the tone for the rest of the meeting. She does not preclude attendees from drawing on alternative discourses, but does establish a narrative against which providers' accounts of young people are set. That is, providers' accounts of young people's involvement in their programmes are set against a narrative of *problem youth*; if young people are not involved in these programmes they will be out on the streets causing problems.

Through the services that they provided to young people in the local community, the various individuals attending the meeting were involved in responding to a wide variety of 'issues' faced by young

people. In the context of this meeting, however, by giving the discussion of *problem youth* such prominence the Chair constructs young people as the ‘issue’ to be dealt with. Her position of power within the meeting as Chair and representative of the Council, a significant provider of funding to youth providers in Dock Town, served to underscore her particular construction of young people. A discussion I had with one of the attendees after the meeting highlighted the existence of alternative discourses of young people’s presence in public space, which were not voiced during the meeting, as this extract from my field notes highlights.

“They [a local performing arts group] have a yearly outdoor performance through which they encourage communities to engage or reengage with public space in new ways. It was interesting to hear about her [a worker with the performing arts group] experiences. She talked about when they go to a community and set up for a multi-day performance they have to try to engage with the local young people and recognize that they are in the young people’s space and therefore they need to be respectful of that. They try to engage with young people by giving them ownership of parts of the performance, like setting up the kit, or seeing people to their seats and she says this works well” (YPN- 26/11/09).

By ‘works well’ here the arts worker was suggesting that it enabled the theatre group to set up and run a multi-day outdoor arts performance in a new area without experiencing tensions or difficulties with local young people over access to and use of public spaces that the young people themselves might normally occupy. Importantly, the worker emphasises the willingness to negotiate on questions of power in, and control of, public space as being central to the effectiveness of their approach. By constructing young people as she did Katie, while not precluding such alternative constructions of their presence in public space from being voiced, makes it less likely that they will come to the fore.

Katie was not the only youth service or council worker to construct *young people’s presence in public space as problematic*, and a later

meeting with Tanya (Female, 30-40, BB), the local youth service manager with responsibility for detached youth work, emphasised this point. In the notes from my meeting with Tanya I comment that Tanya placed a *'lot of emphasis on problems on estates, responding to complaints and dealing with conflicts (tackling anti-social behavior)...she seemed to talk about young people in a problematic way and the focus for detached workers being about resolving or managing those problems'* (Meet with Tanya- Female, 30-40, BB-17/12/09). The significance of this observation should be understood in the context of the previously discussed detached youth work philosophy, which emphasises responding to needs as they are presented by young people (Tiffany, 2007) as opposed to having a pre-determined agenda such as 'tackling anti-social behaviour'. As was evident in my encounter with Katie, Tanya's emphasis on *'problems on estates'* and *'responding to complaints'* constructs *young people's presence in public space as problematic*; something which needs to be managed.

Importantly, Tanya goes on to talk about an initiative that the Council was developing which was intended to bring about a more joined up approach to tackling ASB. She *'mentioned that RASBU [River Borough Anti-social Behaviour Unit] were running street based youth work teams which they [the youth service] were required to link in with'* (Meet with Tanya- Female, 30-40, BB- 17/12/09). A brief insight into the nature of RASBU is useful here to appreciate the impact that this partnership working was likely to have on the detached work philosophy of Tanya's team. *'RASBU are a specialist team set up to tackle and reduce antisocial behaviour. They take legal action using a range of powers including anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) and anti-social behaviour contracts (ABCs)'* (River Borough 2011, p.26). The street based teams which RASBU had set up, and which Tanya was required to work with, I would later discover were called Young Advisors teams. Tanya's emphasis on being *required* to work with these teams highlighted the priority the Young Advisors

teams, and their particular approach to managing the *problem* of young people's presence in public space, were afforded by the council. What these early encounters with Dock Town's council officers began to reveal was the way in which a *discourse of youth presence in public space as problematic* could become productive in mobilising resources, such as youth support services. This process would become even clearer as my observations progressed, in particular through my direct contact with the Young Advisors teams on Dock Town's streets during my street based observations.

5.2 The construction of a 'youth friendly' approach to tackling ASB

Dock Town's 'Young Advisors' teams were part the council's strategy for reducing anti-social behaviour. A quote from the 'River Borough Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy- 2011 to 2015' states that:

"River Borough Young Advisors and the River Borough patrollers will be utilised to build trust and relationships with young people in an effort to encourage them to report ASB and other issues of concern" (p. 22).

A central tenet of the Young Advisors' approach to reducing anti-social behaviour was the referral of young people *off the streets* and into positive activities. In order to construct this approach as a 'youth friendly' approach the young advisors team mobilised a discourse of 'youth proofing'. However, as my discussions below will suggest, my observations of the young advisors team highlighted tensions in 'official' constructions of the team as 'youth friendly'.

5.2.1 An introduction to the Young Advisors

The Young Advisors teams were part of a national social enterprise initiative which recruited and trained young people (known as young advisors) to "*show community leaders and decision makers how to engage young people in community life, local decision making and improving services*" (Young Advisors, 2012). The young advisors street based team was just one of a number of pieces of work that the

River Borough Young Advisors were involved in, however, the street based team are of particular interest here, given the level of contact they had with young people in Dock Town's public spaces.

The street based team was made up of young advisors (aged between 15 and 21), and a selection of adult professionals drawn from 3 key partners; River Borough Community Wardens, the River Borough Anti-social Behaviour Unit (RASBU) and a local voluntary sector youth club. Collectively this team was known as the young advisors street based team. The make-up of the team was reflective of the strong focus it had on reducing anti-social behaviour.

The core task of the street based team, as explained to me by a number of its members, was to collect details from young people about activities that they would like to get involved in. When the young advisors team talked with young people on the street they would also note contact details so that subsequent to the street based discussion there could be a follow up telephone call or e-mail to advise the young people about how or where they could access the particular activity they were interested in. In total the street based team consisted of around 15-20 individuals who would break up into smaller teams of 3-5 and walk around Dock Town for about two hours, one night a week. They did this for most of the 6 months that I was working with the detached team.

The persistence with which the Young Advisors team pursued their objective of referring young people into 'positive activities' became evident in my encounters with young people, as my attempts to make conversation were increasingly met with the response; "*we've already signed up*", as is highlighted in my field notes:

"As we approached and asked if we could have a quick chat they immediately said that they had done it already, 'we've already signed up', looking like they weren't bothered about talking to us. It took a minute to realise that they were talking about the signing up that the young

advisors were doing and they mistook us for young advisors. We had to explain that we weren't to do with that project but that we were from DTYC and we wanted to let them know about the bike project [a street based bike repair project being run by DTYC]. This got a much more positive response from the two boys who listened as we talked a bit about when the project was on and where" (Detached Observations- 13/05/10).

Encounters such as these suggested that at least some young people were becoming reluctant to engage in conversations with the young advisors street based team, my own early contacts with this team provided an insight into why this might be.

5.2.2 Early encounters with the street based team

One evening at an early point in my data collection myself, Joe (Male, 20-30, WB) and Sonia (Female, 20-30, WB) (the other members of the detached team) were on the four blocks estate playing football with a group of young people that we had recently made contact with. My field notes record that

"we were playing probably for about 10-20mins when we noticed a large group of people (10-20) to the side of the court...Three of them came onto the court and beckoned the young people to them, one asking 'Have we got all your details yet?'. That is, they had forms and were asking the young people if all of them had given their details to them" (Detached Observations- 03/03/10).

This group turned out to be the young advisors team, out on a street based session. Because we were at the other end of the football pitch from the young advisors team and because we were dressed in informal clothes, it seemed that they did not initially notice us as being youth workers. *"They talked with some of the young people in a group in the centre of the court and we held back at one end of the court"* (Detached Observations- 03/03/10). Although a game of football was in progress when the young advisors arrived they appeared to assume the right to disrupt this activity so that they could take down the young people's details. This assumed control of the space was also reflected in the way in which the team went about

‘requesting’ the young people’s details.

It is worth giving some further consideration to the request made by the worker in the example above, ‘*have we got all your details yet?*’. Firstly, the worker was letting the young people know that he was collecting the details of young people in the area; secondly, he wanted to know if there were any young people present whose details he had not already collected; and finally, he wanted anyone who had not already given their details to him to do so. There are two particularly significant observations in the way in which these component elements are conveyed through the workers request to the young people.

The first relates to entitlement, the request assumes entitlement to the young people’s details; this is not conveyed as something which needs to be negotiated. The second point is that, by presenting the request in the manner he did the worker appears to avoid any vulnerability that might be created by making a direct request of the young people. His approach to requesting the young people’s details was akin to a teacher asking of his students ‘*have I had your homework yet?*’. The question assumes that the pupils will know the teacher wants their homework and that they should hand it in if they have not already done so. In the case of the young advisors, adopting this approach to requesting the young people’s details places the asker in a position of authority and draws on the assumed understanding that the young people should provide their details if they have not already done so. Whilst this positioning of young people recognises the agency of young people in choosing an alternative activity that they might like to become involved in, it is, however, built on the underlying assumption that time spent by young people unsupervised in public space is inherently problematic.

The position of authority assumed by the worker in the example above did not appear to be lost on the young people and although they did

not challenge it directly one young person highlighted his intention to adopt a strategy of resistance;

“Jamie [a young person] stood with us and when Joe asked who they [referring to the young advisors] were he said that they were ‘The youth Team’ and that they were around there ‘all the time’. He said this in a way that suggested that he wasn’t particularly happy with them. He then paused and ran towards them saying to us that he was going to go and give them some false details’ (Detached Observations-03/03/10).

This comment from the young person was an early insight into the importance to young people of control in public space. Although they might not have been able or willing to directly challenge intrusions into *their* space, there were a range of alternative strategies which they drew on in trying to affirm the limited control they had within certain spaces, when they felt that control was being eroded.

Further insight into the way in which the workers within the street based team viewed their contact with young people was gained on another occasion while I was out with the detached team. We were approached by one of the young advisors teams who thought we might be young people. On making contact with us they could see we were adults but the approach offered the opportunity to have a conversation and to find out a little more about their work. This particular group was made up of two female young advisors (trained young people) and two adult professionals, one of whom was a member of RASBU. The young people walked ahead of the two adult members of the team, who appeared to hover in the background. We were later informed by the RASBU worker that this was a deliberate tactic:

“He told us that they tend to let the young people make the initial contact and if they need to get involved they do but otherwise they stay back and let the young people provide the information” (Detached observations-23/03/10).

Here the worker constructs the young advisors who were

accompanying him not only as the youth friendly front to the team but also as the primary service providers, his role was to get involved only if he *needed* to. However, this appeared to be at odds with the official constructions of the young advisors, which suggested that their role was to assist professionals in communicating more effectively with young people, rather than to communicate on their behalf.

The worker then goes on to construct what he appears to view as a youth friendly street based identity. He informed us that “*he wasn’t there ‘with his RASBU hat on’ and...he wouldn’t be ‘telling young people off for smoking a spliff [smoking cannabis]’*” (Detached Observations- 24/03/10). Here the worker positions young people as generally accepting of cannabis smoking and, therefore, likely to be welcoming of his liberal stance. To be youth friendly for this worker then, was to be accepting of, or at least willing to turn a blind eye to, an illegal activity in the interest of building better relations with young people. As questionable as the assumptions underlying this construction might be, it is not the particular point I want to focus on.

In using the metaphor of wearing a different hat, the worker conveys the temporary nature of his street based identity. That is, he suggests that in donning the hat of street based worker he makes a transition from council officer, who presumably tells young people off for smoking cannabis, to youth friendly street based worker, who is prepared to bend the rules on what might be considered acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. Importantly, in constructing his identity in this manner he implies a line of separation between his street and his *regular* professional identities. This temporary construction of youth friendliness contrasts with the more substantial shift in power dynamics implied by the mobilisation of the discourse of ‘youth proofing’.

5.2.3 The discourse of ‘youth proofing’

The young advisors national website notes that young advisors “*will help organisations ‘youth proof’ their practices, policies, strategies and commissioning*” (Young Advisors 2012). While youth proofing was not defined within the young advisors literature, the discourse was mobilised in a similar manner to that of child-proofing. That is, the youth proofing of a strategy, for example, offered an assurance that young people would not be harmed in the implementation of that strategy. Central to the discourse of youth proofing, as it was mobilised within the young advisors literature, were questions of power and control.

Young advisors would, therefore, ‘*speak out for young people, making sure their thoughts and feelings are considered in decisions that affect them...[and bring] power and decision making into local communities*’ (Young Advisors 2012). The mobilisation of the discourse of youth proofing by the River Borough street based team constructed the young advisors as power brokers on behalf of the wider youth population. Implicit in this construction is a willingness amongst those in positions of power to negotiate on questions of power and control. However, a closer analysis of the market based social enterprise model which underpinned the young advisors relationship with the council highlighted tensions in their construction as power brokers.

5.2.4 The Young Advisors as Power Brokers

One online account of the River Borough young advisors programme notes that ‘*all young advisors (aged 15 – 21) receive training and are paid a “respectful” wage for the work they do, usually £8/hour*’ (London Civic Forum, 2009). This point was also emphasised when I met with the River Borough Young Advisors coordinator who explained that ‘*the young advisors are bought in by other providers. That is, if an organisation wants the young advisors to work for them- for example, the police doing stop and search training- then they can*

buy them at £15 per hour. The young advisors are paid at £8 per hour and the other £7 goes towards developing new pieces of work and the young advisors have control over this' (Young Advisors Focus Group-10/12/10). In an attempt to emphasise the fair treatment and empowerment of the young advisors an economic discourse is mobilised to construct them as service providers.

This dual construction of the young advisors, as both service providers and power brokers, highlights a tension in the young advisors role as 'youth proofers'. That is, the onus on young advisors to respond to the needs of service buyers undermines their ability to challenge the same service buyers on questions of power and control. This point is further reinforced by the way in which some of the young advisors positioned themselves when referring to their work with key partners, an example of which can be seen in the River Borough Young Advisors' relationship with the community wardens.

The young advisors shared an office with River Borough's Community Wardens, they were coordinated by a former community warden and they worked closely with the community warden's team. This closeness to the community wardens revealed itself in the way in which the young advisors positioned themselves when talking about some of the roles they performed, as is highlighted by an online account given by one of the River Borough Young Advisors:

"As Young Advisors we are called to participate in all sorts of events...On such events, we are there to assist the Community Wardens and ensure that the event runs smoothly...We have a team which goes out once a week (Thursday) and patrol[s] around hotspot areas for instance 'Middle Borough' where there are issues with young people. This is called 'Street Base Team'. The patrolling is done by us Young Advisors and at least one Community Warden" (Young Advisors Website, 2012).

In this account the young advisor positions herself as providing a support role to the community wardens. In using terms such as

‘patrol’ and ‘hotspot areas’ the young person positions herself in a policing role alongside the community wardens, as opposed to ‘youth proofing’ the work of the wardens. That is, there is a shift from mobilising a discourse of youth proofing, which emphasises power brokering on behalf of the wider youth population, to mobilising a policing discourse which focuses on monitoring and controlling the actions of the wider youth population.

The commercial nature of the relationship that the young advisors had with services they were meant to be ‘youth proofing’, combined with the close working relationships they had with the community wardens, compromised their role in “*show[ing] community leaders and decision makers how to engage young people in community life, local decision making and improving services*” (Young Advisors Website 2012). The points discussed above suggest that the young advisors could just as easily have supported a process of excluding young people from community life. Underpinning the construction of the young advisors as youth proofers is a highly questionable assumption of solidarity between young people. It is assumed that young advisors will want to advocate on behalf of other young people because they are young people. Notes from the focus group conducted with some of the young advisors revealed how questionable this assumption was:

“The girls commented that they didn’t like that the young people in Dock Town ‘don’t have any respect’. They went on to clarify that they were talking about the lack of respect for their community and the people in the community. The two examples they give are the graffiti around the area and the fact that the young people ‘wouldn’t care about throwing a firework at you’” (Young Advisors Focus Group-09/12/10).

River Borough mobilised a discourse of Youth Proofing in order to construct their approach to tackling anti-social behaviour as a youth friendly approach, through which young people’s power and control in public space was safeguarded. The mobilisation of a Youth Proofing discourse, therefore, was an attempt to position young people as

active agents with whom members of the street based teams were engaged in a genuine dialogue. Central to the effective mobilisation of this discourse was the construction of the role of Young Advisor, working as part of the street based teams, as power brokers on behalf of the wider youth population. However, as the discussion above has demonstrated, there were tensions in the dual construction of the role of young advisor as both power broker and service provider. Contrary to official constructions, some young advisors adopted subject positions more aligned with the monitoring and control of young people in public space, thus reinforcing, as opposed to challenged, the mobilisation of the discourse of *young people's presence in public space as problematic*.

5.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the constructions of young people in the discourses drawn on by local staff in youth service related roles, in the street furniture, play equipment and signage and in the local press over the period of my fieldwork (November 2009 to October 2010) and highlighted the way young people's presence in public space is constructed as intrinsically problematic in a discourse that links young people and the street via expectations/assumptions of violence or unruly behaviour.

6.0 Analysis II: Young Men's Constructions of and Experience in Urban Public Space

Having considered within the previous chapter the ways in which Dock Town's young people were positioned in public space, this chapter will focus more specifically on young men's constructions of urban public space and the subject positions which they themselves adopted within this space. In particular it examines how the issue of fear arises in their accounts and why certain spaces were constructed as to be feared, whilst others were not.

My initial expectation in running focus groups and interviews with young men in Dock Town was that they would talk about particular locations within Dock Town- streets, parks or estates- where they either felt safe or fearful. I had expected that they might talk about specific features of these locations which impacted on feelings of safety in public space and, to an extent, they did do this. For example, within a focus group run at DTYC, young men talked about features such as improved street lighting or the presence of CCTV cameras as making public space feel safe. However, a much more consistent and powerful feature in young men's accounts of safe and feared spaces was their constructions of otherness and, more particularly, their mobilisation of a *discourse of the violent other*. Many of the young men I talked to, whether Black, White, mixed race or Asian, drew on a *discourse of the violent other* in explaining the fear they experienced both on the streets of Dock Town and when they travelled to locations outside of Dock Town, yet not all of these young men mobilised this discourse in the same way. An exploration of this discursive mobilisation is insightful in understanding the ways in which fear appears in and perhaps animates young men's accounts of public space.

6.1 Constructions of otherness

The idea of being *the other* within their own communities was something that a number of the Black young men talked about being particularly conscious of from a very early point in their lives. A number of these young men had moved to the UK at an early age having been born elsewhere. These young men talked about a strong awareness of, and concern about fitting in from the earliest point of living in the UK. This point is well highlighted in the following notes from an interview I had with one of the young men at DTYC;

“I went back to the subject of where Julian was born. He said he was born in Jamaica but he was young when he moved so he didn't remember much about it. He did say, however, that he had tried to change his accent to fit in saying that he tried talking in different ways so that he could blend in better, Julian then imitates talking in a higher pitch to highlight the way in which he tried to alter his accent and then contrasts this with a deep Jamaican accent. I asked him why he thought he had felt the need to make this change and he said it was about ‘blending in’”
(Interview with Julian- Male, 18, BC- 02/11/10).

Over the course of my street based observations I had seen examples of how social difference, such as race or class, could be used by young people to tease or bully. One such example occurred during a bicycle repair session on the Four Blocks estate, and involved two Black boys of African heritage.

“Throughout the session the older Black boy continued to taunt the younger boy by calling him ‘Mr Uganda’, imitating his accent, while the younger boy continued with his retort ‘Mr Nigeria, you’re not funny so why don’t you shut up’. He didn’t seem intimidated by the older boy but did appear to be getting increasingly agitated by his teasing” (Detached Observations- 27/05/10).

