The Things Children Say: Young People and Violence.

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"Persistence is the key to success"- Mr. G. Francis

"Can't is not a word that should be in your vocabulary"- Mrs. A. Francis

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated entirely to my parents, sister and husband.

Without any of you, none of this would have been possible.

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X

In the words of Nelson Mandela:

"It always seems impossible until it is done."

NVIVO Word Cloud: 100 most frequently used words in the thesis.

Abstract

Building on a growing body of research linking youth culture with violence and theoretical frameworks, this present thesis extends this framework to include the somewhat 'ignored' voices of young people and their perspectives and opinions about violence. By using secondary data, although it is clear to see that the number of first-time entrants has fallen by 85% over the last 10 years, and by 11% in the last year within the Youth Justice System (YJS); violence among young people has been of growing concern and remains to be one of the highest crime types in England and Wales (YJB, 2018). Disaggregating this overarching trend by age, gender and race reveals more widely the cultural differences amongst youth, but also the impact social media and austerity has had on these young people's perceptions of what violence means to them.

The present research explores, these debates and the nexus between youth and violence through a situational lens. Looking at the cultural nature of violence among young people and how this is translated within an urban and rural setting. Furthermore, the justification and normality alongside the gendered reality of violence is established. In doing so, this thesis seeks to challenge pathologizing stereotypes of violent youth, drawing on nuanced accounts of youth voice that demonstrate the role of social development, alongside the understandings, meanings and motivations for violent behaviour.

By considering this point of view this research raises important questions surrounding the geographical nature of youth violence, not only by how it is understood but how space is understood and used by young people. What's more, it pushes the theoretical boundaries from traditional to cultural theory, raising important questions around reality and media. To understand this more thoroughly the thesis presents a combined theoretical concept, merging traditional philosophy with more culturally appropriate theory. This research proffers a deeper understanding of violence by understanding it from a less adult-centric perspective and utilises an interpretivistconstructivist framework to consider the nuanced observations from young people across two locations in Britain. As the study progressed it also became apparent that these areas also reflect the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic character of Britain today.

Key words: Youth, Culture, Violence, Cultural Criminology, East Midlands, North West**.**

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles but must be understood in terms of public issues- and in terms of the problems of history making. Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles- and to the problems of the individual life. Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of our societies occur; and within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time."

C. Wright Mills (1959)

The above quote is from Sociologist C. Wright Mills who coherently addresses the issues within research yet suggests how we can gain deeper under understandings of social issues by considering concepts and factors within the area of exploration. This research delves into personal understandings and societal norms by exploring how young people understand and interpret the term violence. Although research on violence and violence among young people is present within social research, there is less that focuses on understandings from rural youth and how they understand or perceive violence (Magnus and Scott 2020). Moreover, scholarship, media and tabloids would have us believe that rural life is idyllic. Yet, what this thesis aims to demonstrate is that the rural idyll may not be the case for all young people in rural areas of Britain and furthermore, how young people understand violence can be different from adults and vary upon location.

This study will illuminate some of the important tensions that encompass youth violence from what we think we know, what we learn from our surroundings and what is taught to us. By considering such perspectives it contributes to the overall understanding of how some young people understand violence. Thus, it can be argued that each of us are born into a cultural environment that assist in our understanding of humanity, which is ultimately bound by ideological influences (Masolo 2002) and frameworks from the cultures and societies we live in. In turn, these frameworks and ideologies can be liberating and enlightening as well as have the same power to constrain, mystify and confuse us.

Youth violence.

Youth violence is nothing new, since the late 1980s there has been ongoing police and media generated concern about how young people conduct themselves, specifically within inner cities (Gunter 2017). Although there has been no one agreed understanding on what constitutes violence it is generally accepted as a subcategory of aggression (Farrington and Losel 2012). Having said that, this has not stopped the development of dominant discourse and boundaries drawn up by law enforcement agencies that fixate on groups of young people who they label as deviant (Gunter 2017).

Accordingly, the phrase 'youth violence' often conjures up memories of high profile and tragic events, memories of which still sit deep within the unsettled minds of the nation. Jamie Bulger, for example was a two-year-old boy who was abducted, tortured and murdered in 1993 by Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, both of whom were ten years of age. Furthermore, teacher Ann Maguire was stabbed to death in her classroom full of students by pupil Will Cornick aged 15. One of the most remembered acts was the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a racially motivated attack in South East London in 1993, the offenders were trialled as juveniles at the time, but such incidents set in motion a chain of events which reverberate even today: each case presented above generated a trial and there have been changes to the law and intense reflection about British society, youth and more so how 'problematic' and violent young people can be. Such concerns were further amplified in 2011 when riots spread across three cities within the UK each having a strong aspect of youth involvement, leading to headlines stating: *British youth as the most unpleasant and potentially violent young people in the world'* (Mail 2011). This incident prompted public outrage, political debate alongside securitisation and enforcement on crime and violence (Bateman 2014).

Although each of the incidents above were different, they all had one common denominator; a young person and violence. Such incidents may not seem rare, but they are less common than one may realise, and are further magnified by the coverage given to them in the media. Recent years have seen the emergence of multiple analytical frameworks within the field of sociology and criminology, aimed at understanding and classifying young people according to their economic,

social, racial and even political challenges they face when concerning violence. Violence has continuously fluctuated and has gradually become a larger problem up to this present day. It is important to remember that youth violence cannot be viewed in isolation from other problem behaviours. Aspects such as neglect, parental substance misuse and abuse, can have a severe impact on a person, now commonly referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Quigg et al 2018). It is argued that those young people who experience four or more ACEs are up to ten times more likely to be a victim or perpetrator of violence, compared to those who do not experience any of the ACEs (Youth Violence Commission 2018). However, it should be noted that not all young people who experience Aces or similar problems are necessarily violent.

Reports such as 'Ending Youth Violence', the 'Kenny Report' and 'Youth Justice Annual Statistics' underscore the serious socioeconomic and educational gaps that have emerged or continue to become furthered between the varieties of youth within the UK. Nevertheless, while many of these tools highlight the economic indicators and the country's progress towards preventing youth violence and crime; attention to community fragility, and social failures that can drive these problems needs more focus (HM Government 2011). Policies put in place over recent years has demonstrated a growing interest in youth alongside the fear that has been building from publicised incidents.

Thus, exploring violence from varying perspectives including that of young people play an important role in enhancing researchers understanding regarding youth violence. Although violence among young people has received a lot of attention, within the media, politics and academic circles. The definitions of what 'violence' means are as abstract and as varied as the outcome under study. Yet definitions or more importantly, understandings of the term 'violence' are vital as they assist in the specification of the problem needing societal attention.

Official statistics

Therefore, the reasons as to why young people do what they do is intriguing and should be understood from their point of view. Looking at statistics and according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2015), there occurs 200,000 homicides worldwide among young people within the age bracket of 10-29 years of age each year. For each young person that is killed, twenty to forty more sustain injuries requiring hospital treatment. Understandably, youth violence rates vary dramatically between and within countries. However, it has been found that young males constitute the majority of perpetrators and victims (WHO 2015). There has been limited work conducted to explain its current nature, especially within the UK. However, as it is important to consider previous trends and statistics, this section will focus on just that. Previous statistics have shown that proven offences of violence against the person by young people are one of the

Chart 4.1: Proven offences by young people, 2012/13[36]
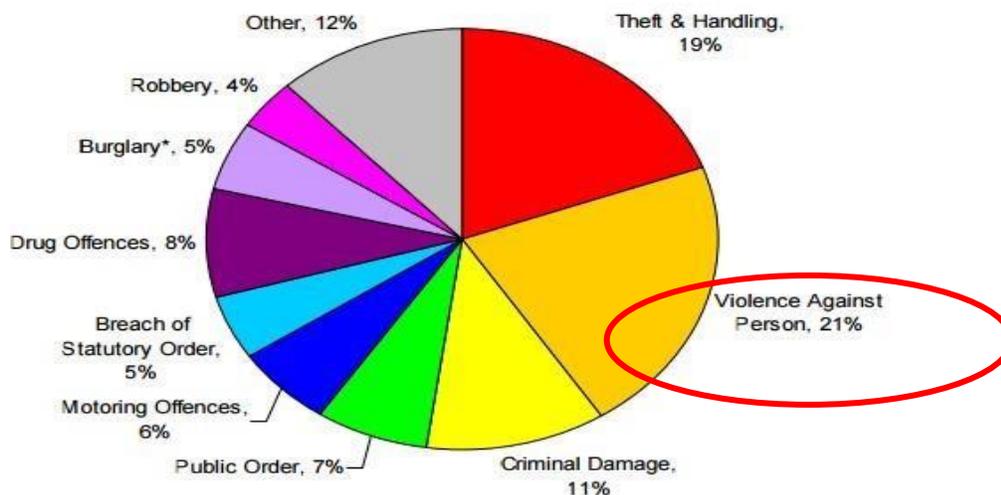
* Burglary includes domestic and non-domestic burglary

larger categories in 2012/13 providing a percentage of 21%.

(MoJ 2013). Figure 1

Although it seems that youth offences have fallen previously throughout 2007 to 2010 violence against a person remains one of the highest recorded offence within the UK (Civitas 2014).

Proven Youth Offences
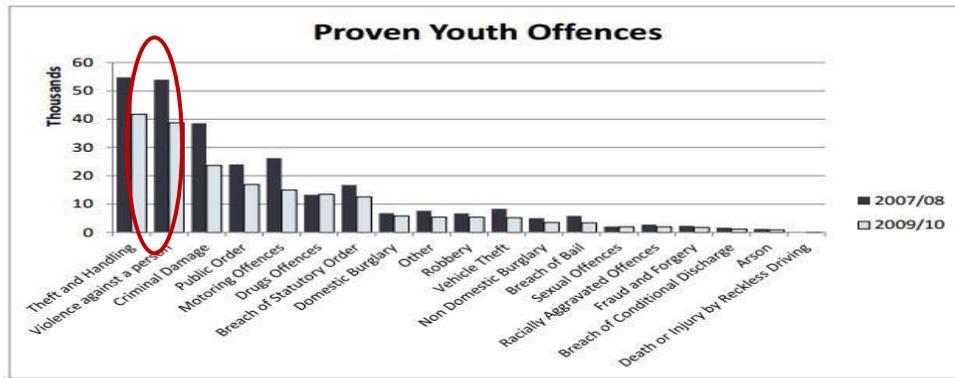
Almost all offence types fell in frequency between 2007 and 2010, with drug offences being the notable exception. The highest-volume categories of offence remain theft and handling, violence against a person and criminal damage.