Whilst for Julian and the young boy on the Four Blocks the challenge of ‘blending in’, or not, focused on accent, for other young men the adaptations were much more substantial and the barriers much more pronounced. For Ralph the language barrier which he faced in moving

to London presented significant challenges for him in adjusting to life in the UK. Within my field notes I comment that:

“Ralph was born in Congo where he lived until he was 13, when he moved to London. Ralph moved in with an uncle and began to go to school here. Ralph said that it was a real challenge for him moving over here because he didn’t speak English initially. He would get bullied or picked on at school and wasn’t able to explain properly to teachers what the problem was because of the language barrier...Even when he first came to DTYC he spoke poor English or ‘street English’ [his description] but he began to watch how others interacted and spoke and tried to learn from them. R was very clear and seemed to speak with conviction about his determination to watch and learn from others” (Interview with Ralph- Male, 22, BA-11/05/10)

Despite the challenges experienced by Julian and Ralph, they both went on to talk about ways in which they managed to negotiate these challenges in order to establish friendship groups. There was, however, a level of ‘othering’ to which they were both exposed which was much more difficult for them to overcome. Negative experiences of racism within Dock Town were raised by Black young men both in focus groups and within a number of individual interviews and discussions. The discussions held with some of the young men at DTYC provide an insight into fears expressed more widely. In an interview with Chris, one of the young people at DTYC, he described a relatively recent racist incident he had experienced when crossing a council estate in Dock Town, that I report in my interview notes:

‘He was on his way to the library and normally avoided Dock Town Central Estate but this time he was in a rush so he decided he would cut across it. He passed an older group of white men, in their 30s. They started saying things like ‘what are you doing here monkey boy?’ and ‘you know you shouldn’t be coming around here monkey boy’. C ignored this and kept walking, then he put his headphones on but still trying to keep an eye on these men in case they would throw something at him (C demonstrates this with his actions). Then they shouted at him so he took his headphones out again and one of them ran up to him and took a swing at him, he ducked and

avoided it but another took a swing and hit him'
(Interview with Chris- Male, 19, BC- 28/05/10).

The issue of racism had also been discussed within the DTYC focus group when a number of Black young men had talked of their concerns about racism and racist attacks in Dock Town. My field notes record that

'Chris in particular raised his concerns around this issue [racism] and referred to negative experiences he had. Rodney also raised concerns about racism but on the subject of where it might be experienced he voiced quite different views from Chris and Ralf' (DTYC focus group- 25/05/10).

There was general agreement between these young men that there were racist individuals and groups in Dock Town but, in the conversation that followed, they had difficulty in identifying where the most racist part of Dock Town was. The young men's inability to identify one particular part of Dock Town as being the most racist part of Dock Town meant that they constructed fear of a racist attack in similarly loose terms. As the Black *Other* in a predominantly white area, within which a number of them had had direct experience of racism, fear of a racist attack was integral to these young Black men's constructions of public space in Dock Town. Although this othering of Black young people within Dock Town was a concern for a number of the young Black men I talked to, of much more concern to most of the young men I talked to, Black or White, were fears of the violent *Other* without. If racist discourses constructed points of friction between Black and White young people (and the Black and White communities more generally), shared concerns about the *violent other without* provided a common fear around which White and Black young people were united.

Across interviews, focus groups and informal conversations, the primary concern, and source of fear for young men in Dock Town, were what they perceived to be violent gangs or groups of young

people in surrounding boroughs. Young men in Dock Town talked both of their concerns about other young people coming into their area and creating problems, but also of concerns for their own safety in travelling out of their area. The way in which young men talked about gangs of young people coming into Dock Town highlighted the inherently unstable nature of their sense of power in public space. Chris, for example, talked about the sense of power he had on his estate from knowing that his friends would back him up if there were problems with other young people coming onto the estate. However, in describing the arrival of more serious, criminal gangs on his estate it seemed that Chris's sense of power and security evaporated in an instant, as his approach to negotiating his safety changed to a much more passive approach. Within my interview notes I comment,

'Chris talked about gangs coming into his area and asking if he 'runs things'. He would say that he doesn't do that stuff [meaning he is not involved in drug dealing or other criminal gangs], he's just plotting [hanging out], he's not in a gang. They would basically be looking for trouble and he would avoid it by saying he's not into that' (Interview with Chris- Male, 19, BC- 28/05/10).

I will revisit the way in which Chris negotiates this scenario later, however, the point of focus here is the fear Chris had of these violent others, and the way in which their presence on his estate resulted in a significantly diminished sense of security.

Callum, a white young man from the Rise Estate, shows his awareness of changing gang allegiances on his estate and makes a clear connection to his own feelings of safety, when he

'emphasized that the Rise Estate is not a safe place so you have to be careful. In particular he said that some of the young people from The Rise have got together with young people from the Peckham Boys [A notorious gang from a neighbouring borough]. Callum saw this as a particularly worrying development because he saw the Peckham Boys as being a particularly troublesome group' (Interview with Callum- Male, 14, WB- 12/05/10).

Callum's concern is not that there are gangs on his estate but that these gangs are now associating with a gang from outside the area who have a bad reputation. Tom, a Black young man, talks much more extensively about gang allegiances and, similar to Callum, was concerned about the connections that the Peckham Boys were making in Dock Town. My field notes record that

“Tom talked a bit about the gangs at a wider level. He said that there are currently tensions between a Brixton gang and the Peckham Boys. The Brixton gang has been forming alliances with gangs on the London Road [a road which divides Dock Town and Peckham] and as a result the Peckham Boys have been putting their beef [fighting not ‘complaint’] with the Lewisham gangs to one side so that they can unite against the Brixton Gang. Tom said that the Peckham Boys were even linking with the Cobbles Estate [in Dock Town] which he wasn’t happy about because he knows and likes some of the young people on that estate” (Interview with Tom- Male, 18, BA-24/04/10).

Tom displays extensive knowledge of the current tensions between some of the main south London gangs, and his primary concern is with how these tensions are playing out within Dock Town. As does Callum, Tom expresses concern about the influence the Peckham Boys were seen to be having on the Cobles Estate. Importantly, earlier in my conversation with Tom he had commented that the main gang in Dock Town was on the Cobles Estate. He suggested that they deal drugs openly on this estate and almost proudly declared ‘*They don’t give a shit* [about the police]’ (ibid). Tom’s concern in relation to the encroachment of the Peckham Boys then was not that it represented the introduction of gang activity to the Cobbles, but that it was the encroachment of an outside gang into Dock Town. Tom constructs the drug related activity of the gang on the Cobles as a little out of control (‘they don’t give a shit’) but familiar and even likeable. Their likeability, however, was becoming at risk because of their association with the Peckham Boys. Drawing on a *discourse of otherness*, he implies that there is something less likeable about the illegal activity of the Peckham Boys.

Tom's, Callum's and Chris's insights into and concerns about gang related activity, and more particularly the encroachment of outside gangs into Dock Town, were reflective of a much wider fear amongst many of the young men I talked to about gangs and gang related violence. Such was the preoccupation amongst young people more generally with gangs that even those who did not believe that gang violence was as bad as it was made out to be, and who consequently did not want to have regular updates on gang activity, struggled to avoid hearing about them. My notes of a conversation with one such young man (a white young man of East-European heritage) highlight this point.

“When I asked Alan about his knowledge or experience of gangs he said that he thought that gangs were hyped up but that the reality often didn't live up to the hype. He gave the example of a typical 'gang conflict' being a group of 5 teenagers on one side of the street and a group of 5 on the other side. They meet and clash and then both run away again. Alan said that he wasn't that interested in gangs but that he hears about it anyway, through friends...He talked about situations where there had been shootings and suggested that the reason people often don't get hurt was because the people holding the guns were so frightened that they would be shaking holding it”
(Interview with Alan- Male, 17, WB- 28/04/10).

Alan attempts to be dismissive of gang involved young people by positioning them, rather than him, as the frightened teenager. Although Alan's attempt was to play down fears of gang violence, the resulting construction of a frightened teenager, hand shaking as he brandishes a gun seems just as risky as any alternative construction. Whichever particular way young men constructed gang activity in Dock Town, it was clear from my conversations with them that it played heavily on their minds and influenced the way in which they negotiated public space within Dock Town and, more particularly, outside of Dock Town. The fear that many of the young men talked about is perhaps best summed up by the following notes from a conversation I had with a Black young man at DTYC;

“Julian said that at this time [talking about two or three years previously when he first started carrying a knife] young people were being stabbed every night and he wasn't sure when he went out at night if he would make it back home again alive so he decided to start carrying [a knife]” (Interview with Julian- Male, 18, BC- 02/11/10).

Later I will consider in more detail how young men dealt with these fears in negotiating urban public space. Before doing that, however, it is important to contextualise this discussion by looking more closely at two significant groups of people who featured heavily in young men's constructions of urban public space. An appreciation of how young men constructed their relationship with these two groups is central to understanding why they negotiated public space in particular ways.

6.2 Young men's constructions of adult presence in public space

Whilst young people's presence in public space was constructed as problematic by many of Dock Town's adult community members and professionals (as discussed in chapter 5), there was less consistency in the way in which young men constructed adult presence in public space. Within focus groups and interviews young people were prompted to talk about public spaces which they saw as being safe spaces and those spaces which they saw as being fearful spaces. The way in which many of the young men constructed adult presence in public space suggested that there was general agreement that adult presence in public space *should* make that space feel safer, however, their accounts of encounters with various adults suggested that this was not always the case. Even those adults who were employed in order to provide a degree of security or reassurance to members of the public in public space were often constructed as less than reassuring and in quite contradictory ways, either by different young people or in different accounts from the same young people.

For a number of young men an important feature in their construction of less feared public spaces was the presence of adults. For example, one young Black man who took part in a focus group, using printed maps of Dock Town and pens to highlight ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe’ spaces (See Figure 6.1 for examples of comments added by young people), drew attention to two public spaces close to each other. One of these spaces, the Tube station, he suggested was a safe space, whilst the road directly adjacent to the station he labelled as ‘Danger’. Importantly, the feature of the tube station which enabled him to construct it as a safe space was the presence of ‘staff to help’ (Young Advisors focus group- 09/12/10). The importance of adult presence in public space was also noted within the focus group with young people at DTYC. Reflecting on this focus group in my field notes I comment,

“The group mapping exercise focused primarily on trying to identify areas that the group all felt were safe. The main focus was the area along the river...comments included: ‘people you know’, ‘more people’, ‘more tourists’, ‘the kind of people you see here aren’t violent’”
(Young Leaders focus group- 25-05-10).

Central to this construction of safe or less feared spaces was the predictability of behaviour within those spaces; to be safe was to be surrounded by people, and those people in particular whose behaviour could be predicted as being non-violent. However, further discussion within focus groups and interviews revealed how fragile this construction was.

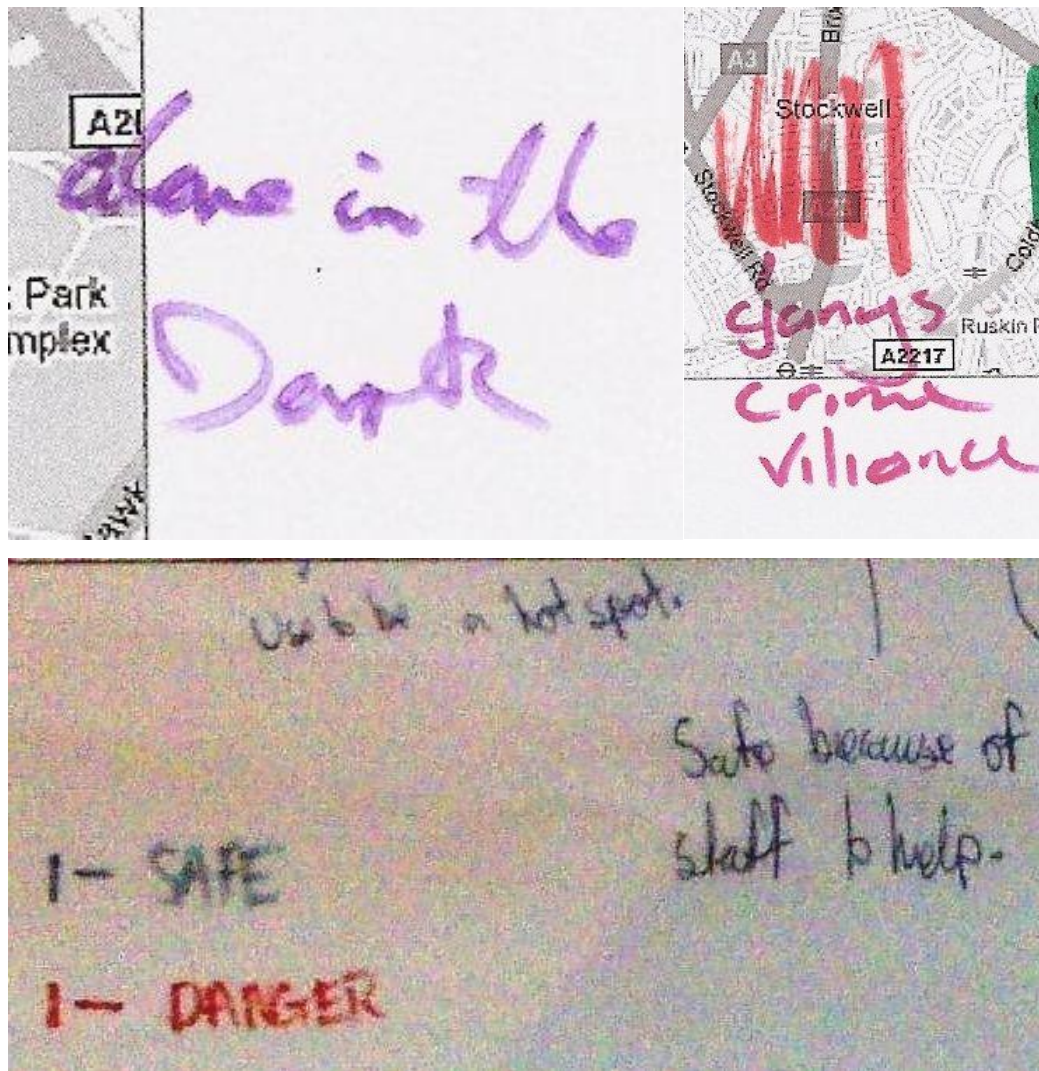


Figure 6.1: Examples of comments added to maps by young people

Alan, one of the young people interviewed at DTYC talks about his experiences of going to the South Bank (a popular area for tourists south of the river Thames between Westminster Bridge and London Bridge). Within my field notes I comment that,

“when I asked Alan about where he would feel safest he said the Southbank. Alan said that although you do get trouble from time to time it was generally seen by young people as a place where you could go and hang out. Alan did talk about one night when he was walking in south bank and a load of skin heads pulled up in cars and said to him and his friend that they [the group in the car] were fucked off their heads and looking to beat the shit out of some people” (Interview with Alan- Male, 17, WB-28/04/10).

Alan constructs the South Bank as a safe space where young people can go to ‘hang out’. While Alan was not suggesting that the skin heads were directly threatening him, in the context of the wider conversation his intention in telling the story was to highlight an experience which eroded the sense of safety that he found in the South Bank. Whilst this is only the account of one young person, it raises questions as to whether the sense of safety found in certain spaces is as fragile for some as it is for others. For example, one might reasonably ask whether the same comments directed at Alan would just as likely have been directed at a mother walking with her child, or a middle class couple, both typical users of this area.

However, it was not just those who were ‘fucked off their heads’ and looking for fights who featured in young men’s constructions of feared spaces. Even in the case of adults who were ‘supposed’ to make public spaces feel safer there was, amongst some young men, a strong sense of ambivalence. Within the DTYC focus group there was clear disagreement between participants as to whether the presence of police made public space feel more or less safe. Of 8 participants in this focus group (young women: 1 White, 1 Black; young men: 1 White, 1 mixed race, 3 Black and 1 Asian- see Table 4.1 for more details) three young people had a strongly held view that police made public space feel safer, whilst another three held the view that they made public space feel less safe. Within my field notes I note that,

“An initial comment was made that there were too many police and that this made young people feel unsafe or at least uncomfortable because they always felt that they were going to be stopped. The discussion developed when some of the other young people stated that they felt there wasn’t enough police. Although the discussion was heated there appeared to be a general agreement. The point was being made that there was concern about a police presence that sought to constantly challenge young people, however, they felt that the less intimidating approach of the community police was welcomed and actually made young people feel safer” (DTYC focus group- 25/05/10).

The focus group members draw on a discourse of victimisation in constructing their distinction between regular police officers and community police officers. The 'stop and search' tactics of regular police officers were constructed as intimidating and therefore undermining these young people's sense of security in public space. When prompted, however, the young people suggested that their concerns about police presence in public space were about more than the fear of intimidation.

"One young person commented that the community police were better because they couldn't do anything [a perception of more limited arrest powers] while others disagreed with this suggesting that although they didn't have the same powers you could be sure that they will call for back-up if they needed to...I asked if they felt that the community police were better because of the view that they couldn't do anything or because of the relationship [having better relationships with young people]. The feedback was 'a bit of both'" (DTYC focus group-25/05/10).

Here the young people construct themselves as both potential victims, for whom the presence of police made public space feel safer, and potential perpetrators, for whom the arrest powers of the police were seen as a threat. For many young men, however, the subject position of potential perpetrator appeared to be their default positioning, even when they did not appear to have done anything to warrant police attention. This was most evident during my street based observations, as the following extract from my notes illustrates:

"As soon as we walked into the football area 3 of the boys started to run away from us...As I got closer I said that we are youth workers and the others paused again at the other end of the football area. They then began to walk back towards us, one of them shouting to the others, 'They're from DTYC'. They began to walk back again. As they approached us and one of them commented that we look like plain clothes police" (Detached Observations-26/04/10).

This kind of reaction from young people was not uncommon during my street based observations and was demonstrative of what appeared

to be, at best, an ambivalence amongst many young men towards police presence in Dock Town's public spaces.

This ambivalence also appeared to extend to the presence of non-uniformed adults in public space. During a focus group run at 'Helping Hands Youth Club', a small voluntary sector youth club close to DTYC, a young man (Male, 15, WB) talked about his contradictory experiences of adult engagement in public space. My field notes record that the young man

"talked about a situation when he was at the shopping centre [in Dock Town] when a young Black boy pulled a knife on him. As he told his story the other boy [in the focus group] jeered that he was mugged by a kid and he [the young person telling the story] attempted to defend himself by saying that he wasn't scared and he just laughed. He continued to say that a nearby adult intervened and took the knife from the young boy but he said that there were some community wardens watching the incident who didn't intervene. He said that after it was dealt with, he asked them why they didn't do anything, as did one or more of the adults present, but they said it wasn't their job to deal with things like that" (Helping Hands focus group- 28/06/10).

The young man's account of his encounter highlights a difficulty I had in talking to a lot of young men about being fearful in public spaces. The admission of being a mugging victim is immediately met by jeering from his friend (Male, 15, WB). The young man then attempts to re-position himself by suggesting that he 'wasn't scared'. However, this alternative positioning was inconsistent with other aspects of his account, such as the fact that it was relayed in the context of a discussion about feared public spaces and the fact that he talks positively about the intervention of a nearby adult and is particularly negative about the wardens for not intervening. I will return shortly to this issue of young men and victimisation, for the moment, however, I will focus on the question of adult presence in public space.

In the account above, the young man offers a view about why the wardens had not intervened in this instance. My field notes record that he

“commented that the police/wardens will often think that you are just another group of young people having a disagreement and not bother intervening. The same young person had also been in an incident when he had been stabbed in the leg when he was getting off the bus...He said the driver did nothing and if it wasn't for a lady on the bus who told the driver to stop and got out to check on him the driver would have driven off again” (Helping Hands focus group- 28/06/10).