Figure 2

To enhance the importance of youth violence, recent statistics highlight the trend that crime has fallen amongst most crime types yet remains amongst the top in crime statistics. Accordingly, the largest proportion of proven offences in the year ending 2015 was still violence against the person which has increased since 2010 and now makes up 24% of total offences over this period, (MOJ 2016).

Table 4.1: Proven offences by young people by offence type, year ending March 2015

YJB Offence Type	Number of offences	Share in year ending March 2015	
Violence Against The Person	20,707	24%	
Theft And Handling Stolen Goods	14,781	17%	
Criminal Damage	10,491	12%	
Drugs	7,529	9%	
Motoring Offences	6,070	7%	
Public Order	5,251	6%	
Breach Of Statutory Order	4,053	5%	
Robbery	2,719	3%	
Other	2,695	3%	
Domestic Burglary	2,519	3%	
Vehicle Theft / Unauthorised Taking	2,151	2%	
Sexual Offences	2,000	2%	
Non Domestic Burglary	1,877	2%	
Breach Of Bail	1,531	2%	
Racially Aggravated	909	1%	
Fraud And Forgery	656	1%	
Arson	647	1%	
Breach Of Conditional Discharge	514	1%	
Death Or Injury By Dangerous Driving	60	0%	
Total proven offences	87,160	100%	

(MOJ 2016) Figure 3

Even a brief examination of these statistics, should prove interesting to researchers, particularly as current statistics provided by the Youth Justice Board indicates that most young people within

secure estates who were on remand were there for serious offences. To clarify, 'serious' offence is geared towards the gravity of a crime, this is then understood in terms of the scale of harm and culpability. Such offences tend to be associated with murder, wounding and rape for example (Serious Crime Act 2015).

Furthermore, of the estimated 373,000 violent incidents experienced by young people aged 1015 years, 223,800 (60%) resulted in injury to the young person, (MOJ 2016). To further enrich this point if we consider all the previous years, we can see an eventual and gradual decrease over the ten-year period. However, with this offence, if put in comparison with all other offence types within the table, violence is still one of the highest offence types.   In some cases, it has doubled or trebled over other offence types.   It may be important to keep in mind that these figures do not account for any violent incidents that had not been recorded.

Table 4.2: Proven offences by young people by offence group, years ending March 2005 to March 2015

Number of offences, year ending March	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Offence group											
Theft and handling stolen goods	50,996	55,907	56,603	54,802	49,183	41,702	32,847	26,327	19,166	16,416	14,764
Violence against the person	44,988	54,661	56,226	53,930	47,490	38,744	35,552	28,510	21,231	19,805	20,707
Criminal damage	34,511	39,028	40,944	38,524	32,328	23,611	19,239	14,320	11,277	10,360	10,491
Public order	21,850	22,496	24,046	24,045	20,965	16,886	15,188	11,254	7,081	6,193	5,251
Motoring offences	55,296	47,047	36,567	26,225	20,515	14,992	11,374	8,930	6,071	5,258	6,070
Breach of statutory order	13,378	15,484	15,910	16,751	15,877	12,544	10,197	6,947	4,942	4,583	4,053
Drugs	11,879	12,794	11,220	13,268	14,435	13,461	12,262	10,481	8,264	8,218	7,529
Burglary*	12,357	13,309	13,241	11,800	10,401	9,328	9,078	8,273	5,223	5,072	4,396
Robbery	5,185	5,607	6,855	6,699	6,079	5,384	5,825	5,998	3,658	3,750	2,719
Sexual offences	1,827	1,988	1,830	2,088	1,907	1,952	1,995	1,888	1,384	1,653	2,000
Other	36,573	35,527	33,517	31,942	27,310	21,797	20,188	16,295	11,924	11,114	11,163
Total proven offences	287,013	301,860	295,129	277,986	244,583	198,449	171,750	137,335	98,837	90,769	87,160

(MOJ, 2016) Figure 4.

The few statistics shown here, although interesting may be shocking as the figures portray high numbers of violence among youth in the UK. However, it is important to consider these statistics against the populations as a whole, and more recent statistics suggest that in 2018 there were approximately 73,000 proven offences by young people, (YJB 2018) 21,170 (29%) of which were

violence against the person. In the UK around the same time there was a total of 7.4 million young people (Statista 2019) making the overall percentage of 0.29%, very small in comparison to what is being portrayed. Furthermore, although the statistics do not break down what 'violence against the person' is, this thesis will aim to unpick how this concept of 'violence' is understood amongst young people. While this is a qualitative piece of research statistics show how extensive the issue has been and currently is among young people, displaying that it is still a topic which needs greater understanding, in order to tackle it effectively.

Gaps in understanding

To gain this deeper understanding, it is important to acknowledge young people to explore how they unpick and understand the term, and therefore this study aims to highlight youth voice. It is important to understand 'youth violence' from the voices of young people, because how we (as adults) understand what violence is, may be different to that of young people particularly if the locations where these young people reside have an impact upon their understanding.

Criminological and popular discourse around youth violence has the tendency to focus on inner city youth and more so the male perspective, such experiences and perspectives have been generalisable to all young people (Magnus and Scott 2020; White 2013). Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2013:1) argue that for much of academic history, under-represented groups have not had their voices or experiences heard, including that of females. Suggesting that they are *'overlooked, ignored, trivialised and marginalised'.* Resultantly, it can be also be argued that young people outside of the city are somewhat excluded from research that looks at youth and violence. Unsurprisingly, as a result dominant law and order perspectives have been informed by inner city research (White 2013). Thus, resulting in youth crime and violence being synonymous with the working classes, ethnic minorities and those at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum where research suggests that violence remains generally in the most deprived areas of the country (Golding et al. 2008; Brennan, Shepherd and Moore 2010; House of Commons 2009). Here we can question whether findings discovered within existing research may well be a result of definitional and research boundaries rather than a true measure of the phenomenon (Gunter, 2017). For much of the 1990s and 2000s incidents of violence perpetrated by young people rose, according to most indicators. Yet, the evidence suggests that this trend has recently started to

reverse (Ministry of Justice, 2014). Ray (2011) proposes that this is in line with declines such as interpersonal violence throughout the western world.

Furthermore, responses to the problem have leaned towards focusing on aspects which lead to the problem, whilst ignoring other aspects, especially legitimate understandings of how young people characterise and understand violence. Presently, there is a focus on risk, and this contributes to the punitive and retributive atmosphere and policies that can undermine counter currents of restorative justice and rehabilitation (Beck 1992; Eades et al 2007). Popular cases (as previously mentioned) and the media attention over the last twenty years has raised awareness that young people can be violent but has done little in understanding this from their own point of view, as Franklin (1995:2) notes:

> '*Twenty years ago, instead of policies to protect children in the community, the government and the media have preferred to promote policies to protect the community from children*'.

Whilst this is a qualitative piece of research, the statistics have showcased and highlighted how extensive the issue of 'violence' is among young people, exhibiting that it is still a topic which needs greater understanding in order to tackle it effectively.

Research aims and objectives

Taking on board the above arguments and debates the central aim of this thesis is to explore how young people understand, interpret and utilise narrative about violence within their own cultural surroundings. This research was located within two locations of the UK; one being an urban city area, and the other, a rural township. With the considerations outlined in the previous sections, three primary objectives are the focus of this study.

- Firstly, to engage young people to explore their understanding and proclivities of the term violence.
- Second, to consider what stimuli compel them to justify or accept violence.

- Third, to explore wider attitudes in relation to how they understand violence, and how this may, or may not have a bearing on how a young person understands or perceives violence.

Therefore, by applying a qualitative approach the researcher will endeavour to gain a deeper and nuanced understanding from the voices of young people. The way in which this study was conducted set prominence on the voices of young people from both locations. Yet, important to note, is that this study is in no way a comparative approach between the two locations. Place emerged as a significant theme of the study for two reasons. The sampling strategy (see page 78-79) which led to two distinctive geographical locations, and within these, young people themselves began to explore the importance of their own experiences *within* place. Consequently, the study changed and developed as a result of the conversations, perspectives and opinions that have been put forward by the participants across both locations in this study. This is an area that is highlighted within the methodology chapter (between what was asked at the outset versus what emerged through the study's development) and emerges strongly within the finding's chapters of this thesis.

Why young people's voices?

It is therefore the purpose of this thesis to study how young people understand the term 'violence' and two main research questions were formulated to achieve this end:

1) To understand how young people, view and interpret violence; and

2) To explore if violence and the associated understandings differ within geographical contexts.

As the concept of violence and young people's voices is central to this thesis, the qualitative approach provided a framework where violence understandings by various young people can be explored; including any facets of violence they feel aids their understanding of such behaviour. Bottrell et al (2010: 59) argues that although criminological enterprise is concerned with the activities of the young, little attention is paid to their perspectives, and as a result, there remains

a pressing need to 'embed' narratives into those theories of offending. Furthermore, by doing so, this can provide important feedback for government and supplement explanations of crime (Squires 2009; Bottrell et al 2010).

The second reason for choosing a qualitative methodology is that it has the ability to be sympathetic and sensitive to the nature of the topic being explored, and willing participants whom are part of the process. By utilising qualitative methods, such as mind maps, focus groups and interviews, it can provide deeper exploration of a phenomenon's meaning and associated behaviours. Furthermore, the strength of using this methodology has the added ability to interpret perceptions and experiences, and by contrast to quantitative methods, engage with the intended research sample, (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Miles and Huberman 1994). Bearing in mind the topic of study and its somewhat sensitive nature the research methods alongside the use of young people as participants in the study were carefully considered.