There is a consistency in this young man's construction of public service responses to what were for him threatening situations. In both of the violent incidents he describes he draws a contrast between the concerned intervention of a community member and the disinterest of public servants. My reference to 'not bother intervening' suggests that, in the view of this young man, public servants constructed their job responsibilities in particular ways to avoid the hassle of intervening in 'disagreements' between young people. The young man's juxtapositioning of the adults in his two accounts- the concerned community member versus the lazy public servant- reveals something about how he views adult presence in public space. Whilst the adults described did not always respond in the way that he might have expected them to, it is clear that his expectation was that adult presence in public space, whether in the form of community members, police, wardens or bus drivers, should contribute towards making that space feel less feared by young people. These community wardens and bus driver, therefore, are constructed as being in dereliction of their adult and professional duty to make public space less feared by young people.

The strength of feeling that some young people had in relation to adult responsibilities in making public space safer was well illustrated by a story recounted by a young man at DTYC who had been helping at the club as a youth work volunteer. In my field notes I record that

“He talked about an incident at DTYC the previous week when there was a fight between two groups of young people. J said he wasn’t clear on what to do. He personally felt fearful about intervening in the situation and felt that despite being a volunteer he didn’t have the authority to prevent the young people from fighting but equally he saw other staff members getting involved and felt that he should too” (Interview with John- Male, 19, WB- 14/05/10).

In this account the young man describes the tension he experiences between his personal fears and the responsibility he felt to prevent young people from fighting. In constructing the role of youth work volunteer he acknowledges that he might not have the authority to intervene but he did have a responsibility. As with the previous young person John drew on a discourse of hegemonic adulthood although he was differently positioned within it. The concept of hegemonic adulthood as it is used here is informed by Connell’s (1995) interpretation of hegemony which he suggests refers to “*the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life*” (p. 77). Although John did not differ significantly in age from the young people who were fighting, his responsibility as an adult volunteer at the club was to intervene in the fighting between the young people. The mobilisation of a discourse of hegemonic adulthood to construct adult responsibilities in making public space safer was a consistent feature of many of the young people’s constructions of urban public space. However, young men’s accounts of actual experiences suggested that the responsibility that they constructed for adults, in making public space feel safer, was not something they felt they could rely on. In the absence of an adult presence which made young men feel less fearful about public space, young men consistently talked about friends as the most reliable source of safety in public space.

6.3 Constructions of friendship

The time spent on the streets with the detached youth workers provided an early insight into the importance of friendship groups to young men in Dock Town. Over the six months I spent with the team I observed a number of groups of young people who regularly spent time together in Dock Town's public spaces. These were primarily groups of young men, although they sometimes also included young women, but remained predominantly young men. The most common location to encounter these groups were the various 'cages' around Dock Town (see Figure 6.2 for some examples) but we also encountered groups walking around the streets, or 'hanging out' in various locations, such as outside the bookmakers, at the square in Dock Town central or along the riverside path.



Figure 6.2: A selection of the 'cages' from around Dock Town

Young men would often endure quite extreme weather conditions to meet up with other friends in the evenings as the notes from one of my observation session records.

“We continued on our walk over to Four Blocks Estate where we met two young men who were hanging out at the football area behind the church. They acknowledged us from a distance with a wave and seemed keen for a chat when we walked over. It was interesting that they were just hanging out there waiting to see who else showed up. They commented that they had no football so they were reliant on others showing up who had one. It was a cold night and they must have been pretty cold waiting around like that” (Detached observations- 14-12-09).

When we passed by this way again about thirty minutes later these young men were still there waiting for others to show up with a football. The observations gained through the street based sessions were given further depth through the casual conversations, interviews and focus groups I ran with young people, in particular those at DTYC.

Within the DTYC focus group one of the requests that I put to the group as a whole was to tell me what makes them feel safe and what makes them feel fearful when they are out in public space around Dock Town. Of the 8 young people (6 young men and 2 young women- see Table 4.1 for more details) who took part in this focus group, 7 suggested that being in the company of friends made them feel safer. In my notes from this session I comment that

“A thread in this discussion was friends and whether people had friends in particular areas or not. The presence of friends and having previous experience of an area appeared to be significant factors in determining whether an area was considered to be feared or not” (DTYC focus group- 25/05/10).

There are two features of note in relation to the young people’s constructions of safe spaces in this focus group. One relates to the familiarity of place and the other to familiarity of the people in that

place, in the form of friends. Both are of course related, the presence of friends on particular estates made a visit to those estates more likely and, therefore, made it more likely that the estate would be familiar, and therefore less threatening, to the young person.

The purpose of friends in young men's constructions of less feared spaces became clearer through the various individual conversations I had with them. This point is highlighted by a conversation I had with Ralph, one of the volunteers at DTYC. In the notes from my interview with Ralph I record;

“Despite Ralph’s attachment to DTYC he said that he would walk out on his job right now if his friend (meaning a street friend) was in trouble. R talked about a friend who is from the Ivory Coast and who has been there for him since they were young. Ralph commented that he would do ‘whatever I had to’ for this friend. He talked about situations when you would be doing things... and you would need someone watching your back, he would do this for his friend if he asked him” (Interview with Ralph-Male, 22, BA- 11/05/10).

In this context when Ralph talks about ‘doing things’ he is talking about criminal activity. In constructing his friendship here, Ralph draws on a *combat discourse* more commonly used in military contexts where the uncertainty of battle situations places a mutually beneficial imperative on soldiers to watch each other’s backs. For Ralph, being a friend meant being prepared to walk out on his job and to do whatever he had to in order to watch his friends back, even if this meant putting himself at risk by being involved in illegal activity. As a young Black man who had been heavily involved in gang activity, and who had served a number of prison sentences, it was not entirely surprising that Ralph might draw on combat discourses, given the prevalence of militaristic terms within London gangs (Pitts, 2007). However, the imperative to provide backup and watch each other’s backs was referred to by many of the young men I talked to, most of whom had no involvement with gangs.

The notes from my interview with Brian, for example, record that

“I asked Brian if he would identify any gangs in the area or if he was involved in a gang. Brian said that he wouldn’t describe the young people on his estate as a gang, more just as a group of friends hanging out together and looking out for each other. He gave the example that they don’t go around trying to beat up people or dealing in drugs. I followed by asking him if they have an ‘elders’ system [a hierarchical power structure found within some London gangs] or initiation process, he replied no” (Interview with Brian- Male, 18, BA- 26/04/10)

My interview with Chris highlighted a similar perspective,

“Chris said that he would hang out with his friends on his estate and they would see themselves as a group not a gang. He has some young people who are friends from a long time back and others that are ‘friends but not friends, friends’ that is, he said that he knows them but he ‘wouldn’t trust them’. If other young people came on to the estate then they would come together to back each other up” (Interview with Chris- Male, 19, BC- 28/05/10).

Chris suggests that even friends with whom he is less well connected he would expect of them to back him up in conflict situations. For both Chris and Brian gang membership was not a prerequisite for the imperative to provide backup to friends, or to expect backup from friends. The distinction between friendship groups and gangs made by Chris and Brian is an important one. Although both young men talked, more generally, about knowing gang involved young people and even associating with gang involved young people, they were both clear that there was a dividing line. Brian’s suggestion above is that this dividing line centres on two key things; the aggressive, as opposed to defensive, use of violence and involvement in the drugs trade. A discussion with Tom, a Black young man attending DTYC, supported, in-part at least, Brian’s perspective. Before moving to Dock Town Tom had lived in Peckham where he hung out with a gang there known as the Peckham Boys. My field notes record that

“when Tom lived in Peckham he would hang out with other young people after school and in doing this he said

that he became a Peckham Boy. [In his own words] 'I suppose you could say I became a Peckham Boy', he was a little hesitant about saying this but seemed to be suggesting that although he might not have been an official member of the gang that he was a member through association. I asked him if he was on the periphery of the gang, were there levels of involvement? To which he answered yes...Tom talked about some of the boys in his school selling weed and said that he could have got into that if he wanted to but he didn't want to get into this. He presented it as if this would have been a step up to the next level of involvement" (Interview with Tom- Male, 18, BA- 20/04/10).

Whilst Tom highlights the blurred boundaries between friendship and gang membership by constructing himself as a gang member through association, he is, however, also clear that the move to a more economic relationship with the gang, by selling drugs, represented a clear demarcation between gang association and gang membership.

Tom and Brian's attention to the *intent* behind young men's activities as a way of distinguishing between friendship groups and gangs was consistent with the way in which many of the young men I talked to constructed this distinction. One activity which featured in many young men's constructions of friendship groups, and which is informative of the distinction between friendship groups and gangs, is the activity of hanging out. Hanging out is also variously described as 'plotting', 'cotching' or 'jamming', but I will refer to it here as hanging out. Although there are some variations in the way in which the term is used and understood by young people, the generally accepted understanding of hanging out, and my experience of the way in which was used by young men in Dock Town, is that it refers to the act of spending time doing *nothing in particular* with other young people. Hanging out, within the data, required that those involved could, at the very least, tolerate each other's company but more likely that they would have a degree of familiarity which enabled them to feel comfortable in the potentially awkward silences that accompany the act of doing nothing together (Corrigan, 1976). If spending time

doing nothing with a group of young people was hanging out, then being engaged more purposefully and consistently with those same young people in illegal activities such as selling drugs, beating up other people or running errands for senior gang members was to be in a gang. My purpose in highlighting this distinction between young men's accounts of friendship groups and gangs is not to offer a definition of gangs or even to suggest that gang involved young men might not describe themselves as hanging out. It is clear that there are significant variations and contradictions in many of the young people's accounts of what does and does not represent gang involvement. The point, however, is that the threat of, or actual use of, physical acts of violence was an important feature of the friendship groups of the young men I talked to in Dock Town, because of the perceived protection it offered them. This type of defensive violence was, in the eyes of these young men, about friends backing each other up, as opposed to gangs doing business.

In addition to emphasising the importance of friends as backup, or as a physical resource, young men also constructed friends as a virtual resource. That is, being part of local friendship groups was an essential resource for young men in constructing a credible threat of violence, however, the physical presence offered by friendship groups could not always be relied on, particularly when young men travelled outside of their areas. When this was the case, some young men constructed a threat of violence by drawing on friends as a virtual, as opposed to a physical, presence. This point is well illustrated in my interview with Chris, a 17 year old young Black man attending DTYC, who talked about his experiences of travelling to areas outside of Dock Town. Chris talked how unsafe he feels travelling to certain areas outside of Dock Town,

“‘What are you doing so far from your ends?’ [from where you live] he would be asked if he went to Lewisham. ‘If you didn’t know anyone in that area you’re definitely getting something done to you- getting shanked

[knifed] or beat up” (interview with Chris- Male, 19, BC-28/05/10)

Chris went on to talk about how he negotiates these concerns;

“Chris said that if he goes into another area, if he knows someone in the local area then he can use that as a way of protecting himself. They might ask him where he’s from and he might say who he knows. If they are in that gang then he would be ok. He described what seemed to be a system of networking...Even if he could just mention someone in a gang from their area it might make them cautious enough to leave him alone. Chris generally only tried to go on estates in other areas where he knows someone” (Interview with Chris- Male, 19, BC-28/05/10).

In travelling to other areas without the physical back up of his friendship group Chris draws on the virtual presence of his friendship network. By establishing a connection between himself and someone who lives on a particular estate he establishes enough doubt in the minds of others to make them think twice about attacking him. To appreciate the circumstances within which the threatened or implied use of physical violence, such as is described above, might become an actual act of violence further exploration of the way in which young men negotiated urban public spaces is valuable.

6.4 Negotiating urban public spaces- combat discourses and being a victim

Whilst young men talked about a variety of ways in which they negotiated the fears and safety concerns they had in making their way around Dock Town, and outside of Dock Town to neighbouring Boroughs, there was one point which appeared consistently across many young men’s accounts. The least desirable and least powerful subject position for young people to occupy was that of victim. Young men consistently talked about the vulnerability associated with being positioned by other young people as ‘a victim’.

One young person who talked about the vulnerabilities of being a victim from a very personal perspective was Callum, a 14 year old white young man who spent a lot of time at DTYC as a result of being expelled from his school for bad behaviour. As part of his alternative education programme Callum was required to spend a number of days each week attending sessions at DTYC. In my interview with Callum he had explained to me that he left the previous youth club he had been attending because he had been beaten up by some of the young people there. On one occasion when I was at DTYC Callum was chased into the building by a group of boys from his estate who had for some time been bullying him. Callum's parents often had to walk him home from DTYC in the evening. The general view that many of the young people, and some of the staff at DTYC, had of Callum was summed up in a conversation I overheard one evening between a staff member, Ronan (Male, 20, BA), and a DTYC member, Lewis (Male, 17, WB). My diary entry notes:

"I was sitting in the club area and Lewis was there, I try to talk with him but he is distracted. Eventually he leaves but on his way out Ronan calls him to ask him what he is doing in the club, he is supposed to be banned from the club for a period of time. There is a discussion going on in the door way which I cannot hear very well but it's clear that Ronan is telling Lewis that he needs to think about what he is doing with himself [doing to improve his situation]. He asks him why he is still hanging out in the club when he is banned, has he not got anywhere else he could be, a girlfriend? To highlight his point Ronan asks 'do you want to end up a joke like Callum?'" (Diary Entries- 02/11/10).

Whilst some of the youth volunteers at the club seemed to look out for Callum, walking him home some evenings for example, in general he did not appear to have many friends and, as the quote above suggests, was not taken very seriously by many of the members, and some of the staff, at the club. Callum's lack of credibility or a friendship network, combined with the fact that he wasn't particularly big or strong meant that he was not able to construct a credible threat of violence in order to position himself as a combatant as opposed to a victim. The result

was the consistent pattern of victimisation which Callum talked to me about and which I also observed during my time at DTYC.

Perhaps the most graphic account which highlights the consequences for young men who are positioned as victims is in an account given by Julian. Julian, a young Black man who attended DTYC, was bigger than average in size, of strong build and had quite a charismatic presence. These qualities seemed to afford him a degree of status amongst young men in the club. At an early point in my interview with Julian he told me that he thought it was important that I was doing this research and finding out about young people's perspectives. He talked enthusiastically and seemed to view his role as being to tell me about what violence is like for young people, asking on a number of occasions "*what else do you want to know*" (Interview with Julian-02/11/10). Julian went on to talk about conflict, primarily violent, between young people. Although he talked about specific personal experiences he also talked more generally about conflict situations that young people might encounter and how they might deal with them. One such account was particularly insightful in relation to how Julian viewed being positioned as a victim.

"Julian said that if you get chased down by a group of young people that it was important not to 'go down', meaning down on the floor, because that was when other young people would lay into you [beat you up]. He seemed to be suggesting that if you went down on the ground that it would open the flood gates for a kicking frenzy. Young people would be so caught up in the moment that they wouldn't care or be aware of what they would do to you in that situation. He acted out the young people kicking someone on the ground, 'boom!' (as he kicks an imaginary person on the ground), almost as if they were in a feeding frenzy, unable to control themselves from kicking the person" (Interview with Julian- Male, 18, BC-02/11/10).

This is a more extreme account from Julian in which the violent aggressors are constructed similarly to animals in a feeding frenzy. Once the young person goes to ground they become a powerless victim

and, according to Julian, the violent aggressors are likely to lose sight of the boundaries that might normally limit the violence they would inflict on another human being. There is a sense in which a victim loses his status as human and becomes a kicking object.

The importance for young men in avoiding the subject position of victim was evident in many other conversations I had. In one example, also mentioned above (section 6.3), Luke, a white young man who attended the Helping Hands focus group, was jeered by another young man for admitting that he had been mugged. In that example Luke attempted to save face by repositioning himself as not being scared. The approach of constructing himself as brave in the face of adversity was, for Luke (Male, 15, WB), more desirable than the alternative subject position of victim. A similar approach was also observed in a number of other young men's accounts of confrontational situations. Within the young advisors focus group, for example, Jake (Male, 18, BA), a young Black man, talks about a situation when he was younger when he attended a youth club outside of his area and ended up being beaten up by some young people from the club.

“Jake said ‘There was a lot of screwing and chatting going on’ (meaning young people were looking at him in a confrontational way and talking about him)...He told the boys that he wasn’t frightened of them so ‘If you’re gonna do something then do it’. They didn’t but later AJ was walking to the bus and had got lost because the friend he had arrived with had stayed in the club. He then got jumped [attacked] by the young people from the club. They knocked him over the head knocking him to the ground and then kicked and punched him. Eventually, an older lady shouted at the boys and they ran away. AJ didn’t seem particularly worried about the incident and commented casually at the end ‘the next day I came back with my cousin and we sorted things’ (Young Advisors focus group- 09/12/10).

In telling the story of this encounter although Jake identifies himself as the victim of what he feels is a racially motivated attack (the story was told as part of a more general discussion about racism in Dock Town) he is careful to construct his account to position himself as

what I would describe as a combatant, as opposed to a victim. To start with he emphasised his proactive stance in challenging the other young men for trying to stare him down and emphasises that he is not scared of them. Having questioned this initial positioning by admitting that he was subsequently beaten up by these boys Jake draws on a very important resource in reclaiming the combatant subject position at the end of his account. Jake comments that the next day he came back with his cousin and “*we sorted things*”. Jake draws on the resource of retaliation in order to reclaim for himself the subject position of combatant, as opposed to victim; the combatant fights back while the victim does not.

Another example of the status afforded to fighting back amongst young men came from Tom (Male, 18, BA), a young Black man, who talked about a confrontation he had with another young man from his school.

“Tom said that he had an art folder [for school] that he used to put the knife into. One day when he was out in the Yard he said that the second biggest boy in the year came up to him and was being aggressive towards him. Tom said that not only was he big but he also had a scar on his face which meant that he had been in some serious fights. Tom was trying to get across the point that you wouldn’t want to mess with this guy. Tom pulled the knife on the boy and a standoff followed, the boy asking Tom was he going to do something (challenging Tom). Other young people stepped in calming the situation and trying to say to the bigger boy that Tom was cool and that he didn’t need to have beef [to fight] with him. Tom felt that pulling the knife on the boy had made an impression on the other boy and after that incident the boy respected him more...they were not necessarily friends but friendly with each other, Tom commented that he still sees him and talks to him now” (Interview with Tom- Male, 18, BA- 20/04/10).

Central to Tom’s construction of this confrontation is his mobilisation of a *combat discourse* to position himself as a combatant with the propensity to do violence to others, as opposed to a victim who has violence done to him. For Tom, even though he acknowledged the fear

he had of the other young man, because he was big and because his scar indicated that he had been involved in violence before, in order to maintain some respect it was important that he meet the young man's initial display of aggression with his own display of aggression. Tom constructs his use of a knife in this context not as a tactic which might ultimately be harmful to him but as an important resource in producing a credible display of aggression, one which would earn him respect. The ultimate outcome of the incident then, in the form of mutual respect between the two young men, in Tom's eye's justified his use of a knife.

It is important to note that despite a number of national campaigns aimed at highlighting the dangers associated with carrying knives a number of the young men I talked to were, like Tom, still able to construct knife carrying as an important resource in ensuring their safety. This point is well highlighted in the following notes from my interview with Julian, also discussed above, in which he constructs serious injury or death resulting from knife carrying not as the result of choosing to carry a weapon but as the result of poor weapons training.

“Julian went on to say that, in his view, for a lot of the young people who kill someone with a knife it's the first time they have used a knife. His assessment was that they wouldn't have wanted to kill the other young person but 'they haven't learnt how to use a knife properly'... A person who knows how to use a knife would injure the other young people to scare them off- Julian performs a swinging action demonstrating how he would try to injure as many as possible if he was in a dangerous situation. Those young people who weren't carrying a knife would be frightened off or would think twice about getting involved. Julian would sit quietly when he carried a knife because he would have a quiet confidence that he had the ability to deal with a situation if he needed to” (Interview with Julian- Male, 18, BC- 02-11-10).