So why pay attention to the rural?

This thesis has developed a focus on rural youth and their voices, which has resulted in violence being explored within subjective spatial and social constructions of the two research locations. As previously mentioned, such spatial variances also provided the research with differences in diversity, neighbourhoods and understandings of violence. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity to engage with young people who may not be considered the 'usual' group of young people who become involved with such research, unlike those who inhabit the inner-city urban streets. Furthermore, it prompts thought around those youth who are 'criminologically and rurally ignored' whilst thinking more broadly about who shares 'the streets'.

Brief overview of the design

The design of the study and the sampling process will be discussed in much more depth in the methodology chapter (Chapter four) but to provide an insight, a brief overview is provided here. Three principal methods were employed for empirical research, mind maps, focus groups and semi structured interviews. These methods were carried out between April 2015 and July 2016. The sampling strategy and breakdown of how the participants took part in the study are elaborated on within page 102 of this thesis.

- There were 32 participants in total

- 21 were individually interviewed

- There were 5 focus groups across the two locations.

- The first location was a secondary school on the East Midlands, and the second location was a youth club in the Northwest.

This research utilised various methods and a three-stage approach to engage young people and get the participants thinking about the topic of exploration from a less daunting viewpoint. By doing so, this research can add to the methodological literature on working with young people within research in addition to its empirical and conceptual contributions.

Structure of the thesis- Chapter by chapter summary.

This thesis has been structured into three parts each having their own set of chapters within them with a specific focus. Each part has been further broken down below:

Part one: This incorporates the introductory chapter which has provided the context of the research. Part one is then further broken down into two further chapters that provide a deeper contextual and theoretical context for the study.

Chapter two delineates the focus of the present study, it will aim to highlight some of the main trends and elaborate on areas discussed within chapter one. This chapter will also explore the intricacies and ambiguities surrounding the definitions of violence. This chapter further considers the definitional uncertainty of violence which arguably requires clarification. It explores how youth are constructed and their ongoing (mis)behaviours are perceived. Furthermore, it considers some contemporary debates around influences of violence such as the media.

Chapter three develops on this further and explores geography within discussions of youth violence and how urban and rural youth differ and what bearing this has on the research. Traditional theory considering opportunity alongside more contemporary understandings that explore space and place, and how young people navigate such spaces are discussed. This

chapter not only highlights the uses of traditional theory in contemporary society, but also aims to push the perspectives of traditional criminology beyond its traditional horizons (Presdee 2000) providing the thesis with a theoretical framework.

Part two of the thesis is separated into three chapters starting off with chapter four that considers the methodology of the research, alongside the epistemological and ontological underpinnings. It provides an in-depth overview of the design, sample, access and locations of the study.

Chapter five, explores how young people understand violence, and what factors aid their understanding, this chapter will present findings from the participants alongside referring back to some of the initial discussions explored within the literature review. This draws on some of themes which were found during analysis, such as race, gender, the media and respect.

Chapter six is the second instalment of findings and further examines participant perspectives but has a strong focus on the rural and locations of study. This chapter highlights some of the similarities and differences between the urban cohort, whilst exploring space and justifications of violence. This chapter critically analyses the rural and unpicks what the 'rural idyll' is and for whom.

Part three provides the final two chapters of the thesis. Firstly, beginning with chapter seven which draws together the findings and further explores the main concepts to emerge from the data, with reference to the theoretical framework, and introduces the researchers own extension and combination of theory called Prospects of Opportunity Theory (POT).

Chapter eight reflects on the thesis and highlights the novel empirical and theoretical contributions of the research. This chapter essentially concludes the research and final words are provided from the researcher with regards to reflections on the research process and next steps.

This thesis will debate varying areas of violence as discussed by the participants, the young people. This thesis will analyse traditional debates and discuss whether this still has emphasis within contemporary society, and overall aims to illustrate that the picture surrounding youth violence is far more complex than media, tabloids or Hollywood, would have us believe.

This is presented below in a flow diagram.

Chapter 2:

A Literature review of Youth and violence

Chapter 3: Concepts and Theoretical debates.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Chapter 7: Discussion and Contributions to Knowledge.

Chapter 6: findings 2: The geographical nature of Violence.

Chapter 5: Findings 1: Positioning young people in the debate of violence.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and next steps.
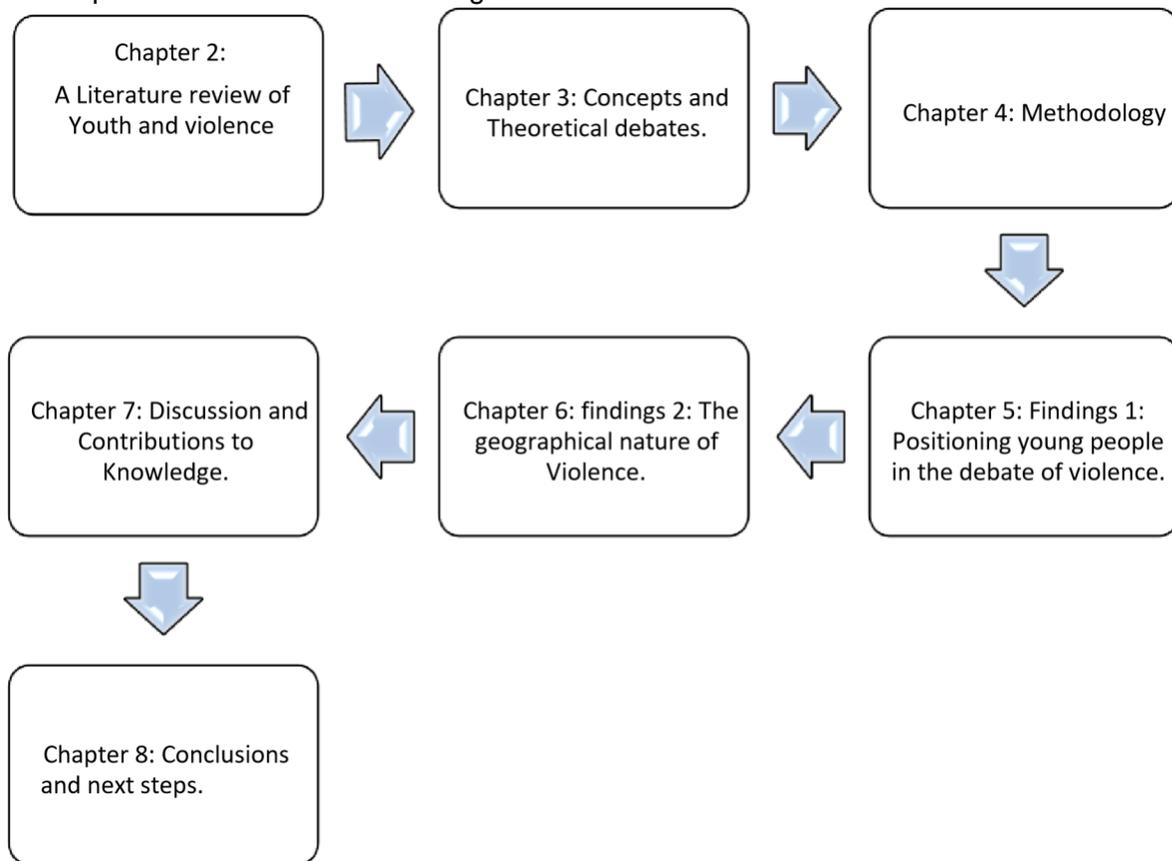
Figure 5

Chapter 2: Constructions of youth and violence.

Introduction

Chapter one set out the introduction of thesis by stating the importance of the research providing a brief overview of the research design alongside presenting some past trends and cases that highlight constructions of misbehaviour, delinquency and violence amongst young people. This chapter continues to provide the overall study with context yet delves into the wider literature on the topic and begins by delineating the focus of the present study, providing a critique on the constructions of misbehaviour and delinquency whilst further highlighting some of the past key trends in youth violence in England and Wales. This will then move towards exploring the definition of violence and considers how we currently understand this term and critically explores the contentious nature of violence. This chapter will also explore debates around young people, including culture and commodification. Finally, a conclusion draws these strands together and sets the context for the chapter to follow.

Constructions of youth 'misbehaviour'

Youth and their behaviour have long been a topic of fascination, whereby dominant and contemporary debates on youth have been linked with crime and violence and have become conflated. This has consequently caused perceptions of young people to become identified as the cause of a growing social problem (Bateman 2013). Hate, fear and newness, have often been supported by scandalous and debatably essentialist images of delinquent youth often portrayed within newspapers and on our television screens but also within academic literature, some of which was discussed within chapter one. Yet, how can we as academics, policy makers or the wider general public understand violence and youthful misbehaviour if we are not to ask the young people themselves how they perceive and understand it? There is power within research that takes on the views of children and young people, as it has the potential to promote a child-centred understanding of their experiences. This then further has the potential to better meet their needs by professionals (Arani et al 2019). Importantly however, as Downing, Stepney and Jorden

(2000:71) rightly suggest there is this *"inexhaustible capacity for strong moral condemnation combined with historical forgetfulness"* particularly with constructions and explanations of youthful and sometimes transgressive behaviour. Furthermore, as Emler and Reicher (1995:1) state *"youth presents both a promise and a threat."* What is meant by this is that young people have the responsibility to maintain the society of which they are part, this is to say, maintain it to the way in which they have been accustomed yet, also have the power to change it. This 'threat' can be worrying to some (adults) and therefore there becomes this greater need to control and discipline youth, an area of concern that has aimed to tutor and control young people since the early ninetieth century (Hopkins-Burke 2015). What progresses from what could be described as inter-generational fear (Waiton 2001) is youthful misbehaviour which was once considered a usual part of growing up has been increasingly defined as criminal. What follows is the sensationalist news reports and headlines about youth crime and violence and young people being out of control, cases such as the riots that were discussed in chapter one being a prime example. Hence, young people have long been positioned as 'folk devils' and have been fed into the centre of numerous 'moral panics' (Cohen 1972; Chomsky 1995), youth and their transgressions are amongst the very few topics that are effective at challenging, scaring and instantly changing public opinion.