Whilst there were more extreme examples of confrontations such as those described above where *combat discourses* were explicitly

mobilised by young men to position themselves as combatants as opposed to victims, the mobilisation of a *combat discourse* also featured more implicitly in other young men's accounts. A good example of this is Alan's account of how he negotiates public space.

“Talking about the wider London area Alan said that generally he feels reasonably safe moving around the city. To a large extent Alan attributed this to his size. While Alan is not very stocky he is very tall (6ft 4”) and he talked about how he had learnt to carry himself. Alan talked about walking through areas with a purpose and holding yourself in a way that people will think twice about messing with you. Alan gave the example of looking at people when passing them as opposed to keeping his head down. When I asked Alan to tell me more about this he suggested that he was not talking about staring people out of it but acknowledging them and in doing so saying I have nothing to fear from you” (Interview with Alan-Male, 17, WB- 28/04/10).

Although Alan is not talking about any direct confrontations with other young people, through his use of particular body language he draws on a *combat discourse* to construct himself as having the potential, at least, for violence and, in doing so, warning off others. Whilst my experience of Alan through my contact with him in and around DTYC was that he would be unlikely to back up his posturing with violent action, his tactic appeared to be to create enough doubt in the minds of others for them to believe that he might do, and his size was an important factor in helping him to construct a more credible threat. Whether it involved carrying themselves in a particular way, as with Alan, or the use of more extreme measures, such as knife carrying, most of the young men I talked to emphasised the construction of the propensity for violence as an important, if not essential, resource in negotiating urban public space in and around Dock Town. This construction enabled them to mobilise a *combat discourse* and, in doing so, avoid the consequences of being seen as “a joke like Callum”.

6.5 Chapter summary

Within this chapter I have explored young men's constructions of urban public space within Dock Town. In doing this I have attempted to draw attention to those spaces which young men identified as being safe and feared spaces, and to consider factors which influence feelings of safety and fear. A consistent feature in young men's constructions of safe and feared spaces was questions of *otherness*. The strength of feeling in relation to *otherness* and the experience of being *othered* was highlighted in my discussion of young Black men's experiences of racism in Dock Town. The same process of *othering* which served to make fearful the public space experiences of young Black men in Dock Town also served to unite young people across Dock Town in fear of the violent other without. It was suggested that a key resource the young men I talked to used in constructing places, people and groups as either safe or to be feared was the mobilisation of a discourse of *the violent other without*.

Despite the previously discussed adult construction of young people's presence in public space as problematic, a consistent feature in many young men's constructions of safe spaces was the mobilisation of a discourse of hegemonic adulthood. That is, many of the young men I talked to suggested that the presence of adults in public space should make that space feel safer. However, young men did not appear to feel that they could rely on adults to make public space feel safe, and particular examples were discussed where adults were seen to be in dereliction of their *duty*. Such were the experiences of young men with adults in public spaces around Dock Town that there was a general sense of ambivalence towards adult presence and a lack of confidence about the extent to which young people could rely on adults to feel safe when they were negotiating public spaces.

In contrast to adults presence, friends and friendship groups were constructed by young men as a much more reliable and important

source of back up when dealing with confrontational situations. Importantly, friends were constructed as both a physical and virtual resource. That is, the physical presence of friends could be used to construct a more credible threat of violence, but when friends were not physically present the connections that young people gained through their friendship networks could still be draw on. Whilst young men's friendship groups were essential in feeling safer by constructing their own credible threat of violence, there was a clear distinction between the defensive violence of friendship groups and the more instrumental and calculated violence perpetrated by gangs.

The question of subject positioning and, in particular, avoiding the subject position of victim was central to young men's decisions about when to be violent. Central to young men's ability to avoid the subject position of victim was their ability to mobilise a *discourse of combat*. This did not mean that they had to be victorious in battle, but that they had to demonstrate a willingness to do battle. An inability to construct a credible threat of violence was to be open to being identified as a victim, and treated accordingly. These discursive mobilisations were identified as having significant implications for young men's involvement in actual acts of physical violence.

7.0 Dialoguing Theory with Data

The analysis to-date has focused primarily on two of Fairclough's (2001) levels of analysis: textual description and textual interpretation. That is, I have been concerned with the "*formal properties of the text*" and "*the relationship between text and interaction*" (p. 21). For example, in relation to textual description, Fairclough highlights the significance of speaker or writer authority. An important point in relation to my discussion of the 'No Ball Games' signs was how the particular choice of words gave authority to the writer by implying legal backing. At the level of interpretation I suggested that its use of legal backing in directing young people away from many public spaces mobilised a discourse of youth presence in public space as problematic.

As was discussed in Chapter 4 above, Fairclough also emphasises a third level of analysis which is concerned with the social conditions of discourse production and interpretation. It is to these social conditions of production, and the connections between language, power and ideology, that I turn to now. At the level of explanation there are two main areas which I will focus on. Firstly, I will consider the role of gender in young men's identity construction and, secondly, I will consider the political context which, at a societal and institutional level, structured these gender identity constructions.

7.1 Violent Masculinities

My focus within this section will be on exploring the subject positions adopted by young men through the lens of gender relations. That is, my focus will be on the gender identities constructed by young men in Dock Town and how these identities related to young men's involvement in physical violence in public spaces. My discussion will start with an overview of the gendered nature of public space in Dock Town as a back drop to young men's masculinity constructions. I will then look more specifically at the dominant masculinities constructed

by young men and the significance of physical violence as part of these identities. Not all young men could access the same resources in constructing successful public space masculinities, so the influence of factors such as poverty and race on masculinity construction will also be considered. Finally, I will link this discussion to the political and ideological context which structured young men's constructions of different masculinities.

As the only dedicated public outdoor youth spaces around Dock Town, the gendered nature of the various sports cages around the area impacted on young men and women's use of public space. Specifically, there was little evidence of gender conscious design in Dock Town's sports cages and the result was that the spaces observed were dominated by young men. In this sense, masculine power dominated these spaces without any explicit rules or directives indicating that this should be the case.

Connell (2008) suggests that it is possible to identify 'masculinity vortices' which he describes as "*areas of school life where processes of masculinity formation are intensely active*" (p. 137). Connell provides examples, from within an educational context, of woodwork, engineering and technical drawing classes. He suggests that within these classes there is a historical connection to gender-segregated professions where the staff teams are also often male dominated. Data analysis suggests that Dock Town's sports cages could similarly be described as masculine vortices. That is, the spatial arrangement of these spaces lent itself to the typically masculine activities of football or basketball; young men competed centre stage, while young women either stayed away or were resigned to the margins. Within these masculine vortices there were certain privileges that accrued to young men, the first and most obvious of these being the dominant use of these spaces.

Other privileges followed from the dominance of these spaces. The street based youth work team that I worked with during data collection used the sports cages as a space to make direct contact with young people. In as much as it might be considered a privilege, the young men who used those spaces had contact with 3 youth workers on a weekly basis whose primary focus was to offer support based on areas of need identified by the young people themselves. One direct follow on from this contact was the establishment of a weekly bicycle repair project which the youth work team ran on the side of one of the sports cages. This project offered tools, some parts and the time of staff to assist young people with repairs to their bikes. In the time that I was involved with the bike project no young women participated in it, and this lack of female participation did not come as a surprise to us. My own expectations of young women's participation in this activity are highlighted in a journal entry after an evening spent distributing leaflets for the bike project:

“As we walked down we spotted four girls down a side street talking to each other. We took a glance and initially thought we wouldn't go down to them, because girls wouldn't be interested in a bike project, but almost immediately realising what a sexist attitude this was we corrected ourselves and walked towards them to give them a flyer” (Detached observations: 13-05-10)

Because the sports cages were considered important points of contact for the youth work team to meet with young people, the youth work activities that the team subsequently developed were informed by the interests of the young people who occupied these spaces, primarily young men. In this way, without proactively seeking to exclude young women, the activities we became involved in, playing football and fixing bikes, were informed by, and came to reinforce, the gendered nature of these spaces. Whilst young men's dominance of the sports cages, and of Dock Town's public space more generally, featured in our practice reflections, we were not proactive in challenging this. In fact, in retrospect I observe that over the period of time I worked with the team our actions could best be described as positively reinforcing

the construction of the few outdoor youth public spaces in Dock Town as masculine vortices.

Despite the privileges experienced by young men, and their apparent dominance of youth public spaces around Dock Town, my analysis of this data suggested that many young men's actual experiences of public space were far less certain than might be expected. A discussion of the particular public masculinities constructed by young men in Dock Town provides a clearer insight into why this might have been the case.

7.1.1 Dominant masculinities

Whilst the concept of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal relations are clearly of relevance to the discussion of young men's involvement in physical violence, and will not be excluded from my discussions, my primary interest is in exploring what Connell (1995) refers to as the "*specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men*" (p. 78), which exist within wider patterns of cultural dominance. These relations of dominance and subordination will be considered in the context of the previously discussed problematizing of young people's presence in Dock Town's public spaces.

Despite the privileges discussed above that accrued to young men in public spaces simply by being male in masculine spaces, my observations suggested that young men's dominance in Dock Town's public spaces was far more uncertain than might be expected. Connell (2005) emphasises that masculinity must always be constructed as "*masculinity-in-relation*" (p. 7). This relationship might be to femininity, but it might also be in relation to other subordinate masculinities. This point is particularly pertinent when considering spaces which might be described as masculinity vortices, as I have suggested is the case with the public spaces most frequented by young people in Dock Town. Given the historical dominance of men over

women in British society, which continues to inform public space gender relations (Paechter, 2007), the discursive construction of masculinity in relation to 'the weaker sex' offers a more stable and perhaps less confrontational subject position to adopt than masculinity in relation to other/subordinated masculinities. However, as Messerschmidt (2000, p. 291) notes, in doing masculinity, men must draw on available resources and given the masculine nature of Dock Town's public spaces, combined with the limited presence of young women in those spaces, the available resource for young men in constructing masculinity was 'masculinity-in-relation' to other, inferior, weaker, less 'manly', less honourable, subordinated masculinities.

In her study of the implementation of two models of incarceration within a Los Angeles men's jail, Dolovich (2012) identifies a pressure, which she calls the hypermasculinity imperative. She suggests that this imperative "*can feed a culture of belligerence, posturing, emotional repression, and ready violence that rewards both indifference to others and the willingness of the strong to victimize the weak*" (p. 971). Importantly, Dolovich observes that the hypermasculine imperative was less evident and, correspondingly, levels of physical violence were lower within the section of the prison which housed gay men and transgender women. While Dolovich's study relates to an institutionalised setting within which many troubled individuals were housed, there are important points which are of relevance to this research. Dolovich's research suggests a strong connection between an institutional environment which lent itself to the construction of hypermasculinities and heightened levels of physical violence. Secondly, it suggests that, even within the same institutional settings, marked reductions in levels of violence are possible where the construction of alternative forms of masculinity is more accepted.

A central resource for many young men in constructing more masculine, and therefore more successful, identities in Dock Town was having or claiming the propensity for violence over other young men. For some young men carrying a weapon was an important resource in constructing the credible threat of violence. Whether weapons were involved or not, the ability to construct a credible threat of violence was an important feature of the dominant public space masculinities in Dock Town and, therefore, an important rite of passage through public spaces. Connell (1995) suggests, however, that many forms of dominant masculinity represent extreme versions of maleness to which most men do not actually fit. This principle of dominant masculinity construction could be seen in the way in which young men referred to gang involvement. The most violent and revered young men were gang involved young men, yet only a small number of young men actually had direct experience of gang involvement. Talk of gangs, however, was very common amongst the young men I talked to. Many had very detailed knowledge of the most recent gang turf wars despite not ever being in a gang. The association that came through knowledge of local gangs then, appeared to me to be a way of accessing a dominant form of masculinity without the risks that accompany it.

If violent masculinities were the most dominant forms of masculinity, then subordinated masculinities were those which displayed weakness or vulnerability. My conversations with young men suggested, however, that it was difficult to avoid situations of weakness or vulnerability completely. Accounts suggested that there were a variety of factors that led to vulnerability, including: body size, skin colour, physical appearance, the nature and size of friendship groups (or lack of) or simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Whatever the cause, displays of weakness undermined young men's constructions of masculinity.

Violence, however, played an equally important role in reclaiming masculinity which had been undermined through instances of vulnerability. For example, retribution was drawn on by some young men to re-position themselves from victim to perpetrator; notions of honour in combat were drawn on in justifying fears of knife carrying young men; young men emphasised the importance of unquestioningly backing each other up in situations of conflict; and notions of competence in weapons use were used to explain situations where young people had been injured by knives. Whilst these discursive resources enabled young men to assert their masculinity, and avoid a subordinated masculinity, they also had actual material and bodily significance. That is, retribution required actual bodily harm to another young person; having honour in battle involved the willingness to have a fist fight in order to demonstrate a commitment to a particular code of combat; backing each other up meant being prepared to join in a fight that might not have been your making in order to support a friend; and carrying a knife meant being willing to use it or risk having it used on you.

Because of the dangers associated with dominant masculinities many young men constructed what Connell (1995) refers to as complicit masculinity. Most young men were either unable or unwilling to fully commit themselves to the demands of maintaining a dominant masculinity. By taking on elements of dominant masculinity, however, they were able to construct a complicit masculinity which enabled them to benefit from the 'dividends' associated with dominant masculinity without experiencing the full scale of the risks. For most young men then, successful masculinities were safe masculinities. Safe masculinities required the ability to, on the one hand, construct a credible threat of violence such that other young men would have to think twice about wanting to start a fight or create trouble, whilst ensuring that the threat of violence was not so convincing that it resulted in actual physical violence; a fuller commitment to the dominant masculinity meant a much greater prospect of being

involved in physical violence, whilst an insufficient commitment meant the risk of being positioned in a subordinated and victimised masculinity.

The construction of successful public space masculinity, therefore, was notably unstable. The implied threat of physical violence which underpinned this masculine identity construction was only effective in as much as it carried a degree of credibility, and this credibility was heavily context dependent. Examples offered within chapters 5 and 6 highlight how easily young men's credibility, and with it, their sense of their own power could be eroded by context changes such as gang or stranger intrusions into their neighbourhood or by their journeying into different neighbourhoods.

7.1.2 Unequal access to masculinity construction

Mac an Ghail (1994) and Connell (1995, 2008) make the point that different versions of masculinity are neither equally available nor equally respected. In Dock Town there were a variety of inequalities in young men's abilities to construct masculine identities. Some young men referred to the significance of age and the hierarchical system of 'youngers' and 'elders' in securing status within gangs. The seriousness of the Brixton gangs, for example, was noted by the 'men', as opposed to boys, who made up their numbers:

"A also said that he would be genuinely concerned for his safety in Brixton. He said that Brixton was different from some of the other parts of south London because the gangs weren't teenagers but men in their mid-twenties. 'Everybody knows that for some reason the Brixton gangs are more like men', and for this reason he was more fearful of them" (Interview with Alan- 28-04-10).

Body size was identified as either helping or hindering the ability to construct a credible threat of violence, a point which is also highlighted by Messerschmidt (1999). Alldred and David (2007) also note the significance of bodily size and puberty/pubertal status to young men's peer hierarchies. For young men in Dock Town, bigger

body size offered a more credible threat of violence, as is illustrated in this example:

“One day when he was out in the Yard he said that the second biggest boy in the year came up to him and was being aggressive towards him. T said that not only was he big but he also had a scar on his face which meant that he had been in some serious fights. T was trying to get across the point that you wouldn’t want to mess with this guy” (Interview with Tom- 20-04-10)

Black young men were assumed by some to have an inherent propensity for violence, despite being the victims of violent racial attacks, and statistically more likely to be the victims of street violence (MOJ, 2010). This meant that young people tended by default to construct them as having some of the attributes associated with a successful public space masculinity. Whilst this afforded Black young men a certain status in public space, it also made it more likely that they would find themselves in violent confrontations with other young men. This point is well illustrated in the following example from an Afro-Caribbean young man interviewed:

“J went on to talk about the way in which young black men look at each other. He said that if he passed a young white boy or Asian boy it didn't matter to him but with black boys it was different- 'We look at each other like animals'. J got animated as he talked about the aggression with which young Black men look each other up and down and have such aggression towards each other” (Interview with Julian- 02-11-10)

Julian’s comments suggest that the perception which Les Back (2004) argues many Whites have of Blacks as *“undesirable, violent, dangerous and aggressive”* (p. 32) may have also been a significant part of Black young men’s own identity constructions. Back’s ‘fear and desire couplet’ worked to constrain the subject positions that Black young men might themselves adopt.

Perhaps the most important point in relation to the issue of equal access to versions of masculinity concerns the socio-economic context within which the observations were made. These are observations of

primarily, but not exclusively, working class young men living in a working class community. The poverty of Dock Town has history, it has been a feature of the area and the families who live within it for generations. It is because of this poverty that settlements like DTYC were established in the first instance. DTYC is only one of a number of settlements established to channel the money and time of the wealthier classes to support the poor, sick and impoverished (in body and spirit) members of London's lower classes. Dock Town's pedigree of poverty is etched into the fabric of its buildings, from its 19th century tenements through to its 1960s and 1970s council housing estates. While the slow creep of gentrification gradually lays claim to new parts of Dock Town, street by street, the poverty which has been such a dominant aspect of the area's past continues to feature heavily in the lives of the young people who call its streets their home today.

The masculinities to which I have referred then, are working class masculinities and the physical violence that the young men encountered, as victims and perpetrators, was, and continues to be, working class violence. Whilst my observations did not stretch beyond Dock Town's borders it is important to ask how the experiences of young men in other, more advantaged, London communities might have differed. How might, for example, the text of public space have differed? In London's more affluent boroughs, how many staff are deployed to walk the streets to refer young people into 'positive activities'? To what extent will the affluent youth of other boroughs be able to make a more extensive range of choices in relation to the ways in which they engage (or not) with local public spaces? These are just a few of the questions which relate to the intersection of poverty and geography in the production of particular experiences of public spaces and, consequently, particular experiences of public space masculinities.

Messerschmidt (1993) draws attention to the differences between white middle and white working class youth masculinity in a US city

and suggests that middle-class youth masculinity “*differs considerably from that of white, working-class youth, especially because of its reduced emphasis on the public display of interpersonal aggression/violence*” (p. 97). Messerschmidt emphasises the significance of available resources in constructing particular forms of masculinity. The observations within this research suggest that the dominance of a discourse of *youth presence in public space as problematic* marginalised young people and undermined their sense of their own power in public space. This, combined with the masculine gendering of the spaces they occupied, resulted in the construction of dominant masculinities which, similar to Messerschmidt’s observations, emphasised the importance of physical violence in dealing with confrontation and vulnerability.

Mac and Ghail’s (1994) ethnographic study of masculinity construction within a particular school setting emphasises the ways in which the organisation of schools structure the context for young men’s constructions of masculinity. Connell (2005) highlights the need to recognise the impact of this structuring on teenage identity constructions more broadly. He suggests that growing boys and girls,

“are not just passively engaged in role learning and being 'socialised'. At the same time their activity is social practice, drawing its meaning from a social framework (language, material resources, social structure), and having effects in the lives of others. Practice always arises in specific circumstances and may be severely constrained by them” (2005, p. 13)

Connell (2005) challenges the essentialist notions of both gender and adolescence which are drawn on by politicians posturing as ‘tough on crime’. In particular he questions the view of adolescent masculinity as a period when, for young men, “*testosterone-driven 'risk taking' becomes usual...[and] male energy finds expression in football, fighting, and trouble at school*” (2005, p. 12). Within the next section I will turn my attention to the political posturing which structured the

context of public space masculinity constructions for young men in Dock Town.