What is known about youth violence?

As momentum on youth behaviour and transgressions has gradually built since the late 18_{th} century, and with mass imprisonment unable to curb the problem, there has been ongoing police and media generated concern about violence and young people. Accordingly, this has resulted in continued development of dominant discourse and boundaries that have been drawn up by law, including enforcement and interventions which tend to fixate on groups of young people whom are labelled or perceived to be deviant (Gunter 2017). Particularly around certain ages where research has found that delinquency increases sharply around the age of 11-12 and peak toward the age of 15-16 (Downing et al 2000), such peaks have been linked to issues around impulsivity and risk taking, alongside identity formation or peer influences (Ray 2011; Tiffin and Nadikami 2010).

The furore around youth violence has usually been of specific interest in city areas and many rural areas have had limited research conducted (Gunter 2017). As research has been more prominent

in inner cities, displaying poverty and high deprivation, such landscapes are arguably seen to be more 'problematic' and 'dangerous' for young people to grow up in or be part of (Golding et al 2008; Brennan et al 2020; House of Commons 2009). However, it should also be acknowledged that some rural towns are also highly deprived where youth crime and violence can and does happen, which debatably goes against the rural idyll that is usually presented (White 2013). Accordingly, this thesis aims to highlight what young people in rural areas think about violence, as having more focus on an arguably 'ignored' locality would not only increase understanding but highlight any similarities and differences among their urban counterparts. By exploring both localities and the participants perspectives on the topic of violence, the study can question whether previous research findings from the inner city are transferable to rural areas, or whether it is the case that definitional and research boundaries are a true reflection of the phenomenon.

For much of the 1990s and 2000s incidents of violence perpetrated by young people increased, however the evidence suggests that this trend has recently started to reverse (Case 2018). Yet, despite the apparent drop-in crime over the previous two decades (Hopkins-Burke 2016) and despite much imaginative scholarship, a definitive explanation for violence still eludes criminologists. As identified in the introductory chapter, there are varying traditions and disciplines that have explored youth and violence. Furthermore, there has historically been a dearth of good quality research on violence and crime on young people and this was one of the inspirations for conducting this thesis. Yet, responses to the problem of youth violence have leaned towards focusing on aspects which lead to the problem, whilst ignoring other aspects, especially legitimate understandings of how young people characterise and understand violence. The continued focus on risk contributes to the punitive and retributive atmosphere and policies that can undermine counter currents of restorative justice and rehabilitation (Beck 1992; Eades et al 2007; Arani et al 2019; Magnus and Scott 2020).

This study does recognise that violence can affect young people from all communities and in all corners of the country. News and various media outlets report daily the lives lost and the significant negative impacts violence can have on young people. Yet, whilst much has been written *on* youth violence, there is still scope to research violence critically from the perspectives of youth (for exceptions see Pittman 2002; Phillips 2000; McIntyre 2000). Research that has a focus on youth violence often explains it from a deviancy perspective, arguably, this could be the case where adults project onto youth their growing concerns about violence, and this has resulted

in youth becoming the site of adult 'moral panics' (Fine and Harris 2002). In some aspects violence has seen to be an induvial or medical issue whereby violence is examined from a trait or disorder perspective (Loeber 1982), yet what needs to be considered also are ongoing histories, social relations and structural issues that impede on the mobility, freedom and movement alongside young people's understanding of society and violence. Therefore, the importance that is highlighted in this study around youth voice, is because they have the ability and opportunity to challenge normative prepositives on social issues such as violence. Young people in various instances can critique institutions, practices or behaviours that can be viewed differently within adult eyes such as truanting or fighting that can be reconceptualised by young people as understandable (Daiute and Fine 2003).

Although recent statistics suggest that crime has fallen over the past two decades, the extent of youth violence is difficult to evaluate as official statistics can under-estimate the problem. Indeed, violent crime has seen very substantial reductions since its peak in the mid-1990s as recorded by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW cited in Home Office 2018), regarded as the most reliable independent survey of crime. Violence with injury in the year ending September 2017 was 40% lower than in the year ending June 2010 and 76% lower than at its peak in 1995. However, some types of violent crime recorded by the police have shown increases since late 2014. Some of this increase can be attributed to improvements in how police forces record crime, but some are thought to be genuine, including a rise in offences involving knives and firearms (Home Office 2018:11). This following section will further analyse some of the key trends in violence amongst young people in England Wales over the last decade or so.

Whilst we can argue that the number of offences committed by children and young people has fallen over the last ten years, violence against the person has gradually increased from 19% in the year ending March 2007 to 28% in the year ending March 2017 (ONS 2018). By exploring some of these statistics in a contextual manner we can better understand the issue being discussed.

Figure 4.2: Percentage point change in the proportion of proven offences by children and young people, England and Wales, between the year ending March 2007 and March 2017[27]
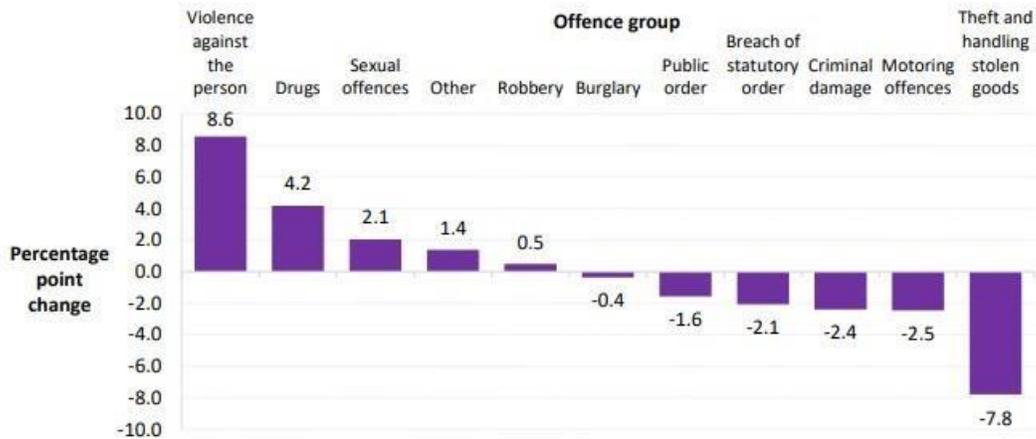
Supplementary Tables: Chapter 4, Table 4.1

(Youth Justice Board Statistics 2018). Figure 6

The trend shown in the above chart is important, because not only does it highlight the importance and need for further research into young people and violence but also depicts the category of 'violence against a person' amongst other offences as one of the highest. Important to recognise here is that the category of 'violent crime' more broadly used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2018) covers a wide range of subcategories ranging from minor assaults (such as pushing and shoving), harassment and abuse (that result in no physical harm), through to wounding and homicide. Furthermore, recent statistics (in the below graph) highlight the trend that crime has fallen amongst many offence types, yet, 'violence against the person' (as above) remains amongst the top categories in the crime statistics. In 2010 this crime type made up 24% (YJB 2016) of total offences, and in 2017 it made up 28% of total offences (YJB 2018).

Figure 4.3: Proven offences by children and young people, England and Wales, year ending March 2017
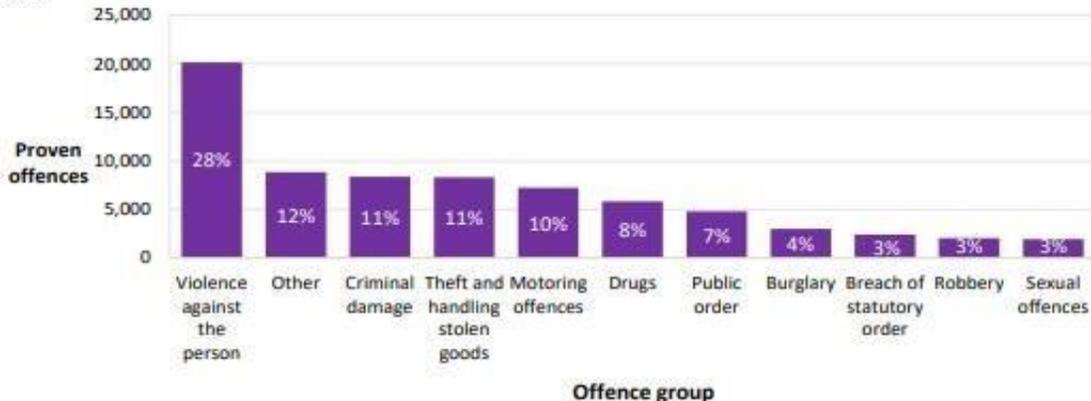
(Youth Justice Board Statistics 2018). Figure 7

Although it can be seen that crime is decreasing in all areas of youth offending and may only account for smaller percentage of crime overall in England and Wales it is still concerning to see that above everything, violence against the person still remains as the highest, regardless of crime drops over the past several years. This sub-section has further built on trends and debates provided in chapter one, but also provides the reader with a brief yet sharp focus on the problem and showcases the importance of further research in the area, particularly with regards to better understanding the issue as it seems to remain the highest category amongst all other offence types. In order to contextualise these trends, the next three sections will consider definitional issues alongside the concept of youth in exploring violence.

The definition of violence: How is it understood?

"He who considers things in their first growth and origin…will obtain the clearest view of them"   (Aristotle 1905:26)

Although the above quote may seem an odd choice , it does represent the overall though process of this thesis, whereby, in order to further understand what we know about youth violence we must understand it from the voices of *youth,* 'the origin' in some respects. Violence is multifaceted, socially constructed and a highly ambivalent phenomenon. It is multifaceted because there are many forms of violence; it is socially constructed because who and what is considered violent

varies according to time, place and culture; it is ambivalent because of the ways it is socially sanctioned, legitimised and institutionalised, as well as culturally transmitted and experienced, and therefore can be different for each person (Speirenburg 2008). As such, violence is only condemned because we, as social actors, have adhered to the rules set by government and ruling classes to make it the norm (Hopkins-Burke 2016) and have thus come to understand such behaviour to be immoral, illegal and disruptive. This results in controversies surrounding the substance and scope of the definition of violence (Spirenburg 2008).