7.2 Political discourses of youth

“By creating public straw-enemies and shrouding them with the attire of violence, widespread fear may be engendered and the state’s monopoly over the use of violence to ‘protect’ the victim population is reinforced. In this process public attention is deflected from the sources of real violence in our society, and the brutality of an economic system based on profit and inequality is obscured” (Green 1994, p. 38)

Within this section I will consider the extent to which the New Labour government which was in power at the time of commencing this research, and for over 10 years previous to that, structured the context of young men’s relations in Dock Town’s public spaces. I will draw in particular on Fairclough’s (2000) detailed critical analysis of the language of New Labour, and the tensions he identifies in their discursive constructions. Fairclough proposes an increasing importance for language, and therefore analysis of language, in modern politics generally, but particularly in relation to the New Labour government because of its ability par excellence to use ‘political spin’ in mobilising support for its policy agendas. A central concern for Fairclough is analysing how New Labour’s concept of the ‘Third Way’ is constructed in discourse.

Before discussing New Labour’s policy discourses on youth it is important to identify some key features of the ideological shift which the party had undergone, and which had a significant impact on the language it used in talking about young people. When New Labour came to power in 1997 with an overwhelming majority, after 18 years of a Conservative government, it set about implementing an ambitious programme of change across the policy spectrum driven by a new political ideology. Underpinning these policy changes were the commitments made within its 1997 election manifesto when the Party,

led by Tony Blair, set out what would make a New Labour government distinctive, both from the then Conservative government but also from 'old' Labour (Driver and Martell, 2002).

Throughout Tony Blair's introduction to the 1997 Labour Party manifesto there is a continual emphasis on the extent to which New Labour represented "*a new and revitalised labour Party that has been resolute in transforming itself into a party of the future*" (p. 2). Blair makes clear that a defining feature of New Labour is its move to a "*new centre and centre-left politics*" (p. 3), away from Labour as a Socialist party of the Left. So keen was Blair to emphasise the Party's new political positioning that, in places, his introduction and the subsequent manifesto reads like the confessions of a reformed offender, eager to confess the error of his ways. This is most obvious in the sections of the manifesto which discuss the Party's relationship with the trade unions. The manifesto emphasises the distance that New Labour had placed between itself and the unions stating that it had changed its own policy making processes to "*put our relations with the trade unions on a modern footing where they accept they can get fairness but no favours from a New Labour government*" (p. 2). The change in union influence is further highlighting within the manifesto by drawing attention to the doubling of the Party's membership base to include "*people from all walks of life, from the successful businessman or woman to the pensioner on a council estate*" (p. 2). Presumably the implication here is that it represented these groups in a way that it had not in the past. The significance of distancing itself from the unions, and the related growth of alternative membership bases, cannot be over stated given how central the support of the unions had been to the Labour Party, both as a membership base and a source of funding.

While this point might seem somewhat removed from the positioning of young people in public space, there is an important connection. There is no secret made within the 1997 Manifesto that at the heart of

New Labour's move away from what had been the bedrock of its membership, amongst other changes, is a desire to position itself firmly in the centre ground of British politics and to:

“put behind us the bitter political struggles of left and right that have torn our country apart for too many decades. Many of these conflicts have no relevance whatsoever to the modern world - public versus private, bosses versus workers, middle class versus working class” (p. 2).

Central to the *new* vision of a New Labour then, was the construction of a centre ground policy discourse, which offered appeal to, and might have been mobilised by, either side of the traditional left-right political divide. This centre ground discourse was also evident in New Labour policies on crime and, it is argued here, played a hugely significant role in the construction and mobilisation of the discourse of *youth presence in public space as problematic* that I identified in Chapter 5.

Fairclough (2000) suggests that New Labour efforts to position itself as a party that speaks to both sides of the right/left electoral divide is evident in the promises it makes to the electorate:

“The phrase ‘not only ... but also’ pervades the political discourse of New Labour in a variety of expressions (e.g. ‘enterprise yet also fairness’, ‘enterprise as well as fairness’, ‘enterprise with fairness’, ‘enterprise and fairness’, which both draws attention to assumed incompatibilities, and denies them” (p. 10).

As a socialist party which has, historically, been firmly situated on the Left of British politics, New Labour faced a challenge in articulating a centre ground approach to tackling crime. On the one hand, there was a danger that it might distance itself from a large proportion of its voter base in working class communities if it did not articulate a position which was sensitive to the social conditions of living in poverty which might be seen, in particular by those living in poverty, as exacerbating levels of crime. Lacking such sensitivity would have put New Labour at risk of being associated with Victorian

(and arguably Conservative) notions of the criminal under-classes. On the other hand, a reluctance to challenge criminal activity would have resulted in New Labour being seen as soft on crime and out of touch with those on the right of the political divide, more likely advocates of a hard line stance on tackling crime.

In constructing an approach to crime which could be said to be both challenging of crime, and criminals, but also challenging in its approach to tackling the underlying social causes of crime New Labour drew on notions of toughness. New Labour's rhetoric on crime then, was to be both 'tough on crime' and 'tough on the causes of crime'. Although the second element of New Labour's commitment on tackling crime acknowledges New Labour's understanding of the need to tackle the underlying causes of crime, the repetition of 'tough' and 'crime' within both sections, combined with the manner in which the two elements are co-located, means that the underlying message is one of 'toughness'. In this way New Labour conveys its message of toughness without isolating itself from those sections of its voter base that might advocate a 'more carrot, less stick' approach to tackling crime. New Labour's pursuit of a centre ground on crime is of particular relevance in considering its position in relation to young people's involvement in crime.

It was clear from the outset of its 13 years in government that young people, and youth crime, would feature highly on New Labour's list of priorities (Labour Party, 1997). Tackling youth crime, therefore, was listed as one of five identified crime priorities within its 1997 manifesto, and the first in order of discussion. Although the priority afforded by New Labour to tackling youth crime is evident across a range of its subsequent government policy documents (DfES 2005, Home Office 2008a), there is a particular address given by Tony Blair to the annual Labour Party conference in 2005 which is illustrative of what was, after 8 years in government, a well-established New Labour discourse on youth crime.

He directly addresses the issue of youth crime and identifies the policy of giving “*our young people places to go so that they're off the street*” as a central strand in the Government’s approach to tackling “*21st century crime*” (BBC 2005). As with New Labour’s overall approach to being “*tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime*”, this more specific approach to youth crime is consistent with New Labour’s pursuit of a new centre ground politics. There are some important points to note in relation to this section of Blair’s speech. In referring to ‘our’ young people he simultaneously draws on notions of solidarity and a discourse of parental responsibility, at the same time as reinforcing a ‘them and us’ divide between the adult and youth populations. He speaks to the liberal Left by suggesting that the government shares this responsibility with the nation’s parents, of which he is one, and that the government will play its part by giving “*our young people...places to go*”. However, Blair also offers a second and equally important commitment, against which the first is counter-weighted; young people will be given places to go so that they are “*off the street*”. The provision of ‘positive activities’ for young people away from public space are not constructed as a learning or developmental resource, in the way that organised play activities for children might be, for example. Instead, ‘positive activities’ for young people are constructed as a resource for keeping young people off the streets and, therefore, not causing crime.

Implicit in Blair’s speech then, is a common sense assumption that if young people are on the streets they are a problem and, in the context of the wider speech, they represent a threat to efforts to reduce 21st century crime. Fairclough (2001) emphasises the connection between ‘discoursal common-sense’ and ideology. He suggests that ‘discoursal common-sense’ can be used to ‘naturalise’ dominant discourses and enable ideologically driven practice to become common sense practice. Data analysis highlighted significant parallels between these

discursive mobilisations at national level and those at the local level in Dock Town.

Coverage within Dock Town's local newspaper, for example, counterbalanced editorially positive news stories about the provision of activities for young people by highlighting the benefit that accrued to the wider community through keeping young people off the streets. Youth workers drew on a discourse of crime or problem prevention in constructing their relationships with young people, a discourse which seemed at odds with a central tenet of the profession's stated purpose; *"to develop their [young people's] voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential"* (Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2012). On the streets young people were encouraged to engage in positive activities away from public space by council officials whose stated purpose, and dominant discourse on youth, centred on the reduction of anti-social behaviour. The discourse of youth presence in public space as problematic was also evident in the text of Dock Town's public spaces. Young people were discouraged from socialising in many public spaces and the dedicated youth spaces that did exist were sports cages which, by design, marginalised those young people who were not interested in a narrow set of competitive masculine activities. It was suggested in Chapter 5 that the problematic positioning of the presence of young people, and young men in particular, served to reinforce feelings of uncertainty and contributed to the circulation of fear.

Stan Cohen's classic study of mods and rockers in 1960s Britain provides an approach for understanding how the problematizing of young people's presence in public space might relate to the circulation of fear. He explored media representations of violent clashes between groups of young people. In his analysis Cohen (1972) developed the concept of the moral panic and highlighted an amplification process through which social concerns are identified and heightened to produce moral panics. Although Cohen's work has been used widely

and developed further since its initial publication, his outline of the basic amplification process remains consistent within many accounts.

There are many parallels between Cohen's amplification process (discussed in Chapter 3) and the media and political constructions of Dock Town's young people. There is, however, an important point of departure that I would make from Cohen's analysis in exploring the experiences of young men in Dock Town. Positive feedback is one of a number of terms used to describe the feedback element of the amplification process, through which A produces more of B which, in turn, produces more of A (Keesing, 1981). Within Cohen's analysis, drawn from Wilkins (1964), this process happens as a result of a deviant act becoming seen as more common or more normal within marginalised deviant groups. This is presumably the type of logic that underpins campaigns designed to convince young people that carrying a knife or a gun is not 'cool'.

My analysis of young men's experiences in Dock Town, a different context and period in history to Cohen's work, highlights a much more important role for young people's fear within the positive feedback element of the amplification process. Rather than young men becoming more involved in street violence as a result of it being glamorised, my suggestion is that, in the context of Dock Town, the A and B of the positive feedback were adult fears of violence and young people's fears of violence. On the one hand the mobilisation of a discourse of youth presence in public space as problematic by media, political and professional sources heightened adult fears by reinforcing the perception that young people's presence in public space represented a threat to public safety. This, in-turn, also heightened levels of fear amongst young people and lessened their sense of reliance on adult intervention to make public space feel safer; adult pre-occupations were with "*giving them places to go, so that they're off the streets*". Young men turned to what they perceived to be more reliable approaches to public space safety, such as hanging

out in groups, carrying weapons and, in more extreme situations, associating with or joining a gang. In the context of existing adult fears, the public safety measures adopted by Dock Town's young men could only serve to further heighten adult fears and sustain the amplification spiral. New Labour's mobilisation of a discourse of youth presence in public space as problematic acted as a fear appeal, drawing on adult fears of young people in positioning itself as the political party that was 'tough on crime'. As Squires (2006) suggests:

“Undoubtedly there was always something of a tension in New Labour's promise to be 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime', but this has now evolved into simply being toughest on youth” (p. 163).

New Labour's discourses on youth normalised the perception within government institutions and, in-turn, among practitioners that the problematizing of young people's presence in public space was 'common sense practice'. This structured the context of young men's identity constructions; successful masculinity constructions being those that avoided associations of vulnerability and displayed the propensity, at least, for violence. Connell (2002) suggests that *“violence is not a 'privilege', but it is very often a means of claiming or defending privilege, asserting superiority or taking advantage”* (p. 95). In a context where young men's presence in public space is both consistently and effectively undermined, leaving them with only limited resources with which to assert their sense of power in public space, it is perhaps not surprising that they might rely on the one resource that is such a fundamental component in the construction and defence of hegemonic masculinity, physical violence.

7.3 Main Findings

Before outlining the main findings from this research it is important to discuss a significant incident of street violence which occurred over the period that this research was being conducted, but which has not featured in my discussions to-date. On the 4th August 2011 a young Black man by the name of Mark Duggan was shot dead by police in

Tottenham. In the days after the killing tensions between the family and friends of the dead man and police began to escalate. This escalation initially sparked rioting at a local level within Tottenham, however, between the 6th and the 10th of August rioting spread around London city initially and later to other cities around the country. Over the course of the four days of rioting 5 people were killed, dozens were injured, there were over 3,000 people arrested and estimates for the damage to property were in the hundreds of millions (Smith, 2011). The purpose in discussing these riots is not to provide an in-depth analysis or to attempt an explanation. These were the worst riots in London in over 20 years and given that they occurred over the period that this research was being completed it is important to say something about why they have not featured within my discussions up to this point.

The first point to make is that the riots occurred after my data collection had taken place. Whilst this did not prevent me from discussing the riots it meant that it was not a feature of my observations or a topic of conversation with the young people I met. There were, unsurprisingly, many moments over the course of the riots when I felt I should have been out on the streets of London collecting additional data, given how extraordinary these events were. Aside from obvious issues in relation to research protocol and ethical considerations, there was another important reason for not being more active in pursuing insights on street violence arising out of this period of rioting. A key concern of this research has been the everyday fears and concerns young men have in using urban public spaces. As much as the riots ignited my sociological imagination and demanded of me to ask critical questions about who was involved and why, I took the view that a more significant focus on the riots would have diverted me from the core aim of the research.

The summer riots of 2011 might be viewed as the rioting equivalent of a ‘perfect storm’; it represented the coming together of a broad range

of aggravating factors to produce an outburst of violence that is rarely seen in British society. To start with there was a ‘Trigger’ event in the form of the killing of Mark Duggan by the police; this event was no doubt imbued with additional significance by the fact that it was a young Black man that was killed; the escalation in tensions was contributed to by the specific dynamics and perhaps historical tensions between police and the local community in Tottenham; tensions were escalated further with the circulation of a ‘youtube’ clip showing police using what many would judge to be excessive force against a 16 year old girl, the gender and age of the ‘victim’ being significant; much has been made of the role of social media more generally, and Black Berry messenger in particular, in the mobilisation and organisation of rioters; the fact that it was summer time, the weather was hot and young people were off school is likely to have influenced young people’s involvement in the riots, although it is important not to view these as exclusively ‘youth’ riots. As Robert MacDonald (2012) suggests “*part of the difficulty of making sense of these events lies in the multiplicity of logics at work, not only at the level of the collectives that came into existence but also at the level of individual experience*” (p. 21).

The choice not to incorporate a discussion of the riots at an earlier point within this research was motivated by a desire to avoid delving into a topic so vast that it could have consumed my focus completely and, in doing so, detracted from the initial and important focus of the research; young men’s everyday experiences of fear and marginalisation in urban public spaces. While the findings outlined above were not intended to identify the underlying causes of the riot, an important question which should be asked is whether they seem consistent with what happened in the riots. Reflecting back on the findings, it was suggest that young men’s usual positions of power in public space were inherently unstable; that they responded to vulnerability by looking tough, talking tough and occasionally being (physically) tough; and that their presence in public space was viewed

within policy discourse and by local officials as a problem to be resolved/removed. It is not possible to say whether it is inevitable that such everyday experiences of public space would lead to the kind of widespread looting and acts of violence witnessed in August 2011. However, historical accounts of, or enquiries into, rioting in the UK (Rude, 1981; Kettle and Hodges, 1982; Scarman, L. 1986; Gifford, 1986; Brink, 2007), tend to draw attention to the significance of the marginalisation experienced by particular groups. Scarman's (1986) review of the circumstances surrounding the Brixton Riots of 1981, for example, suggests that such rioting must be considered in the "*context of complex political, social and economic factors which together create a predisposition towards violent protest*". More specifically he suggests that in the case of Brixton issues of "*family education, unemployment and discrimination are particular areas of difficulty...as a result [of which] young black people may feel a particular sense of frustration and deprivation (pp. 194-195)*". I would suggest that experiences of fear and marginalisation in public space, such as those I have outlined, are not incompatible with the outbursts of violence and destruction that took place during the riots. It is worth at this point recapping on the research aim and research question to provide a reference point for the findings discussed below.

Research aim:

To explore how interpersonal physical violence perpetrated by young men against young men in London's public spaces relates to their experiences of fear in public space?

Research question:

How do young men talk about their experiences of public space and what resources do they draw on in managing fear and/or marginalisation in public space?

The first finding relates to the way in which young men talked about their experiences of public space. Although young men experienced

certain privileges by virtue of being men in masculine spaces, their accounts suggested that their positions of power in public space were inherently unstable. These unstable positions of power were further undermined by a dominant discourse of *youth presence in public space as problematic*. The mobilisation of this discourse at local, regional and national levels reinforced dominant constructions of public space as aggressive, dangerous, masculine space within which young people were more likely to try to look intimidating, gather in groups or gangs, or carry weapons in order to feel 'safer'.

There are a number of specific observations in relation to how young men talked about fear in public space which have informed this finding and are, therefore, worth noting. Firstly, notions of otherness were central to young men's accounts of fear. This meant that young men's fears were informed as much by what was not, but might be present, as they were by what was actually/physically present within the public spaces they occupied. Secondly, adult presence in public space was considered important in making public space feel safer, but active intervention from adults in vulnerable situations was considered unreliable. Thirdly, a much more reliable, and therefore important, source of intervention for young men in vulnerable situations was friendship groups. Finally, a credible threat of physical violence, from either a group or an individual, was considered an important resource in negotiating vulnerability in public space.

The second finding relates to the resources that young men drew on in managing fear and/or marginalisation in public space. A gender analysis of the spaces that young people occupied suggested that these spaces were overwhelmingly masculine spaces which were dominated in terms of physical presence by young men. The gendering of these spaces informed the masculinities constructed by the young men who occupied those spaces. The sports cages that primarily young men occupied were identified as masculine vortices where the absence of femininities meant that masculinity was constructed primarily in

relation to other/subordinated masculinities. Central to the construction of a dominant masculinity within these spaces was the mobilisation of combat discourses. Dominant masculinities, however, did not equate to safe masculinities and young men's accounts suggested that they were more likely to construct what Connell (1995) refers to as complicit masculinities in order to negotiate safer movements through public space. Complicit masculinities in Dock Town required of young men to draw on resources such as looking tough, talking tough and occasionally being involved in fist fights. While such complicit masculinities did not require of young men to engage in more risky behaviour such as carrying weapons, joining a gang or stabbing or shooting someone, they increased the likelihood that they might.

The third key finding relates to the national political context within which data collection took place. In its pursuit of a 'Third Way' or 'centre ground' politics New Labour constructed youth as a problem to be solved. Implicit in New Labour's solution to the problem of youth was the removal of young people from public space. For practitioners, and the adult population more generally, this normalised the practice of removing young people from public space. For young men this undermined their sense of power in public space and structured a public space context within which the propensity for violence was an essential element of a successful masculinity construction.

7.4 Methodological reflections

"There is no description without a standpoint" (Connell 1995, p. 69)

A key feature of my approach to conducting this ethnography was the standpoint from which my observations, and descriptions, were made. I have discussed aspects of this standpoint within Chapter 1 and whilst reflections on the way in which my standpoint has influenced

the research process have been present throughout, it is important to revisit this discussion in relation to the findings. There are two points in particular which should be discussed, the first relates to my youth work background and the second to my own masculinity.

In starting the research process I primarily saw my background in and connection with the youth work profession as a useful resource in making contact with young people in locations that would be useful for the data collection process. There were many assumptions underlying my understanding of the youth work profession, and myself as a youth worker, which have gradually been unpicked over the course of this research. Some of these assumptions relate to basic terminology that is used within youth work, such as the use of the term 'session' to refer to a planned period of time during which a planned set of activities is delivered to a group of young people. Whilst this observation on its own may seem reasonably inconsequential, it is the intersection of many similar specific terms within a professional discourse of youth work which is much more significant. Dominant professional discourses within youth work in England emphasise the role of youth workers in enabling young people to develop their voice, influence and place in society. In reflecting back on my approach to research design, the youth work emphasis on developing the voice of young people was seen as an important compliment to gaining a better insight into young people's subjective experiences of public space. That is, I saw youth work as being less corrupted by the polluting agendas of other professions.

The reflexivity that is so central to the ethnographic methodology has led me to be much more questioning of an assumed view of youth workers as 'on the side of young people'. The language of youth work, as with any profession, is constructed in discourse and, as such, youth work and youth workers are positioned by dominant discourses of youth. The advantage then of working alongside youth workers in conducting this research has been in the access it has given me to

meet with, observe and talk to young people in public spaces. The challenge of critically examining how youth workers are positioned by dominant discourses, and how they mobilise these discourses in their work with young people, has been as much of a challenge as it would have been had I worked alongside any other, less ‘youth friendly’, profession. I will discuss this point more specifically in relation to detached youth work practice within the conclusions section below.

The second point in relation to standpoint relates to my own masculinity. In the tradition of ethnographic research, or the approach as it is advocated by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) at least, I have used an on-going dialogue between the data and theory to identify the relevance of masculinity literature, and Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity in particular, as being central to theorising the findings from this research. However, I have been slower, or even resistant, to deconstructing my own masculinity and considering how it might have informed the data collection process.

I have talked previously about aspects of my own background and so will not repeat that information here, instead I will focus on what I see as being the underlying features of my own masculinity construction without engaging in an overly detailed analysis of the complex cultural and historical influences that might have informed this identity. If I were to use one word to capture my masculine identity it would be strength. I gain a certain sense of pride when I am described as the ‘strong silent type’, although I wonder how accurately the ‘silent’ element of this description suits me. When faced with challenges or difficulties, either individually or within a group, my discursive responses often conform to quite traditional middle class notions of masculine strength; being tough, not showing fear, remaining calm in the face of challenge or danger, protecting the weak. These discursive constructions of strength are embodied in my physical presence. At 6ft 3” I am well above average height and this often results in others assuming me to have levels of strength which

are correspondingly well above average, an assumption which I am generally happy not to challenge. Whilst I have not chosen my height, I have had greater control over the development of my physique and I generally attempt to use my physique in a way which suggests or allows for the interpretation of underlying strength.

Within my work with young people and, therefore, within this research I have drawn on my masculinity in building relationships with young people. As has been discussed above, the qualities of strength which are a feature of my masculinity are admired and often aspired to by many young men within working class communities. My masculinity then, enables me to build relationships and initiate conversations with young men which otherwise might be difficult to establish. It is important to recognise therefore that the way in which young men talked to me about their experiences of fear and vulnerability will have been informed by my masculinity. It is possible, for example, that they may have talked about vulnerability in different ways had they been talking to a female researcher, or a male researcher who constructed an alternative form of masculinity. This is why the ethnographic approach of exploring an issue from multiple perspectives has been so important within this research, as it has enabled the observation of both inconsistencies and continuities in young men's constructions of vulnerability in different contexts. The unstructured nature of the approach has provided flexibility and enabled consideration of a broad range of perspectives in relation to young men's experiences of violence.

Whilst the ethnographic approach offers breadth in the range of data collected, this same aspect of the approach also creates a degree of uncertainty in relation to the data that will be captured and the nature of the insights that might be drawn from that data. At the outset of this research there were a range of groups that I had expected a reasonable degree of contact with. Unsurprisingly, the group that I was most interested in having contact with was young people hanging

out in public spaces around Dock Town. These were not, however, the only group. I had also hoped to have some contact with community members, police officers, council officers and shop keepers. This is not an exhaustive list but it reflects the range of insights I had hoped to gain. Actually making contact with these various groups in the time available required a proactive approach and the use of relevant connections. However, even acting proactively and drawing on the growing range of contacts in the area the process was at times unpredictable and meant that the level and quality of contact with some participants was less than expected and with others more. For example, while I had suggested from the outset that I wanted to keep a measured level of distance from the police, I had hoped to have a greater level of contact than I actually did. This meant that as a source of data this group was far less productive than expected. On the other hand, before starting my data collection I was completely unaware that a group of street based ‘young advisors’ would be working in Dock Town over the period of my data collection. Though unpredicted, the insights I gained from my contact with this group proved to be very valuable in relation to the local council’s approach to tackling anti-social behaviour. Such are the risks and benefits of ethnographic approaches to data collection.

7.5 Conclusions

I will start this section by outlining a number of key contributions that this research makes to the wider body of literature relating to young men’s experiences of public space and violence in public space.

Cockburn (2008) and more recently Moore and Breeze (2012) highlight the limited amount of research that has been conducted exploring how men, and particularly young men, experience public space, and fear in public space. This ethnographic piece of research has made a unique and original contribution to knowledge relating to young men's experiences of fear in public space, and how this relates

to their involvement in street violence.

This research drew on methodological insights from a source that might not typically be considered for an analysis of men's experiences of violence. Feminist deconstructions of the public-private divide revealed how underlying issues of power and dominance shaped women's experiences of domestic violence (Stanko, 1994; Duncan, 1996). These insights from feminist geographers highlighted the benefits of adopting a social constructionist perspective on violence, and provided important direction for a deconstruction of young people's experiences of violence in public space.

Social mapping has been used as a participatory tool within mapping exercises, however, within this research it was used as a way of engaging young men with a topic that they might otherwise find difficult to engage with. The use of social mapping within this research has built on the experience of researchers such as Travlou et al (2008) in highlighting the usefulness of social mapping as a less intimidating way to engage participants in a conversation about aspects of their public space experiences which they might otherwise find difficult to discuss.

Through an analysis of data captured from multiple perspectives, facilitated by the ethnographic approach adopted, this research has identified the mobilisation of a discourse of youth presence in public space as problematic in the text of public space, in media representations and in adult/council officer/policy constructions of young people. This analysis has revealed the role of power within particular constructions of youth presence in public space and has reinforced the growing body of literature which is questioning of the common sense assumption that the solution to street violence lies in getting young people off the street (Cockburn, 2008; Squires, 2011; Bannister and Kearns, 2012).

As has been discussed in relation to media and political constructions of youth presence in public space, young men's positions of power in public space might be considered to be far more stable than this research revealed them to be. The positions of power occupied by young men in this research were inherently unstable and this led many of them to engage in exactly the activities that would draw attention to them for all the wrong reasons, such as: hanging out in groups/gangs, carrying weapons or generally looking intimidating. These features of young men's behaviour were identified as important resources in managing vulnerability in public space. This insight from the research raises important questions about the possibly counter-productive nature of some policing or policy interventions aimed at tackling street violence.

This research makes an important contribution to Cohen's (1972) insights on the amplification process within which acts of deviance by young people become amplified through a combination of media attention and escalating adult fears. The insights drawn from this research suggests a much more prominent role for young people's fear in public space, and particularly the circulation of fear, within Cohen's (1972) amplification cycle.

Much of the current research in relation to young people's masculinity construction focuses on institutional settings, such as schools, work places or prisons. As much of the data within this research has been gained through street based observations this research has been able to add to the existing literature in this area but also to offer an important alternative perspective. Drawing on Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity to theorise the structuring of public space masculinities, the research has explored how political context can structure masculinity construction in public spaces, and how this might relate to young men's involvement in physical violence.

Methodologically, this research has brought together the uncommon

combination of ethnography, discourse analysis and non-verbal text analysis. A discursive analysis of the physical text of the research location has added to Parker's (1999) 'critical textwork'. This analysis revealed the techniques of power at work in everyday features of public space, such as: signage, layout, colouring, ordering and materials. Importantly, it also added an additional dimension and greater depth to the understanding of the positioning of young people in public space.

Following on from these contributions, a number of key conclusions are drawn from this research. A central and broad conclusion to draw from this research is that there needs to be a fundamental reconsideration of the social geography of contemporary urban public spaces in England and, in particular, of the construction of young people's presence within those spaces. The literature review highlighted the extent to which the social geography of urban spaces in the UK is changing and how this is impacting on the way in which different groups within society are able to access and make use of public space. The observations made within this research have suggested that the removal of young people from public space has been seen more favourably to any critical consideration of the violent spaces they were being removed from.

A more specific conclusion relates to the way in which public spaces need to be reconsidered. The gendered construction of urban public spaces needs both further research and the development of practical interventions designed to enable young men, and particularly working class young men, to explore alternative public space masculinities. It should be noted that this is not a further problematizing of working class young men and their presence in public space. It is recognition that young men will construct masculinities with the resources that are available to them. For the young men involved in this research the available resources meant that not only did they construct different masculinities than they might have constructed in other locations but

the masculinities they constructed resulted in them being more likely to be involved in incidents of physical violence. There is a need to develop more effective, or simply more, critical gender identity work with young men in order to give them the ‘resources’ to deal less violently with vulnerability.

At regional and national levels in particular, there needs to be greater awareness of the way in which discursive constructions of youth can impact on the circulation of fear. There are important distinctions to be made between the factors that influence adult fears in public space and young people’s fears in public space. Whilst the mobilisation of a discourse of ‘youth as problem’ within political rhetoric might be instrumental in conveying a political determination to tackle adult fears, it also has the potential to worsen the circulation of fears amongst young people and further undermine their sense of power in public space. This research has highlighted the heightened potential for physical violence that can arise when young people’s sense of power in public space is undermined. Under the conditions of a public space masculine vortex, the loss of a sense of power is more likely to result in greater reliance by young men on physical violence, actual or threatened, in managing vulnerabilities.

For Fairclough (2000) New Labour’s approach to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) was underpinned by a power which was dispersed but not fragmented. Drawing on the Foucault informed work of Cohen (1985), Squires (2006) highlights the particular impact that the ‘*blurring, widening and masking*’ of New Labour measures of social control, and particularly their approach to ASB, have had on young people. The significance of the ASB agenda for young people’s experiences of public space has been discussed in Chapter 3 and I will not repeat these discussions here, however, in the light of the insights from this research there is a specific conclusion to be made in relation to the implications for detached youth work practice. Gaskell (2008) suggests that when New Labour first set out to tackle ASB in 1997 it

identified ASB as a significant cause of crime. By 2003, however, she suggests that ASB *was* the crime, and young people were increasingly being criminalised for behaviour that previously would have been considered nuisance behaviour.

Davies and Merton (2009) suggests that, under the New Labour government, a focus on ‘youth as problem’ combined with the promotion of neoliberal management approaches has resulted in tensions between national policy priorities for Youth Work, and the types of practice that the profession itself would seek to promote. Detached youth workers have traditionally seen themselves as being in some way distanced from dominant discourses on youth through their physical separation; by working with young people on the street. Although my own account of Detached Youth Work (Whelan, 2010) highlights the need not just for physical but also organisational and institutional detachment, or at least critical distance, it still draws on the notion that detached youth workers can in some way place themselves outside certain dominant discourses on youth. This research has highlighted the pervasive nature of discourse and, as Foucault puts it, “*the polymorphous techniques of power*” (1990, p. 11) at work within discursive constructions of youth. If Detached Youth Work is to retain its claim to “*negotiate with young people on questions of power. control and authority*” (Tiffany 2007, p. 4) then detached youth workers must become more critically aware of the dominant discourses within which their practice is constructed. An important conclusion in relation to Detached Youth Work then, is that there is a need for the critical analysis of discourse (which includes but is not exclusive to Fairclough’s CDA) to become more central to the training and on-going practice of detached youth workers. This would involve encouraging an awareness of the relevance of discourse but also the more challenging task of incorporating the skills and knowledge required to critically analyse discourse into everyday professional practice.

In concluding this section, and the overall research, I will make a final recommendation from the research which could provide a clear guide for a specific area of practice development. Most primary schools run transition programmes to prepare students for the changes they will experience in making the move to secondary school. Similarly, most secondary schools offer an induction programme for new students to familiarise them with the environment and curriculum within their new school, and to try to make the transition process as straightforward as possible (Ofsted, 2008). However, in both cases these programmes rarely involve the process of familiarising young people with the new public spaces they are likely to encounter when they move to their new secondary school. For example, an evaluation conducted by Ofsted of 'Primary and National Strategies' (Ofsted, 2008), which focuses specifically on evaluating support provided in relation to the transition from primary to secondary, makes no mention of the public space transitions that young people have to negotiate.

The primary to secondary transition is an important juncture in young men's school life when they experience vulnerabilities and concerns both in relation to their formal education but also in relation to their informal social education. For many young men the move from primary to secondary school involves an adjustment not just to a new school curriculum and a new school environment but also to the new, and often scary, public spaces and people that they now need to negotiate. For some of the young men in my research this was the first period in their lives when they either considered or actually started carrying weapons for protection. As such, an intervention in relation to this aspect of young people's transitions is much needed in order to enable young men to explore new, less violent ways of dealing with vulnerability they experience.

Much work has been carried out in exploring gender identity construction from a range of perspectives within UK school settings

(Mac and Ghail, 1994; Green, 1997; Mac Naughton, 2000; Penney, 2000; Paechter, 2007), and this work no doubt informs the support provided to young people in adjusting to new school settings. However, much less is known about young men's gender identity construction in public space. This research has suggested, however, that an important part of successful public space masculinities for young men in Dock Town was the construction of the propensity for violence, and that this was related to a lack of alternative ways of doing masculinity. As informal educators, focused on young people's social education, youth workers are well placed to gain better understandings of young men's gender identity constructions in public space, outside of formal educational settings. Youth workers are, therefore, well positioned to support young men in negotiating the new experiences of public space that accompany primary to secondary transition, and which represent potentially important junctures in their weapons carrying practices. Central to any such intervention would be a commitment from youth workers to critical gender education work alongside the provision of support to young people in resisting uncritical subject positions presented by dominant discourses of youth presence in public space as problematic.

8.0 References

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9.0 Appendices

9.1 List of appendices

Appendix 1: Research Ethics Committee approval

Appendix 2: Sample interview script

Appendix 3: Sample focus group notes

Appendix 4: Sample detached session observations

9.2 Appendix 1: Research Ethics Committee approval

Mr Michael Whelan
PhD (Education) Student
School of Sport and Education
Brunel University

28th October 2009

Dear Michael

RE38-08 – Street Violence Amongst Young Men in London

I am writing to confirm the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Sport and Education received your application connected to the above mentioned research study. Your application has been independently reviewed to ensure it complies with the University Research Ethics requirements and guidelines.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority, is satisfied with the decision reached by the independent reviewers and is pleased to confirm there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study.

Any changes to the protocol contained within your application and any unforeseen ethical issues which arise during the conduct of your study must be notified to the Research Ethics Committee for further consideration.

On behalf of the Research Ethics Committee for the School of Sport and Education, I wish you every success with your study.

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Bradford
Chair of Research Ethics Committee
School Of Sport and Education

9.3 Appendix 2: Sample interview script

Meet Date: 02-11-10

Meet Time: 7pm

Meeting Location (s): young leaders room

Meet with: Julian (J) age19 Afro Carribean

Notes

Had called to the music room to talk with J where he was working with a few other young people. I asked him if he had a minute and, in what felt like a dismissive tone, he said he didn't have time but that he would come and see me when he had finished at 7pm, I wondered if he would. A little later I was in the office and J called to the door. He was in a more positive mode now and was keen to hear what I wanted him for. I explained that I wanted to talk to him about my research and wanted to know if he would be willing to talk with me. J was happy to do this and said that he had to go back up to do a few more things but would come back down soon to talk with me. At 7 J came back down, I was playing pool, and he gestured for me to go with him upstairs so that we can talk. I went with him immediately not wanting to miss the opportunity as I have been trying to talk with him for some time.

We went up to the young leaders' room where one of the other young people, David, was using the computer. A private room would have been better but J was comfortable with this space and was happy for D to be there so I wasn't about to go against what he wanted. On the way up the stairs J had asked if I was going to record the discussion or take notes and I said no, almost immediately he nodded in an approving way, he seemed more comfortable with that idea, commenting 'you'll just remember it'.

I took a seat away from the door where David was sitting to get at least an element of privacy, in as much as that was possible in the

small room. J sat on the pool table, holding a pool cue. J wanted to know what I wanted him to tell me, a line he continued to use throughout the interview, 'What else do you want to know'. From an early point in our discussions J talked freely and moved from one discussion to another, I was happy to allow him this flexibility as it seemed to be what he was most comfortable with and he provided some very valuable insights through his discussions.

Started by asking J if he was from Dock Town, he said that he was but that he didn't really think that it mattered because we (meaning him and his friends) 'go all over' mentioning Peckham and Brixton- 'all over'.

J went on to flow into a discussion about the way in which young black men look at each other. He said that if he passed a young white boy or Asain boy it didn't matter to him but with black boys its different- 'We look at each other like animals'. J got animated as he talked about the aggression with which Black young men look each other up and down and have such aggression towards each other. J was clear that this level of aggression was particular to black young boys. J said that he used to be like this but now he had changed, he had been 'educated'. I asked him what he meant by 'educated'. J said that he had learnt about black history when he had gone to a black club and to the mosque. He clarified that it wasn't a Black only youth club but that white young boys didn't go there. J explained that in learning about the history of the black man (clarifying that by this he meant Caribbean and African) he had come to realise the plight of the Black man and how it had impacted on the way they are today. In particular he made reference to the fact that Black young men are having post code wars over postcodes where only going back a few years the Black man wasn't even welcomed.

J said that it was ignorance that was leading young black boys to fight in the way they were but that if they could be better educated about

their past J felt confident there wouldn't be so much 'Beef'. J said he had talked to white people about the need for black people to be educated separately by 'our people' but they had disagreed with him and this frustrated him. He said that he had kept his cool but that he had felt so passionately about it that it frustrated him that they couldn't see that he was right. J kept emphasising that he knew this could be effective because it had worked for him.

I asked if black history had been taught in school but J said that he didn't remember it being taught properly, he admitted that it was focused on during Black history month but he compared this to Christmas time- 'it's like the Christmas tree, it's taken out once a year and then put away again'.

I went back to the subject of where J was born. He said he was born in Jamaica but he was young when he moved so he didn't remember much about it. He did say however, that he had tried to change his accent to fit in (I didn't prompt him on this) saying that he tried talking in different ways so that he could blend in better- J talks in a higher pitch to highlight the way in which he tried to alter his accent and then contrasts this with the deep Jamaican accent. I asked him why he thought he had felt the need to make this change and he said it was about 'blending in'.

From some of the comments J had made already it was clear that he had at points carried a weapon so I asked him to tell me about when he had first made the decision to carry, if he remembered. He said that it was when he was in year 10 (14/15yrs- this would have been 3-4yrs ago or 2006/2007, during a peak period in levels of violence and hysteria around violence in the country). J said that at this time YP were being stabbed every night and he wasn't sure when he went out at night if he would make it back home again alive so he decided to start carrying.

J then went on to talk about various aspects of carrying a knife. He said that if you get chased down by a group of young people that it was important not to 'go down', meaning down on the floor, because that was when other young people would lay into you. He seemed to be suggesting that if you went down on the ground that it would open the flood gates for a kicking frenzy. Young people would be so caught up in the moment that they wouldn't care or be aware of what they would do to you in that situation. He acted out the young people kicking someone on the ground, 'booom!', almost as if they were in a feeding frenzy, unable to control themselves from kicking the person on the ground.

J went on to say that, in his view, for a lot of the young people who kill someone with a knife it's the first time they have used a knife. His assessment was that they wouldn't have wanted to kill the other young person but they didn't know how to use a knife properly. He justified this claim by saying that most of these incidents are over something small, like a phone. He asked how many young people would want to go to jail for a phone, 'That's 50 quid!'. 'They haven't learnt how to use a knife properly'. A person who knows how to use a knife would injure the other young people to scare them off- J performs a swinging action demonstrating how he would try to injure as many as possible if he was in a dangerous situation. Those young people who weren't carrying a knife would be frightened off or would think twice about getting involved. J would sit quietly when he carried a knife because he had a quiet confidence that he had the ability to deal with a situation if he needed to. J talked about how those young people who had killed would be faced with a decision of letting their conscience destroy them or destroying their conscience. He said that some young people had chosen to destroy their conscience so that they could kill and be able to justify it- 'He deserved it man!'.