Violence as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2015) states that it entails; *'intending to hurt, damage or kill something.'* This definition connotes representations of physical attack; whereas, it could be argued that violence or rather the notion of it, is a large spectrum of incidents that should be considered on a continuum. However, this definition is simple and easy to comprehend as we are used (or conditioned) to hearing or reading about violent 'physical acts' in the media and general conversation. However, what is missing from the above definition is the centrality of power in understanding violence. Although this study has not set out to define violence amongst young people it is important to consider, because how can one accurately understand something with no exclusive or universal definition. Arendt (1970:34) suggests that '*violence appears where power is in jeopardy',* it can be suggested that this understanding of violence mirrors what Weber (1922) discusses within his discourse of power and specifically makes a link to violence. He suggests that the relationship of the state with violence lies with the administrative staff who successfully maintain a monopoly on power by use of physical force through imposing systems of governance on the masses. The discussion of power here plays an important role in this thesis, by providing young people with the autonomy and thus power to discuss and interpret violence without any adult perspectives or predefined definitions imposed upon them. Inevitably what this thesis aims to do is not only understand violence through the eyes of young people but to, highlight how power intersects and emerges through positions of age, class, race and gender (Hadfield and Haw 2001).

In exploring various meanings of violence, Reidel and Welsh (2002) argue that one of the most common ways of defining violence is using what is contained in the legislation. Thus, in the UK section 2 of the Public Order Act 1986 offers:

> *"Used or threatened; unlawful violence; so that the conduct of them (taken together) would cause; a person of reasonable firmness; present at the scene; to fear his or her personal safety."*

The above technical definition has, the intention of comprehensively covering all aspects and possibilities of violence and therefore enables us to identify what it is. However, it does not seem to take account of individual autonomy and cultural explanation of such behaviour which can render violence as difficult to understand. As known within literature and common understanding, violence is a phenomenon much like youth which occurs within all cultures across the globe in varying forms. Research that has considered young people's perspectives has primarily focused on young people's responses to existing definitions of violence.   However, until recently (Sundaram, 2013; 2014; 2016; Magnus and Scott 2020; Arani et al 2019) little work has explored how young people themselves interpret violence and the factors which influence their acceptance, understanding or justification of violent behaviour. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that 'violence' as a term has been produced and re-produced and can change across time, and within space and cultures.

In discussing the reproduction and assimilation of violence the term itself has been linked with and used in addressing other areas of criminality. Pinkney (2018) thus suggests that the notion of youth violence is often used interchangeably with gang violence. Although this may be a subelement and connected in some ways to youth violence it is important to recognise that such symptoms have emerged as a result of structural issues within societies.   Thus, violence, perpetrated by young people can be argued to be a reaction to such structural issues. Bauman (1995) explores the role of the state in violence and argues that violence is a feature of inequality, thus, keeping a critical eye on the state and how young people operate and navigate their spaces is crucial in furthering our understanding. In keeping with this debate about how violence should be viewed. Mary Jackman (2002) argues that we must analyse the ideology of violence in order to assess how and why various acts of violence are repudiated, ignored, denied, praised or glorified (Jackman 2002:408).   This thesis has adopted this approach and considered the perspectives and understandings that young people may attribute to violence in order to explore what they think and understand more broadly and to explore if this has similarities with legal or literature definitions. This study does not intend to provide a definition of violence although it can be argued that definitions can play a part in the misunderstanding of what violence is or perceived to be. Stanko argues that for scholars there is no clear starting point as to what determines

violence or what 'violence' is (Stanko 2003). It can be suggested however, that in reality: *'Violence is a slippery term which covers a huge and frequently changing range of heterogenous physical and emotional behaviours, situations and victimoffender relationships'* (Levi and Maguire 2002:796).

I am raising the issues with the above definitions not because I have conceived the perfect definition or because it surpasses these previous attempts, but because it highlights the problems entailed in specifying violence unambiguously. Thus, Ray (2018: 8) suggests that *'we need to unpick these general claims and examine detailed dynamics of violence and aggression.'* Thus, to understand the dynamics of violence we must consider the social and cultural process through which these young people navigate (Levi and Maguire 2002). In considering Bauman's earlier discussion, violence can reflect the material realities of young people embroiled within it. Their context, social and cultural processes all provide emphasis to the milieu of violence (White 2013) yet can only be told by young people themselves as the focus of the study, by being involved in research as the participants.

Buffacchi (2005) points out that there are two ways of thinking about violence- on the on hand there is the narrow 'minimalist conception' and on the other the broader 'comprehensive conception.' The minimalist version of violence is similar to the discussion above regarding the physical force and bodily response to harm (Ray 2018: 8). Such definitions are considered here to be limited as they take no account of the wider contexts in which violence may occur. Thus, definitions of violence are subject to the social and political contexts and these can be subject to change. For instance, if we use the sport of boxing in the UK as an example the British Medical Association (BMA) has for many years campaigned to ban it considering it to be unacceptably violent, regardless of consensual participation (Brayne et al 1998). Although no court has decided on the legality of injury sustained in licensed boxing there have been judgement on the unlawful nature of 'street fighting' but not in a ring. The ring is covered by strict rules, safeguards and medical personnel is available- due to the sport's violent nature. In contrast, proponents of the 'comprehensive conception' of violence argue that we can avoid some of these difficulties by broadening the definition to include anything avoidable that may impede human realisation and focuses on outcomes rather than intention.

It is important to remember that violence although predominantly focused on physical tangibility, can also be viewed as harms which are social and derivational. Galtung's (1969) concept of 'structural violence' describes the physical and psychological harm that results from the unjust political, social and economic systems. It can be argued that this may not be carried out by individuals but is hidden to greater extent within structures that may prevent people from realising their potential. Echoing this, Pitts (2012) draws on the breakdown of families, that when combined with poverty is just a by-product of an:

> '*overweening welfare state that rewards fecklessness, undermines individual responsibility and discourages parental propriety, producing a culture of dependency and entitlement, wherein…criminality becomes the norm'*
>
> (Pitts 2012:29).

The context of where violence takes place and the reasons why provides insight and contextual depth to address the vague statistics which we rely on so much. The context of where this study took place has highlighted some of the issues which have been discussed. Žižek (2008) therefore claims that when individual threshold of sensibility to violence increases, objective violence in the form of dispossession and poverty also grows. Therefore, from this perspective, it can be argued that violence will appear within any context where an individual feels they are denied access to resources. Žižek (2008) suggests that within such contexts this is where physical and psychological violence exists (Ray 2018). Some of this 'violence' could arguably be in the way society portrays youth and the phenomenon of violence they attribute to them, and this could be in part, due to the lack of power that most young people experience.

Violence: A youth problem?

In considering the denial of resources and lack of access to power we turn our attention to the situation of children and young people. It has often been argued that crime and anti-social behaviour has its antecedents in childhood (Rutter et al 1998). The phrase children and young people connotes negative imagery in the minds of the public and is thus synonymous with trouble. Children in many parts of Britain are at a distinct disadvantage due to their lack of power within

the social, economic, legal and sometimes physical arenas. As a result, they can often be denied access to opportunities which are usually afforded to adults in mainstream society.

Thus, 'youth' is an invariably unstable period in the life-course of the individual with, various psychological, physiological, cultural and structural elements that can have a profound impact during this crucial phase between childhood and adulthood (Spence 2005). Such experiences of all these life changes can have an effect on the behaviour of the individual and have a major impact on their self-identity (YJB 2004). In characterising youth this way, we begin to consider the individuality of young people. Yet, Stanley Hall (1904) an influential figure in charting or debatably inventing the social constructed concept of 'adolescence', describes the experiences of all in the same way with no regard of time and space. This narrow and tunnel vision view of youth contradicts how this thesis is conceptualised and coming from the point of view of social constructionists, the emphasis is placed on the socio-cultural context and its importance. Yet, Hall describes this time as a period of storm and stress:

> *"It is the age of natural inebriation without the need of intoxicants, which made Plato define youth as spiritual drunkenness. It is a natural impulse to experience hot and perfervid psychic states, and it is characterised by emotionalism. We see here the instability and fluctuations now so characteristic."*

> (Hall 1904:74-5).

Thus, as time and research has moved on, we now understand 'youth' not only as being influenced by biology, but also see the teenager as a cultural phenomenon. We understand that youth itself is a social construction, identified in history where young people began to become cherished by their families rather than be viewed as a burden (Hopkins Burke 2015). Arguably, from a cultural perspective, young people as a special category are regarded as product of the way society is organised. The social construction of youth is epitomised by the birth of the 'teenager'- a post Second World War phenomenon in which relative affluence and optimism provided the space for increased financial independence and the pursuit of 'cultural play'. With this pursuit gaining prominence, the research surrounding these cultures became more entrenched within criminological and sociological disciplines (Franklin 2002). Resultingly, the focus on young people took a political emphasis, particularly on youth crime and its associated problems. This has been exacerbated by the media which highlights the apparently spiralling problem of children and young people. Over the last two decades the legal and media status of children and young people has

changed, with common rhetoric epitomised by two contrasting debates. First, children and young people being increasingly identified as victims of cruelty and in need of help and protection in the early 1990s, by the fast-expanding child protection professionals; to second, being seen as unruly from whom the public need protecting from in the late 90s and again in the mid 2000s (Franklin 2002).

These turbulent conceptions of childhood and youth have been aggravated further by high profile cases of young people being perpetrators in crime. Such shifts have been prompted by those cases like the Bulger case and the riots as discussed in chapter one. Although, there have been many other cases where young people have been both victim and perpetrators of violence it contravenes the social expectations that whilst young people may offend, they should not. As Brown (1998:2) argues in relation to the murder of James Bulger: *"The real violence of the Bulger case is arguably the violence it did to adult notions of childhood."* Important to remember here, that these opposing notions of childhood have appeared in literature time and again since the period of Enlightenment (Hopkins Burke 2016; Franklin 2002). The picture we begin to see emerge here suggests that children and young people along with their associated behaviours are continually the subject of analysis by others. As Cohen and Ainley (2000:89) state:

> *'Young people have had to carry a peculiar burden of representation; everything they do, say, think or feel is scrutinised by an army of professional commentators for signs of the times.'*

Thus, children and young people have been socially controlled since the mid nineteenth century, but what has changed is the anticipation of criminal behaviour from children and young people rather than the reaction to it. By doing so, this not only broadened the definition of crime to include the potential of crime but widened the net for various young people to become trapped within it. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 included civil injunctions such as ASBO's (anti-social behaviour orders) parenting orders and child curfews, and most importantly, the abolition of *doli incapax* for children aged 10-14 years (Scraton 2002; Hopkins Burke 2015). This Act has arguably undermined family control, and the right of children and young people to freedom and expression (Brown 1998). This combined with the overarching effects of media representation of young people as bad, has masked the structural issues many young people face such as that of poverty, deprivation and class polarisation. Factors within society that can pose risk, not least for young people who are making the transition to adulthood.

Although these changes and culminating effects have taken place over the last two decades, further political and societal changes are very likely to occur in the near and distant future with further impact on the young people in this study and many others. They are the ones amongst all the other young people in the UK who will continue to grow and transition to adulthood throughout the various political and economic changes that are precarious to say the least. The thirty-two participants (although this was not an official prerequisite of the study) may have come from backgrounds that are likely to impact adversely on future opportunities. They were willing to take part because they all wanted to voice their perspectives in this topic of violence within an undefined and broad sense. This research offers a group of young people an opportunity to describe, unpick and explore what they understand violence to be, how they interpret this term, what impetuses are most important in becoming involved in or staying away from violence and how they agree or disagree with the use of it. By considering their context, their cultural understandings and the common themes apparent in the findings, this will go some way towards developing a greater understanding of young people perceptions of violence.

Crime, violence and culture: Violence and the visual.

Working towards understanding violence and how young people comprehend this in more depth, it is important to consider a contemporary and common area in the lives of young people, the media. Larry Ray (2018) suggests that visual representation of violence have complex relationships with violent acts and the way we respond to them. The multiple forms of broadcasting available now means that media is one of the most dominant forms of communication and facilitates our relationships with one another and world affairs. The history of 'violent media' has been around since 200BCE, with one of the earliest texts following the legend of Sumerian king Gilgamesh. A story that is rife with unapologetic violence and sexual themes (Hallo and Sampson 1971), and although not much is known about what the Sumerian people thought of this story its popularity and survival is a testament to its approval.

Some of the first negative commentaries on violence in the media were argued by the Greek philosopher Plato, having suggested that there should be a ban on plays and poetry with a concern for the corruption of the young mind (Griswold 2004). Plato seemed to be one of the first

to put in writing the often-repeated conclusion nowadays that children and young people in particular are unable to distinguish reality from fiction, that it therefore is harmful to them and could indeed make them violent just as video games are an argument for mass shootings in America. In contrast, Aristotle argued that music, poetry, plays and art could in fact have a liberating effect on the viewer which could cause them to be less aggressive (Aristotle 2004; 350BC). Just by briefly considering the history of violence (however one interprets that term) within the media we can begin to outline the two debates present within modern day discourse. One argues that it can have a harmful effect and promote aggression whilst the other suggests it can be therapeutic and a venting of aggression. We begin to see here the cyclical nature of the debates surrounding young people and violence. In fact, although these debates have gained significant momentum over the last ten years, they are nevertheless nothing new and it is important to draw on traditional discourse as a way of understanding the here and now.

The late nineteenth century, however, saw film and media now making visual depictions of violence that was available to the masses. It was not so much the content of the media which had changed but the way in which technology has advanced, bringing with it increased visual and special effects for viewing pleasure, forever changing the way we now view film and television. As a result, it was the very impact of these visuals that raised concerns and the National Board of Review (NBR) was a governmental effort to censure film media. The early regulatory effort took place during a general period of moral panic over the effects of media, alcohol, immigrants and other perceived assaults to the morality of society (Trend 2007). Ferguson (2013) argues that such concerns around media violence, drugs or alcohol, the immigration scares, or other "moral issues" (or in some cases moral panics) seem to occur together in consistent patterns throughout history. For example, the 'flapper movement' during the 1920s, where young people appeared to be particularly rebellious and uncontrollable to their elders. Subsequently, concerns around television in the 1980s coincided with anti-immigration movements or the war on drugs. It appears that these moral crusades appear to be rooted in what Sherkat and Ellison (1997) suggest being a sense of 'inerrancy' where the view of some powerful groups in society feel their moral beliefs are correct, and those of the other, usually powerless groups are wrong.

Within all these somewhat negative debates, violence within the media can conversely be treated as a celebration or an act of collective enjoyment which unconsciously legitimates the act itself.

There is a vast majority of violence ready to acquire at one's own rate, such a boxing matches or reality talk shows such as Jeremy Kyle where huge bodyguards stand in the wings eagerly waiting to break up potential fisticuffs. This debate has come up time and again as varying forms of media have become popular and interjected into society, we saw it with video games, the rise of social media and varying genres of music.

Yet violence in the media has been a perennial facet since the beginning of human history (Ferguson 2013: 28). We as the public seem to have an interest in violent entertainment, the debates about harmfulness and control of media and violence can sometimes be argued to be part of a larger social agenda. Providing this brief history provides the introduction to a consideration of the seductions of crime and violence and how these can be located within a broader social context and the market of contemporary culture and violence which makes it so enticing.

Seductions of crime and violence

In considering the acceptance of violence within media it is interesting to understand the attraction behind it. We understand that although the arguments surrounding young people and their transgressions are nothing new nor the debate on violence within the media, the two combined, scapegoat one another and blame each other the for youthful transgressions. Although this chapter and more so this thesis is not here to retrace the steps of this debate or offer any attempt to reduce or control what can be viewed as errant behaviour of young people. This part of the chapter will focus on a group of scholars work collectively known as 'cultural criminologists' (Katz 1988; Presdee 1994, 2004; Ferrell and Sanders 1995). The discussion here will consider Jack Katz's pivotal texts *The Seductions of Crime: Moral and sensual attractions in doing evil* (1988) and consider the emphasis that is placed on the seductive quality of crime to provide further context in understanding this so called 'youth problem', and how, in fact we as the general public are excited and lured by the prospect of potential real or 'made for TV' violence and crime.

Katz argues that in order to truly understand any form of anti-social behaviour or crime we must start from the premise of the 'attractions of doing evil'. Common explanations of crime and violence stress the importance of structural, genetic or environmental factors on crime, commonly known causal explanations. However, by considering the individual and their emotions and

perspectives, this can be central in understanding crime and violence among young people and is thus important to bring this to the foreground, or at the very least, consider this alongside these dominant causal factors. Thus, transgressions from young people such as vandalism or peer group violence also have much to do with youth expression and exerting control where they may have very little. Or where traditional avenues for stimulation, such as playing outside or youth clubs and parks (within a proximity to their home) have long since evaporated (Hayward 2002).

Although Katz's work resonates with a lot of how we can understand young people, crime and violence it has been criticised for failing to recognise the wider social and structural contexts where this individual experience takes place. Thus, it is important to encapsulate both this debate between foreground (individual experience) and background (structural elements).

Hayward (2002) elaborates on this debate and argues that rather than simply focusing on the binary framework of structure versus agency, it is more about the prioritising various emotions (such as excitement) and human experience alongside the social conditions of today. Accordingly, excitement not only brings a level of individual experience but also a way of seizing control. This latter point Is important for further understanding young people today, this argument is twofold. On the one hand the way Katz explains the above issue is by considering the attractions of crime essentially as a form of escape. On the other hand, escaping the mundanity of everyday life may be the case for some young people, but others contemporary milieu is much more complex (Hayward 2002), thus making context and place very important. This is an aspect on which this study draws.

Numerous scholars have suggested that late modern society is characterised by this pervasive sense of insecurity and dis-embeddedness (Hayward 2002:5) everything is arguably subject to change. For some it can bring feelings of being downhearted and face uncertain possibilities and it highlights that the teleological beliefs that we or in particular young people tend to cling to can begin to collapse and cannot be reconstructed, and once we realise this we try and escape reality or gain excitement elsewhere. As Lyotard (1984) suggests, there are grand narratives and individual narratives which rise and fall together. Accordingly, drawing on this debate numerous scholars (Giddens 1990; Bauman 1987; Davis 1998) have the belief that in order to tackle the contemporary crime problem depends on the acknowledgement of 'ontological security', where the impact of social and economic conditions on individual subjectivity are a consistent and striking feature in modern life (Young 1999) As Jock Young states:

"We live in a much more difficult world: we face a greater range in life choices than ever before, our lives are less firmly embedded in work and relationships, our everyday existence is experienced as a series of encounters with risk either in actuality or in the shape of fears and apprehensions. We feel both materially insecure and ontologically precarious." (Young 1999:vi).

Thus, young people nowadays are having to engage and navigate these contingencies and dilemmas which are brought about by the late modern condition and would be interesting to see if going forward in the next five to ten years if the way young people understand and view violence will shift to a more abstract and political focus. Considering these circumstances, it may be possible that an individual (or in this case young person) may feel both insecure and over controlled. As Garland (2001) suggests not only is it becoming more difficult to exert control and navigate a life within the established norms and values, but, at the same time youth are confronted by a culture of control in its variety of forms.