I asked J if he still carries a knife and he said that things are different now, he sees himself as more of a 'young man' now and is above all

that. J said that if someone looks at him in an aggressive way now instead of being all in their face and asking 'What you look'n at?' he now sees that they are 'not on the same intellectual level'. He can resolve issues by talking, he can even talk it out over the phone, he doesn't have to resort to violence.

J said that DTYC had been a great help for him. He added that the residentials he had been on with DTYC were very helpful because he had interacted with people he wouldn't normally interact with, he was forced to do things with other YP that he normally wouldn't work with e.g. share food and cook together. This helped him to see things differently. J said that he came back from his residentials with a different perspective on things.

I asked J is he is fearful anywhere and he said that he wasn't, re-emphasising that he sees himself as a young man now and has other priorities. J also emphasised the relevance of drugs in causing violence amongst young people. He said that the elders in the drugs scene are clever because they don't get involved in the violence but they get the youngsters to settle issues (a point that links with other interviews). So young people are being involved in violent conflicts and are often being manipulated by elders without knowing what it's all about.

J emphasised that young black men should know that it is the system that is the problem and not them. J said that it was a good thing that I was listening to what YP had to say about the issue and how young people experienced it rather than looking at it (violence) from the outside- J gestures with his hands as if to suggest someone manipulating pieces of a puzzle. 'You're a good listener, its good that you're listening to how we [Black young men] experience it [violence]' (earlier in the discussion K had clarified that when he talked about we he was referring to Black young men).

9.4 Appendix 3: Sample focus group notes

Data Collection- Meeting Recording Sheet

Meet Date: 25-05-10

Meet Time: 6-7pm

Meeting Location (s): DTYC training room

Meet with: Young leaders group

Observations

Met with young leaders to do an individual and group mapping exercise with them. It was a sunny day and I wondered if this had an impact on attendance. The group were a little slow to arrive but did settle reasonably quickly, in fact the challenge I felt I would have was getting them energized again especially given that I didn't have time to run an ice-breaker game with them. Attendance noted below. The general outline of the session was:

- 10mins on brainstorm; likes and dislikes of Dock Town
- 10mins on brainstorm; makes me feel safe in Dock Town and makes me feel unsafe
- 15mins; working individually filling out maps to note where they feel safe and unsafe in Dock Town and in London
- Feedback on individual maps, noting feedback to powerpoint

Discussion started a little slowly but once it picked up pace the challenge was to control the discussion so that everyone had an opportunity to input. G, T and C all sat beside each other and kept having arguments about aspects of the feedback. This limited other members of the group from inputting fully into the discussions. For example, one of them would say that there are too many police in Dock Town and one of the others would disagree, this would then unfold into a big argument about whether there were enough or too many police. This discussion would be loud and involve a combination of shouting and what I might describe as loud body language such as waving arms, stepping in-between each other, grabbing each other to get attention etc. The only way I found that I could deal with this was firstly to slow the discussion and encourage these young people to reduce the volume levels and then to redirect the discussion back to other members of the group.

The following points were noted in the brainstorm headed: 'Dock Town- likes and dislikes':

Likes: Girls, Football Club (local club), DTYC, Youth Work, Clubs (SE1 club), London Marathon, Local Attractions

Dislikes: Nothing to do, no girls, no jobs, Not enough zebra crossings (T), Too much drugs, too much smoking (cigarettes), Car thieves

Observations

This initial brainstorm was intended to give young people an opportunity to get talking in a way that wouldn't intimidate and would enable all of the young people to make some comment- most young people can find something to say on the subject of likes and dislikes. Under the heading of likes there was some discussion around the London Marathon. The young person was saying that he liked having events that bring people and a bit of excitement to the area, he seemed to be saying that he liked the fact that Dock Town as an area has such a major national event happening right on its doorstep. Although there wasn't a very big discussion within the group on this subject, there seemed to be general agreement that this was a good thing. Added to the list was the related point of 'local attractions'. These points seem to fit well with the point in the mapping citing well lit touristy places as being safe feeling spaces for young people.

The point about girls was unsurprisingly cited by one of the boys but was counteracted by another boy who felt that there was some nice girls in the area. Neither of the boys seemed to think that the girls present might have any issue with the quality of the area being judged by the presence or lack of good looking girls.

On the subject of things to do, 'nothing to do' seemed to be thrown out initially by one of the young people as a standard complaint but this was then challenged by one and then another of the young people. A discussion then followed when two or three of the young people listed the range of youth clubs and activities that existed for young people and children in the area. T suggested that there weren't enough play areas but then C highlighted the fact that a block he lives close to has three kids play areas near it. They then went on to talk about the number of youth clubs, listing them. In the end there seemed to be a general consensus that there was a good selection of things to do for young people in the area with football, DTYC and SE1 being noted as examples. G noted the distinction between youth provision and youth work and said that it was the youth work in the area that he felt was good.

The point on zebra crossings was noted by T who again had a lot of disagreement from the rest of the group who felt that there were enough crossing places and the lack of zebra crossings was not an issue. This discussion became quite loud with T arguing quite strongly with C and G.

The lack of jobs was supported by most of the group but it seems to be a point which reinforces the comment made by the mother daughter combination the previous week about the loss of local industry and the challenges that this presented to young people looking to get their first job.

We began to run out of time on the last three points so discussion was limited but I did clarify that when they said there was too much smoking they were talking about cigarettes and not weed. This was an observation I hadn't expected but I didn't have time to explore it in any great detail.

I can't remember who said that they felt there were too many car thieves. Again this comment was made at the end of the discussions and I didn't have time to discuss it in any great detail.

Observations

The following points were noted in the brainstorm headed: ‘ Dock Town- makes me feel safe and makes me feel fearful’

Safe: more mixed cultures, community police (3), more cameras, friends (7), positive young people, bright lights

Fearful: racism, too many police- if they keep stopping you, groups of boys hanging out (S), Park areas when alone at night (Tu), People with dogs (C)

Under the headings of where young people feel safe and unsafe there was a lot of discussion around the issue of racism. The first point noted under safe relates to this discussion. C, in particular raised his concerns around this issue and referred to negative experiences he had. D also raised concerns about racism but on the subject of where it might be experienced he voiced quite different views from C and T, suggesting that Dock Town Central was actually ok. This, one of the others suggested, was related to the fact that D goes to the school near the blue and so is more familiar with it. D was insistent that he is there every day and doesn't have any issues with racism, while T and C felt that the Dock Town Central was the centre of the racist attitudes in Dock Town and therefore was where someone would be most likely to experience it. Interestingly, this point was followed by a discussion about where exactly the Dock Town central was located. This seemed to imply that C's views of which areas were racist was based on his understanding that ‘Dock Town’ is a racist area and therefore, he only needed to know where the Dock Town Central was and then he would know where the racism was.

Related to this discussion on racism, some of the young people (the black boys) were agreed that a better mix of cultures would make them feel safer, that is they felt less safe when they were in a primarily white area. A point reinforced when D commented that he thought the K estate was a bit racist (said with a touch of hesitation indicating that it was just a bit, not a lot). G responded by saying that he didn't agree ‘There's black people in the K too’.

The issue of police provoked a lot of discussion. An initial comment was made that there were too many police and that this made young people feel unsafe or at least uncomfortable because they always felt that they were going to be stopped. The discussion developed when some of the other young people stated that they felt there wasn't enough police. Although the discussion was heated there appeared to be a general agreement. The point was being made that there was concern about a police presence that sought to constantly challenge young people, however, they felt that the less intimidating approach of the community police was welcomed and actually made young people feel safer. There was a clear distinction made between the police and the community police. One young person commented that the community police were better because they couldn't do anything while others disagreed with this suggesting that although they didn't have the same powers you could be sure that they will call for back-up if they needed to. To get a general feeling from the group I asked if they felt that the community police were better because of the view that they couldn't do anything or because of the relationship. The feedback was ‘a bit of both’.

Observations

T commented that he felt that there should be more cameras and again this point was heavily debated. It turned into something of a joking point with Clayton demonstrating going to the toilet and the fact that he couldn't do this with concern that a camera might be watching. It was interesting that the person who appears to have been the most heavily involved in criminal activity (T) is the one who is calling for the tightest control measures to feel safe. I did find myself on a number of occasions having to try to get the group to refocus on expressing their own perspectives on what makes them feel safe and fearful as opposed to telling me what they think should be done. I also had to continually work to try to prevent C, T and G from dominating the discussion.

All bar one were agreed that hanging out with friends made them feel safer, although countering this point S (female) stated that groups of boys hanging out in her block makes her feel unsafe, especially in the dark, at night.

A suggestion was made that more positive young people about would make yp feel safer. This was followed with the suggestion that there should be more young people like the young leaders who could set a more positive tone on the streets.

Again there was general agreement in the group that more brightly lit areas represented greater safety for young people. This point was stated directly but also indirectly through comments about dark or poorly lit areas feeling unsafe. Tu commented that being in or around a park alone at night makes him feel unsafe. This was then met with a barrage of questions and some laughter from C, T and G about why Tu might be in a park by himself at night. The reaction was so extreme and so exaggerated that it was better to remove the attention from Tu than to try to get him to explain what he meant but it highlighted a clear difficulty with discussing these issues in a large group like this. Young people need to make themselves vulnerable when they comment on things that make them feel unsafe and this appeared to inhibit the group from exploring this aspect of their experiences as openly as I might have wanted them to.

C made the point that people with dogs make him feel unsafe. Some of the other young people questioned this and prompted me to ask C if he was afraid of dogs. Again this turned into something of a side line argument and I was reluctant to put C on the spot by asking him if he was afraid of dogs.

Observation that most of the points cited by young people as making themselves feel safe are similar to those cited by adults. The problem with this is that adults have the power to remove young people from public space and there appears to be a clear reluctance on behalf of adults to share public space with young people.

Individual and Group mapping exercises

This section involved the young people noting safe and unsafe areas on individual maps and then feeding back to the group. I also asked young people to add some general comments to the areas that they note as being safe and fearful. The feedback on this was very mixed.

Observations

Most of the young people put only very limited comments on their maps. M failed to engage in the process at all and I wondered if this was related to literacy issues. Some basic comments on the individual maps are as follows:

- C: Distinguished primarily on gang related issues on the large scale map, citing areas of gang tensions as being spaces that he sees as being unsafe. Central London, most of Dock Town and towards Peckham he saw as being safe. However, on his Dock Town map he cited L estate as being unsafe and notes 'very racist' as his reason for this.
- G: G commented at one point that he had done this before so his map revealed very little above what he has already talked to me about. Primarily that he sees all of Dock Town as being safe and Lambeth, Stockwell and New Cross Gate as being fearful space.
- T: T's maps were pretty unclear. He cited three categories in his large scale map, 'safe', 'should not go' and '50%' (presumably, somewhere in-between). Most of north Dock Town was safe, getting a little less certain as he moved south towards Camberwell. Similar to G, he marked the border with Lambeth and New Cross as being 'should not go'. T had very limited areas noted on his map of Dock Town.
- D: D was quite specific with his LS map. He noted most of the areas in north Dock Town as safe but also Peckham and Camberwell and Burgess Park. River Borough Park in Dock Town was noted as being unsafe and again moving west to Lambeth and southeast to New Cross were noted as being unsafe. Central London highlighted as safe. There were no additional comments on this map. D's map notes a lot of area north and south of Dock Town Road South as being unsafe.
- Tu: Tu highlighted Dock Town east as being a safe area along with the area around DTYC. Elephant and Castle, Walworth road and Peckham were all noted as being fearful. A line from Peckham leads to a comment 'usual stereotype'. Presumably referring to the view of Peckham as a dangerous area. Tu's map of Dock Town highlights River Borough Park as unsafe with the comment 'alone in the dark' - supporting his previous comment in the large group. Much of the rest of Dock Town Tu has marked as being safe.
- M: very limited marking, maybe a literacy issue. M was insistent that all of Dock Town and London are safe for him. He made a point of lifting his map and showing me that he had circled the whole of the London map in green to indicate that he finds it all safe.
- E: E's map was the clearest. Specific areas were noted and clear comments coming out from these areas with explanations highlighting what it is that she finds safe or fearful about them. Comments include: safe- 'never had a problem and chill out with friends there', 'hang out with friends there' x 3, 'grew up in the area', 'live there'. Fearful- 'never been', 'heard bad things about the area'. On her small scale map she comments of River Borough Park; 'good during day/bad night time', re Silwood- 'used to live there know people' and re area near the new secondary school 'dad works there'.

Some other comments:

Observations

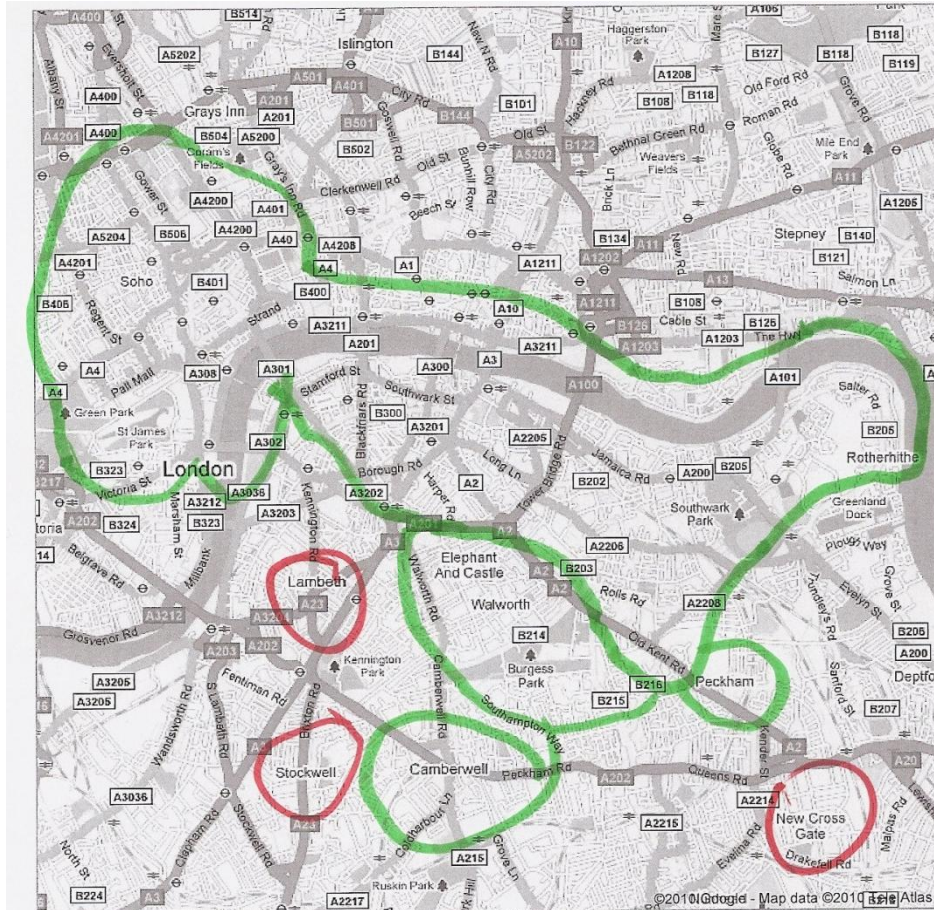
The group mapping exercise focused primarily on trying to identify areas that the group all felt were safe. The main focus was the area along the river on both sides from Dock Town East to Westminster bridge. Comments included: ‘people you know’, ‘more people’, ‘more tourists’, ‘the kind of people you see here aren’t violent’. There was general agreement in the group that DTYC and the road it is on were safe spaces- this feedback was not the result of a prompt from me.

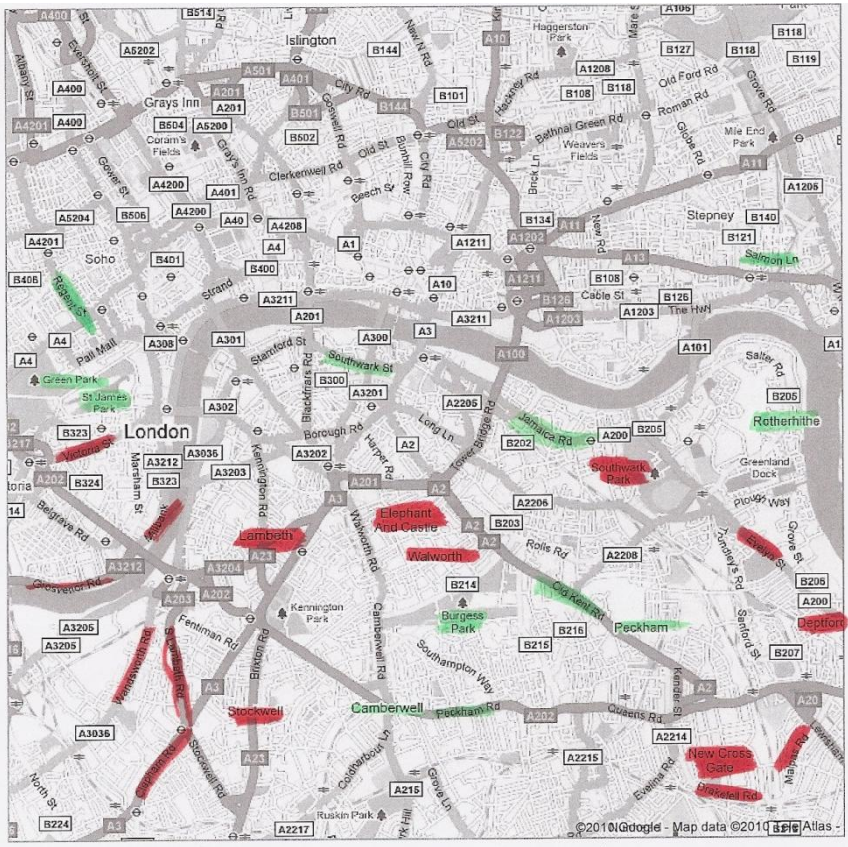
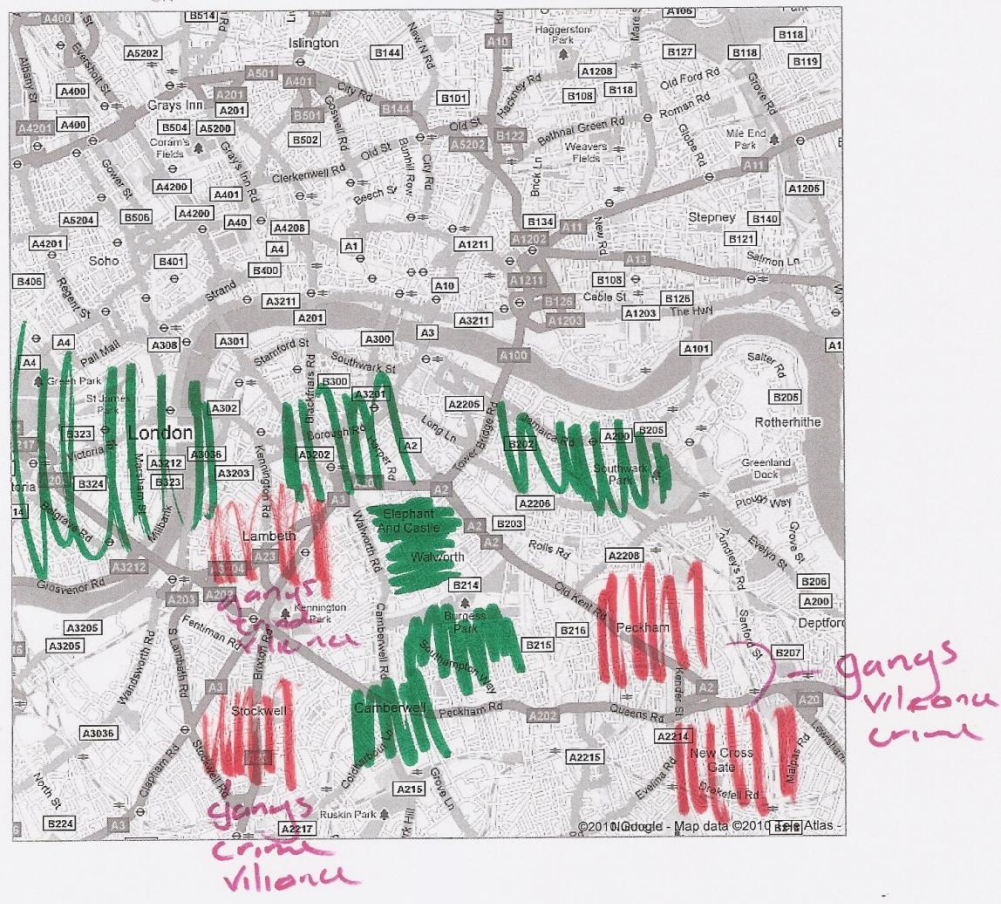
The areas that were considered fearful were much more difficult to agree on. Some young people cited certain areas while others disagreed suggesting that they hadn’t experienced problems in those areas and so they considered them safe. A thread in this discussion was friends and whether people had friends in particular areas or not. The presence of friends and having previous experience of an area appeared to be significant factors in determining whether an area was considered to be fearful or not. Comments included: ‘there’s always beef in Peckham’ (C). There was a lot of disagreement about ‘Dock Town Central’. Derek saw it as safe space, while others cited that this was just because he goes to school in that area. Others, specifically C and T, saw the Dock Town Central as the centre of Dock Town and therefore the centre of the racism in Dock Town. C has had a bad experience on L estate so cited it as a fearful space and linked it geographic proximity to the Dock Town Central as another reason for feeling that Dock Town Central was an unsafe space. D cited the S estate as fearful but E commented that she knew people there and saw it as a safe space, or at least not dangerous.

Conversation was a times difficult to manage and certain members of the group did not contribute as much as I would have liked them to. However, the brainstorming and the individual maps gave everyone an opportunity to input. Individual follow up interviews with D, C and M would be helpful.

	10-14		14-16		16-19		19+	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
White					1	1		
Mixed					1			
B or BB			1	1	1		1	
Asian			1					
other								

Sample of maps from mapping exercise within this focus group





9.5 Appendix 4: Sample detached session observations

Detached Session: 31-11-09

Time: 6:00- 6:30pm

Myslef, M and D working tonight. Started with the usual pre-session meeting. D arrived a few minutes late and myself and M chatted about the Youth Providers Network (YPN) meeting we had attended. I found myself expressing concern about the fact that the meeting seemed to focus a lot on 'issues' with young people and some of the attendees seemed almost disappointed that no issues presented themselves. Also talked briefly about the community profile which M says nearly all of the information has now come in for. He is going to pull it all together and we can have a look over it and finalise it together.

D arrived a couple of minutes late and we had some discussion with her about the YPN. M commented that someone had asked us to attend a meeting at the youth service this week as a follow up to the YPN and I went into an explanation about what the meeting was about and trying to explain where the Targeted Youth Support Service (TYS) had come from, because I had been involved with it when I worked for River Borough. I was keen to share my knowledge as was D. It seemed she didn't want to be outdone and did her best to show that she already knew what I was telling her. She seems very keen to show that she knows a lot about her work and is well connected. I suspect that at times she exaggerates a bit for effect. She talked about having been at a meeting with a lot of important people within the council and that she had received three jobs offers, one with a salary of over 40k heading up a team. I realize that I don't know the context of the discussions but I know enough about council employment policies to know that managers don't offer out jobs in that way. My conclusion was that she may have been told about jobs that were coming up and

possibly told that she would be well suited to them but not offered the jobs.

We agreed that we would follow a similar route to previous nights, avoiding B Youth Club this time. We would be particularly focused on engaging with young people now. Noted the route and left the building. As I waited outside for M and D to join me I had a brief chat with one of the other staff on his way into work, a very friendly Black guy with a hoodie over his head. I found myself being surprised that he was as friendly as he was, probably because I was drawing on typical stereo types of Black young men in hoodies. As I waited a lot of younger members were arriving for the 10-13yrs youth group. I noticed that a lot of them were dropped off by adults in their cars while others seemed to come with parents or older siblings.

Time: 6.30-7:00pm

From the centre we crossed over S road and cut across into L estate. The football area here had the lights off. We passed a couple of young people on bikes who seemed to be trying to figure us out a bit. We continued on our walk over towards FB estate. It was very cold out tonight and a bit of a breeze blowing which made things a little worse.

As we crossed Dock Town Central we noticed that the library was open so we decided to call in to say hello. I was curious to see if either of the other two would try to engage first but they seemed keen to step back and allow me to do this. I just introduced us and told the ladies behind the counter a little about what we are doing. I was trying to avoid asking if they'd had any issues with young people but found myself asking it in the end, almost as a way of continuing the conversation, getting discussion going. From this perspective it was effective because although they have not had obvious 'issues', as in Anti-social behavior, the lady began to talk a little more about other issues that they have picked up on. For example, she mentioned that some of the street market sellers, who base themselves outside the

library, often put their children into the library while they are working. It was her view that the children were being put into the library instead of school. It might be that we need to try to call by on another occasion when these children are around in case there is some support or advice we could offer.

We left the library and went up to the FB estate where we noticed a small group of young people who appeared to be hanging out in a stairwell. We walked past and I was in two minds as to whether to engage or not, mainly cause I didn't want to suddenly change direction and appear to make a b-line for them. Part of me also felt that this would not have been such an issue and I should have just stopped and had a chat. I could tell that there was also hesitation on behalf of the other two, I felt that I will need to take the lead, I think they are expecting me to do this anyway. We continued to walk up the Four Blocks and agreed that if we didn't see any other groups we would go back to that spot again and see if these young people were still there. We continued up the road but everywhere seemed very quiet so we then went back down D road to where we had seen the young people. At this stage they had left the stair well but I noticed them going into one of the other blocks so we continued in that direction. As we got there D raised the issue of whether we should be going into stairwells or not and I said that I felt that because it was well lit and the group didn't appear to be an aggressive group in any way that it would be reasonable for us to try to engage with them.

As we went up the stairwell it appeared that they were getting further and further away, not clear if they were running from us or just happened to be going up higher. They eventually came out of the stairwell and as we reached the block they were on they ran past us in the other direction chasing each other. It seemed clear that they were playing a game amongst themselves and it wasn't a good time to try to engage. We left them to what they were doing but agreed that we

would come back again to see if we could engage with them on another night.

Time: 7.00-7:30pm

As we walked up SP road we noticed a group of three young men, one white and two black. We were walking more or less alongside them for a little bit and then I suggested to M and D that we attempt to have a chat with them, they agreed. I introduced myself and the others and asked if they would mind having a quick chat with us. I think they were probably a little unsure of our motives but agreed to chat anyway. I told them that we were youth workers from a local club and we were working on the streets meeting with young people. I asked them if they were from around the area and what they were up to that evening. They said they were just hanging out. One of them, the white young person said he was working but was still interested to hear if DTYC was open. M and D said a little about DTYC and the young men had heard of it. M and D commented later that most of the young people they meet through outreach had heard of DTYC either by having been there or by family or friends having been there at some point in their lives.

Made some small talk with the young men but didn't delay long. Told them that we going to in the area again and asked if they would mind us chatting if we saw them again. The two Black young men were a little quieter but the white young man said he didn't mind. After the engagement I commented that at least one of the group seemed to be stoned, a point which D had also picked up on.

As we walked up the road we heard shouting from the other side of the road and which turned out to be Ma (staff at DTYC) who was out doing some outreach with SJ. We stopped to have a chat with them for a little bit. Ma seems to make subtle comments from time to time trying to emphasise his ability as worker. He told us that we looked a little lost and laughed but there seemed to be a subtle comment that he

was at ease in the street but that we seemed a little uncomfortable with it. I played the comment off by suggesting that M had been very scared and had wanted to call Ma to help us out. Perhaps unnecessary to buy into his comment but I found it hard not to. Ma and SJ walked with us up to J road where they went into a Chinese to talk with some young people and we crossed over to see if the young people who hang out close to the football cage were there tonight. As we walked D made a comment about how Ma wanted to show that he was engaging more young people than us.

Time: 7.30-8:00pm

No young people hanging out at a spot where we had quite regularly seen groups hanging out. I did notice however, that there was one young person, who appeared Black, with his hoodie up, playing basketball by himself in an unlit football cage. I also noticed that in a small car park opposite the cage there appeared to be some adult white males sitting in an MPV with the engine running. I could not draw any solid conclusions out of these observations but I did find myself wondering if there was anything sinister in what was happening with the men in the car. We continued up through the D estate and then turned up to the river. As we got close to the river it was clear that the wind was picking up so it was unlikely that anyone would be hanging out by the river but we went up there anyway. Just as we turned in the direction of the river a scooter appeared out of a subway with a couple of young people on it. The bike was definitely illegal with no lights, riding in a pedestrian subway and possibly no helmets. Neither D nor M recognized the young people on the scooter. I thought that we might see them again at the river but we didn't. The riverside was quiet and cold so we didn't delay long.

Made our way up through the D estate to pass the football cage near to the small TRA hall. Here the lights were on again but no young people were using the cage. We agreed that we would bring a football/

basketball out with us the next day and spend a little time in the cage to see what we see if we stay in the one spot for a little time.

As we got closer to DTYC I suggested we return via the A estate, it's a small extra deviation but I read into the silence and lack of enthusiasm of the other two that they were not that keen to extend the evening. I felt it was important because previous experience has shown that you can never be sure where you will engage and the chance encounters can often be the most productive.

Time: 8.00-8:30pm

Arrived back at DTYC at about 8pm which was cutting the night a little short but it seemed that with the coldness of the night and the small number of young people we saw on the street it didn't make sense to extend the session for the sake of it. Just noticed that I am probably contradicting the comments I just made about the importance of looking for chance encounters at times you don't expect them. I suppose the issue is a balance of covering all of the basic areas or re-walking areas. Probably re-walking areas with the night that was in it was unlikely to produce significant new outcomes.

Time: 8.30-9:00pm

Returned to the office where we had a discussion about the session. I find M and D reluctant to analyse the session in any great detail. It seems to be me looking for the detail in the small encounters we have. I get the feeling at times that if I said nothing they would just note what we did and leave it at that. I will need to draw this out of them or possibly challenge them on this if they do not start to be a little more proactive with this.

Main point we noted was the contact with the 3 young men. I felt that these were the type of young people who would most benefit from contact with us because they may present with issues around drug use, education, work, the law etc. that may need greater support than some

of the younger young people we see who may just want to be linked in with a youth club or somewhere to go. Agreed we would take a football out on weds to the D estate. Also, that we would try to engage with the younger group on the four squares again on another evening.

Contacts

	10-14		14-16		16-19		19+	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
White					1			
Mixed								
B or BB					2			
Asian								
other								

Detached session- 17-03-10

Time: 6.00-6.30pm

Arrived to the office at 6. I had texted to say I might be running a bit late but ended up arriving on time in the end. D had been in the office and had left for a couple of minutes again, possibly because she had been told that I was running a little late, I didn't ask. D joined us and we updated her on the session we had on the Monday. Again we joked about all the good contacts happening when she's not around. In particular, I drew attention to the fact that we engaged some young women on the A estate, this has been a long standing point of discussion; whether we will ever meet any young people on the A estate.

We talked a little about where we would go and had some brief discussion about the different groups we are engaged with and the need to consider what we might do with them. We left the building and walked in the direction of the A estate to start with. All was quiet tonight on the A estate though, I'm not expecting that now we've had one contact that we will start to see lots of young people here.

Time: 6.30-7.00pm

We crossed onto the D estate and walked past the TRA hall. We walked through the small arch near this hall where we had seen young people (JB and his mates) hanging out before. As we walked through there was no sign of young people initially but I spotted what appeared to be a group of young people in the distance so I suggested that we hangout out there for a little bit to see if it was a group of young people. We sat on the railing and chatted for a while, it felt much more comfortable to be able to sit down and talk a little, especially with the weather improving, it felt like we were pretty relaxed with each other and this decision was reinforced when a group of young people did arrive and sat on the steps behind us. We waited a couple of minutes and then went to make contact with them. These were young people we had been in touch with before (friends of JB- 3 white male, 17-19yrs, one called B). M made the contact although it seemed that there was a hesitation around this, something we probably need to be clearer about in future. He recognized one of the young people from the club, used to play football with DTYC. M talked with him a little about football at the club and more generally about football, the young man commented that there was a football game on that night and they were keen to watch it.

M asked them more generally about what they are doing at the moment, if they have any work or what do they get up to. The same guy answered and said that he wasn't working but was looking for any bit of work that might come up. It seemed to be a bit of a rehearsed response but that's just my assessment. When M pushed a little further about what they get up to B made a comment about doing some exercise, some running and he and the others laughed. It was my assumption that the running he was talking about was running drugs as opposed to exercise running. Of course this is an assumption, although we do know that they are cannabis smokers, all out of work and school so it would seem possible that this might be the case. It would be interesting to see if any more information comes out about this over

time. We chatted for a few minutes and then moved on again. As with the previous encounter with JB, M did not suggest that he might be able to assist in helping these young men if they genuinely wanted to find work. We talked about this later and M said he felt that it was a little early in the process of engaging with this young person to suggest that we might be able to help with work as he may just say what he thinks we want to hear and then distance himself from us in case we put similar pressure on him again in the future. We did agree, however, that we would need to monitor and manage the balance waiting for the right time and not be proactive at all.

We walked through the arch and to the left and ended up passing the young people again as we walked towards the river but we didn't acknowledge each other in any way. We walked the length of the river to MP estate and then through this estate to the main road. We didn't come across any young people along this section.

Time: 7.00-7.30pm

As we crossed at the lights there was a police van outside the K estate with 4 or 5 police officers. They had been out of the van and were just getting back in a leaving as we arrived. It wasn't clear what they were doing there, there was no sign of a disturbance or problem of any sort. We continued down SP road and as we walked we passed the Tall boy with the cleft lip (A) that we had met on the Monday. It took a couple of attempts to establish contact with him, he seemed distracted by the police. He noticed us eventually and we just said hello. He had his dog with him so we made some small talk about the type of dog he has and we asked if he knew why the police were there, he didn't. As before he was polite but not too keen in having a long discussion.

We crossed to the other side of SPR to the top football area. The pitch was empty tonight so we continued on down to the lower pitch. Here there was an adult playing with two children but aside from this it was quiet so we decided to sit for a few minutes to see if anyone came or

went (this was facilitated by the milder weather, though still not warm). It seemed quite useful to be able to sit and observe rather than just passing through and not having any idea of what might be happening just after we leave the area, although no matter how long you stay you can always think that something might have happened just after you leave.

We sat on the wall surrounding the football pitch and chatted. It wasn't long before two girls came along (white- 14/15). They approached us asking for a light and then asking if we'd seen some other girls around the area. There was a really strong smell of weed, although they were adamant that it wasn't coming from them. Initially they didn't realize that we were youth workers but M explained this to them. I thought this might cause them to walk away immediately but it didn't. They did say, however, that they were drunk and this was very clear from their appearance. We chatted about where they were from and if they were in school or not. One of the girls told us that she had left B College and was trying to get a place in H Academy, she said she was being home schooled at the moment. The other girl (H) wondered if she knew me from somewhere and as we talked we concluded that it must be from OS youth club because she used to live in Dock Town east. H was on the whole pretty quiet while the other girl was more vocal, telling M that she thought he was good looking. They talked for a few minutes and then went off again, as they walked away another three girls passed along the other side of the court and they all met up opposite from us. They talked for a little bit and then went in opposite directions again. It felt disheartening to see two such young girls so out of their heads on a Wednesday night, I wondered what was going on for them that they would choose to do this, maybe they just enjoyed it.

We stayed put for a while after the two girls left and noticed a group of people on the other side of the court. I was unclear as to whether it was a group of young people or adults but after a little while the

group separated and four of the group walked across the court in our direction. As they came towards us it was clear that they were members of the street based young advisers team. I recognized one of the workers, S, from B Youth Club. S had given me a very reserved welcome the last time we had called to the club but this time she was much more enthusiastic, although perhaps a little too enthusiastic. She asked what we were up to and we explained detached, we didn't ask her as it was clear from the jackets they were wearing. S talked a little but her colleagues walked away immediately so she couldn't delay and followed on to catch up with them. As she left she said that we should call to the club to say hello, I thought this was an unusual comment given the reception she had given the last time we met.

After she had gone M made the observation that he thought she was acting a bit strangely, I took this to mean her over enthusiasm, which I put down to embarrassment that she was working with the street based young advisors (given her previous involvement in more purist, and in my view better quality, detached work) or because she felt a bit embarrassed at the reception she had given us that last time we had called of the club. We discussed this briefly and then moved on.

Time: 7.30-8.00pm

We walked in the direction of the blue where we passed H and her friend again at the chipper. The friend came to the door of the chipper and made comment again about M's good looks. I joked a bit about this as we walked. Just after the pedestrian lights we noticed a group of young people in a side road (approx 10 white 14-16), we passed slowly, half trying to say hello but not quite knowing any of them well enough to get a reasonable response. Just as we passed them we noticed that they were gathered around an older man. Initially I thought that this might have been a relative of one of the young people or the 'local drunk' who was engaged in a drunken conversation with them. Either way we walked past the group pausing and not really clear as to whether we should engage more actively or

not. This was real hesitation on our behalf and we should have been clearer and more decisive about whether to engage or not. D stopped at the cash machine just beyond the side street and this gave us a minute to observe and have a quick dialogue about engaging or not. At this point D suggested that the young people might be mugging the old man and while I thought this was unlikely I did feel that the best option was to go and talk with the group. Just as we turned to approach them an ambulance came in our direction and M suggested that this might have been coming for the elderly man and that the young people may have called it. We approached the group as the ambulance pulled in and asked what was happening. They explained that the old man was very drunk and that they had stopped to help him and had called the ambulance. They were very proud of themselves for having done this and saw the man into the ambulance. I immediately felt like an idiot firstly for not having engaged more quickly because I might have been able to help, being first aid trained, and secondly because I allowed a more negative view of the young people, (they might have been mugging the man) to inform my actions. That is, I only felt it was necessary to engage with the group because they might have been mugging someone.

We all made a point of congratulating the boys for their actions and then moved on again as they went on their way. As we walked we talked about the importance of not assuming the worst of young people, and how positive the boys actions had been.

We walked across to the L estate and just as we turned to go into the estate we passed three young people (14-16, 2white female and 1 white male), one was wearing an Irish scarf around her neck and seemed to be celebrating St. Patrick's day. I then noticed that the other girl was the Irish girl that myself and M had talked to on the Monday and she was with the Irish boy we had met the previous week (F). I caught her eye and said hello and wished her a happy St Patrick's day. As we passed she turned to F and told him that I was

the guy she had been telling him about. It felt very good to start making contacts with young people who could recognize us and to know that they were commenting about us amongst each other, it gave the sense that we were being noticed, something that we haven't felt very strongly up to now.

We passed on through L estate, where the lights were still not repaired and back to the club again. Didn't see any other young people on the L estate.

D completed the evaluation when we got back to the club. Again she rushed things a little so I tried to draw out some conversation on various aspects of the evenings interactions. I think that what is really needed is some specific training or discussion around filling in the evaluation forms and the kinds of things that we should be looking out for.

We agreed that we would look at some possible engagement options next week, to consider what if anything we might put on the table with one or more of the groups of young people to engage them in a more involved contact.

Contacts

	10-14		14-16		16-19		19+	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
White			9	3	4	1		
Mixed								
B or BB								
Asian								
other								