Although arguments have been made about breaking boredom and finding excitement as an explanation for youthful transgressions, it must be considered that, if one is not able to escape their social environment to engage in these transgressions or risk-taking behaviour then one has to find alternative arrangements, and this point will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter. The literature reviewed above has suggested many instances where young people will find excitement within areas that are familiar to them. The research literature has explored these spaces as being the run-down social housing estate, or the urban inner-city area, or the ghetto neighbourhoods of American states. We thus can conceptualise young people's spaces (just as the ones which are used within this study) as paradoxical spaces. We have on the one hand, young people living within and around environments across Britain where they are subject to systematic powerlessness and on the other, we have what Presdee (2000) calls sites of risk consumption. This is where the lived-in areas provide numerous avenues for transgressive behaviour. Youth culture in its essence has always been a problem in need of control with the pursuit of pleasure potentially antagonistic to the state. This is where, mass media coverage and moral panics provoke a general sense of fear and immorality of youth. Youth culture in its very essence is characterised by tensions, regulations and rebellion. Youth culture forever pushes the

boundaries of what adults *thought they knew*; this therefore prompts panic from adults (Presdee 2000).

Furthermore, although modern society has brought along with it changes in technology, youth cultures and entertainment, it has also brought advances in communication and consumer culture. Consumer culture is more evident with youth culture than any other (Fenwick and Hayward 2000). Interestingly, it is corporate capitalism which has come to almost rely on images of crime and violence in order to further sell products to young people. Hayward (2002:10) argues that crime has been seized upon, it has been packaged and repackaged to young people as cool and exciting as a form of a cultural symbol. Within this acknowledged consumer culture, crime and violence has been aestheticised which provides representations of criminality equated in some instances with excitement, thus making lines between reality and fiction blurred.

> *"…stylised images of crime abound in many other areas of the mass media, sending mixed messages to a young audience who often take their lead from popular consumer culture. In film, violent crime and drug dealing are glamorised by slick production values and carefully selected soundtracks. The central characters in films such as Pulp Fiction, Reservoir Dogs and Natural Born Killers are then lionised as cool popular culture icons".* (Fenwick and Hayward 2000: 45-6).

Many criminologists have pointed to the importance of commodified violence and highlight the paradox of this apparent liberation of human experience which is offered by television and other forms of social media. This opens pathways towards fascinations with the anti-social and violence as cultural zones of exception (Atkinson and Rodgers 2015). Overall, what this section has put forward is that we need to remember as researchers that there is a role of excitement and emotion within crime and violence, and it importantly highlights the need to further let participants voices be heard in this context without any presupposition of what they should talk about.

Responding to youth violence

This penultimate section in this chapter will provide a brief overview of policies and strategies designed to reduce youth violence, considering New Labour, Conservatives and the new violence strategy from 2018.

New Labour provided some significant legislation aimed at tackling violence, these included initiatives such as Sure Start centres, and the development of youth inclusion programmes sought to deter at risk youth and children who have previously offended away from continuing on that path (Traynor 2016; Crawford and Traynor 2012). These preventive programmes implemented by New Labour had a narrow interventionist agenda which was based more on a developmental model, rather than taking a public health approach. Furthermore, the media and moral panics surrounding youth violence provided justification for 'tough reassurance and policing' (Crawford and Traynor 2012). The Conservatives also made some efforts at social crime prevention although this was during the austerity measure and budget cuts. The Home Office in 2011 sought to tackle youth violence, the review made recommendations including anti-knife crime presentations within school, more work with children and young people. These recommendations shared some of New Labours symbolic aspects of crime and is seen to be doing something about the problem rather than *actually doing something*.

Whilst the policies and strategies considered above has generated significant policy activity, Silvestri et al (2009) did a substantial review of the UK strategies over the period from 1998-2008 and concluded that: *'What is striking is that the vast majority of these initiatives have not been independently evaluated, and most have not been evaluated at all'* (Silvestri et al 2009:45). A lot of initiatives and strategies have focus on knife crime an area of youth violence which is on the rise. Much of the political rhetoric surrounding this topic has emphasised the detection and subsequent punishment of these offenders (Crawford and Traynor 2012; SCYJ 2018). This increasingly aggressive drive which aims to catch and convict young people does not stop the problem, and in 2018 a public health approach was adopted.

This public health approach is not about individual people, essentially, its practice is underpinned by dealing with diseases and problems affecting health. As a result, it aims to provide the

maximum benefit for the largest number of people. the concern Is to prevent problems and extend care and safety to populations. Regarding violence there are examples of authorities taking this approach to tackling violence. In Scotland, the police led Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) (Pepin et al 2018). They target violence whether it occurs on the street, within schools or homes. As a result of their approach and according to official Scottish Government statistics, recorded crime is at its lowest since the 1970s and their homicide rate has been halved between 20082018.

The heralded success of the Scottish initiative prompted the Home Office Serious Violence Strategy set out £40m of measures aimed at addressing the rise in violent crime across England and Wales over recent years. With this approach it is suggested that the strategy represents a step towards change in the way we think and respond to serious violence (SCYJ 2018). They look at this strategy over a variety of areas. From drug misuse and county lines through to supporting communities and early intervention along with law enforcement. This approach being the most recent has aimed to look more holistically at youth crime and violence than previous government policy by acknowledging that children can be vulnerable and or exploited, combined with preventative measures are likely to bring wide benefits to society (Pepin et al 2018). This holistic approach with the recommendations made can tackle the surface of youth violence but efforts need to be made to view children first and as offenders second. The adopted risk factor approach can label and marginalise children young people with a focus on preventing their negative behaviours rather than ensuring they build their positive ones (Case 2018; SCYJ 2018).

Summary and implications for the study

This chapter has intended to cover a lot of ground to provide the reader with a context and overview of the topic under study. It has further described some of the key trends in crime amongst young people in England and Wales and located these in the wider context of why levels of violence seem to remain high. This chapter has critically unpacked the concept of violence and broken this down into definitional issues and the problems inherent within some of these. It is important to remember that the young people who we tend to focus on in research grow up often in complex environments and a lot of their understanding and perspectives about life come from their early years and social contexts. This can often be within deprived or socially excluded areas.

It was explored and argued that although crime has significantly decreased (and there are various reasons for this), it is important to consider why *violence against the person* remains high.

Although some may argue that this is due to increasing widespread poverty, it is better to start from the beginning and find out the understandings that young people have of violence. Furthermore, if they do understand this term are there differences in justifications, the cultural or more importantly accepted boundaries that millennials have set amongst themselves? It can be argued that some previous research has failed to take account of young people's voices, this gap has provided methodological inspiration for this research, which is further explored in chapter four of this thesis. The cyclical nature of young people, crime and violence has been highlighted and there has been consideration of the ongoing fascination with this topic. With central debates around the lure and excitement of violence unpicked, with a consideration of the previous and current violence strategies.

The next chapter will continue the overview of literature and consider cultural perspectives, which provides the foundations for the researcher to develop a theoretical framework for approaching and understanding young people and violence. The following chapter thus considers structural theories, looking at traditional theories of anomie, strain and opportunity structures, before moving onto looking at space and place as a concept which hold significance for further understanding young people and violence. The final section of that chapter considers masculinity and status and how this has links with the previous concepts introduced within this chapter.

Chapter 3: Concepts and theory: Violence, structure and identity.

Introduction

The previous chapter suggested that understanding contemporary contexts of young people, crime and violence was necessary to any framework or study that aimed to further explore this topic. Research into this area has spanned varying disciplines, from sociology, psychology, politics and criminology to name a few. To gain a robust understanding of violence from the perspectives of young people, it is therefore important to understand their neighbourhoods as places of meaning making. As previously discussed, research has had a strong focus on inner city areas and as a result, the concept of youth violence is essentially widely associated with inner-city neighbourhoods. Traynor (2016) argues that although it occupies our popular consciousness it is almost a mythic space which is both a localised and a global phenomenon.

Youth violence along with 'street life' alludes to the concerns surrounding the 'feral' underclass (Newburn 1996) that resonate with youth generally, but particularly with violent young people.

There is, however, a need to acknowledge both sides of any argument and Emler and Reicher (1995) describe this as the 'double character' of delinquency research. By adopting this concept, this study aims to acknowledge both the social contours, structures and mobility of space and individual behaviour, for example masculinity and femininity. Thus, this research sought to understand how broader social and structural processes can interact and therefore consequently impact on individual and cultural processes which can influence how young people understand or interpret violence. Consequently, by approaching the topic from a broad perspective that includes consideration of literature from youth studies, sociology and criminology, this thesis will be a unique endeavour that can shed light on this topic.

There is vast amount of theoretical research and insight which has gone some way to helping us understand crime and violence. Theories of delinquency are usually divided between those that use external environment explanations or those which focus on the internal processes of the individual. As such, psychology has a traditional approach where they attribute delinquency to the cognition or deficient internal structures of the individual. These explanations can be located within the predestined actor model of criminal behaviour and in contrast to the rational actor model that proposes free will and opportunism are the motor of criminal behaviour. From the predestined

perspective, the individual is both destined to be a criminal by forces beyond their control while being seen to be in a different category of humanity than non-criminals (Hopkins-Burke 2015: 141). Such assertions of this nature are thus based on understandings of cause and effect, and as Squires (2009) has argued, tend to neglect the social contexts of where the social phenomena occur. This disregard and lack of social context is arguably a common theme throughout much research, yet important to consider as it can shape the way an individual understand, interprets and relates to certain things.

The first section of this chapter explores the development of theory in sociological and criminological research by exploring subcultures, mobility and structures. In doing so, it provides good foundations for exploring some of the overlapping and related concepts which are used in the thesis analysis. Namely the concept of structures and how codes can enforce or reject violence, and how this can shape identity and space for young people. The second half of this chapter has a focus on gender and how this has links with violence and associated discussions around assertions of gender. Particularly exploring the normative and 'masculine' nature of violence. By focusing on these three key areas it provides a more complete framework by which to approach the research topic.

Structural theories

While individual definitions of crime have focused on the biological and psychological areas, as briefly explained above, from the mid-twentieth century sociologists began to make an impact on criminology. In accordance with predestined actor model principles, the basic premise of most sociological theories of crime and violence is that behaviour is socially determined, shaped by external conditions leading individuals to conform or deviate. Sociological theorising owes much to the pioneering work of Emile Durkheim who argues that society is divided into various interest groups on an unequal basis. He suggests that such divided societies are not ones where *'contracts between individuals and society could be made'* (Durkheim 1993 originally 1893:202).

Durkheim's pivotal work *La Suicide* in 1897 was a discourse on alienation and the loss of attachment to social norms, and in this text, he introduced the crucial term 'anomie', where a sense of normlessness, brought about by a lack of perceived legitimate rules and moral guidance

can lead to unrealistic aspirations. Durkheim proposed two main arguments to explain crime and its growth in modern industrial societies. Firstly, he points to egoism, an unrestrained individualism perceived to be contrary to the development and maintenance of social solidarity and consequently, conformity to the law (Hopkins-Burke 2014). Secondly, he observes the inadequacy of established regulations at a time of rapid social change. Thus, new forms of control and regulation have been introduced to help maintain the solidarity built on the foundations of earlier rules and older forms of control. Therefore, within such a period, society is in a state of anomie and normlessness and the two arguments are closely interconnected.

By briefly focusing on the founding father of academic sociology and the consensus of norms and values, it provides the much-needed foundation surrounding the argument that human action is indeed a response both expressive and symbolic of the moral order (Hughes et al 1995). Indeed, there is method in peoples perceived madness. Deviance and crime serve as a function to societies, it provides others with social boundaries to social behaviour. By doing so, we begin to develop a collective sense of identity by outlining who was within or outside the boundaries, 'us and them.' We arrive at shared ways of doing things and rather than these shared meanings be fixed, they are fluid, and subject to processes of social interaction.

The concept of subculture is alluded to above and is subsequently tied to broader understandings surrounding youth and violence, particularly on gang and knife crime within contemporary debate in Britain. This concept of subcultures was introduced in the USA in the 1920s in order to explain patterns of offending and responses to deprivation and adversity (Park and Burgess 1925; Downing et al 2000; Hopkins-Burke 2014). Social ecology theorists sought to understand the social roots of crime and argued that development is patterned (Park and Burgess 1925). Thus, offending either occurred as a result of the breakdown of community controls (Shaw and McKay 1942) or due to organised social structures which encouraged offending within illegitimate arenas (Thrasher 1927; Sutherland 1947).

Subcultural strain theorists argue that these subcultures were formed due to the clash of cultures at a societal level, rather than local conditions (Merton 1957, 1964, Cohen 1955). Although there are different subcultural explanations of crime and deviance, they all share the common perception that certain social groups share values and attitudes that encourage delinquency, crime or violence (Hopkins-Burke 2014). Firstly, we turn our attention to Merton's (1938) concept

of anomie, by drawing on Durkheim's sociology he argued that there was in fact an inherent contradiction between that of dominant goals and the means to achieve them. This resulted in strain (anomie) thus, forming subcultures that create their own rules and in some cases favour criminal and violent behaviour (Traynor 2016). Merton's influential theory identifies that potential 'strains' within modern societies (even more so now) is this disjuncture between goals and attainment due to inequalities present within any given society. As a result, Merton proposed his five modes of adaption this 'strain'.

Table adapted from: (Ray 2018:25). Table 1

Conformity	Achieving success through legitimate means
Ritualism	Reject the socially approved goals or reduce expectations of success.
Retreatism	Relinquishes both goals and means.
Rebellion	Reject both the goals and means and replace them with new ones.
Innovation	Accept the goals but rejects the means.

It could be argued that a lot of youth offending can seem to come under the rubric of innovation or retreatism due to the propensity for young people to commit property crime and more commonly now, get into the business of drug dealing (innovation). Or in some cases substance misuse to relieve the 'boredom' or lack or engaging activities (retreatism). Yet, critically assessing Merton's theory, it can appear to explain goal orientated crime and financial motivation, yet fails to provide explanation for expressive forms of violence such as vandalism (Ray 2018; Barry 2004).   As a result, Cohen (1955) argued that juvenile offenders stole for the fun of it and took pride in their acquired reputations. Merton argues here that in fact, subcultures can provide individuals not only with the same collective ideals but also notions of respect which are denied elsewhere (Hopkins-Burke 2014). This insatiable need for status among young people is somewhat

unattainable to those of lower economic status, and it is those within the middle classes by which the measuring rod is drawn.

Accordingly, due to this need for status yet, bound within unachievable aims, subcultures are formed, and alternative norms and value traits such as aggression and violence are formed, and in essence, are a rejection of those imposed middle-class norms they failed to attain (HopkinsBurke 2014). Nevertheless, despite certain differences, strain and social ecology theorists highlight the importance of deprivation in material and social contexts, which can shape the conduct of groups or individuals. Consequently, criticism of these theories laid the foundation for other emerging theories in this arena. Matza (1964) criticises Cohen for being overly determinist in his understanding of offending behaviour.

Furthermore, the debate around class values is what Kitsue and Dietrick (1959) argue to be irrelevant. Middle-class norms and values are simply not acknowledged by working class young people. They in fact resent the intrusion of middle-class norms, and their behaviour whether violent, criminal or otherwise should be considered rational within their *own* working-class culture (Hopkins-Burke 2014). Matza observes that delinquency is simply something that most young people tend to drift into and out of again, eventually ceasing to offend. What Sykes and Matza (1957) argue is that young people are able to hold both delinquent and non-delinquent views at any given time and just as the concept of young people in the contemporary context is fluid, so too are their norms regarding delinquency; this perception is thus adaptable to contemporary circumstances (Hopkins-Burke 2014; Traynor 2016).

Youth and violence as discussed within the above theories form the central explanatory focus for the formation of the sometimes-violent subcultures which we can see in contemporary Britain. Like Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) view subcultures as a collective response to goals. Their work *Delinquency and Opportunity* (1960), was one of the major developments in deviant subculture theory. What they suggest, is that in order to fully explain adolescent transgression there is a need for a *'push'* theory that can explain why young people offend, yet secondly, it equally needs a '*pull'* theory to explain the continuance of this behaviour, or in some cases, how it is passed onto others. Their combination of Sutherlands *Differential Association theory* and Merton's *Illegitimate opportunity structure* provides originality in their theorising (Hopkins-Burke 2014:149). Cloward and Ohlin observe that due to the class structure of society, offending by

young people is also due to their awareness of this structural inequality. Offending therefore, could arguably be a solution to problems of adjustments (Cloward and Ohlin 1960). Thus, from this crucial observation they developed three separate subcultures: (Table adapted from HopkinsBurke 2014:149).

Criminal	These subcultures exist where legitimate opportunities for learning and motivation are absent and criminal activity may result in material success.
Conflict	This exists where adolescents are denied access to the legitimate opportunities and thus have no criminal opportunities and for example work off frustrations through aggression or via gangs.
Retreatist	This subculture tends to exist where drugs are freely available and is open to those who failed to gain access to the legitimate or illegitimate subcultures.

Table 2

The above table not only looks at the existence of established criminal gangs and their absence, but this is also attributable to geographical location, which is an imperative for this study. Granted, this study does not explore gangs, but it is the available criminal opportunities which highlight the idiosyncrasies within the locations of this study.

As with any theoretical perspective, there are criticisms, Hopkins-Burke (2014) observes that this 'illegal opportunity structure' model is predicated on the Chicago slums of the 1920s which have long ceased to exist, and this theory is not wholly (in that context) transferable to contemporary Britain. Furthermore, their concentration on gang culture and working-class males as a homogenous group disregards the complexities of different ethnic subcultures. Those in similar situations who do not transgress, with an oversimplification of the use of drugs and alcohol is a common phenomenon among middle class professionals (Hopkins Burke 2014:150). There is basically a problem of youth being placed in simplified social class-based categories with the more multifaceted cultural context of contemporary society not addressed. This thesis nevertheless

accepts the basic premise of Cloward and Ohlin that children and young people have differential access to crime opportunities invariably based on geographical location. This thesis builds on the authors theoretical insights and considers the perceived limitations of their now dated study not least by recognising the previously neglected and closely associated areas of rural poverty and crime.

It is the aim of this thesis is to explore how young people understand and interpret violence subjectively, within their own cultural and localised context. The theories presented above provide the foundations of a theoretical framework yet in addressing some of the criticisms of strain and subcultural theory, it can also be suggested they equate offending as an alternative to future legitimate employment. Yet, it must be considered, that in fact strain theory in its variety of forms can be more generally applied to more immediate aspirations and strains young people feel and identify with more broadly (Greenberg 1979). Therefore, making it flexible and more in line with how 'youth' and 'crime' is fluid in context and meaning depending on time and space. In considering this flexibility, British research on subcultures has done much to explore the origins of working-class culture itself. Research has emphasised violence as normal within such cultural contexts, a part of the parent culture. This tends to reflect wider social dynamics within postindustrial Britain, rather than considering working class violence and crime from the pathologies of racism and poverty (Wolfgang and Ferracutti 1967; Cohen and Robins 1978; Hobbs 1988, Traynor 2016).

In considering the above debates more widely, British research has a marked difference in approach, with a focus on subculture and style, such as Becker (1967) and Matza (1964), consider both *Structure and Agency* compared to the US whose focus was frequently on organised crime and gangs (Tierney 1996:190). This highlighted the ways state power and social construction can shape perceptions of and response to youth crime alongside alluding to the ways young people made sense of their world. As Muncie (1999:125) states, *'Whose law and order is being protected?'* The socio-political context of crime is thus important, as criminality is defined by the powerful and discriminates against the powerless. The subtle Marxist undertones that flow through (British) subcultural theories ask us to raise our criminological gaze and consider the structural and conflictual framework where crime flourishes.

This brief overview has considered the origins of subcultural understandings of crime and deviance and the significant developments in this area. This provides the foundations to further consider a wider body of research and literature that explores contemporary youth behaviour in consideration of some of the above concepts.   Some contemporary theorists came to argue that subcultural theory is irrelevant and redundant and began to lack favour in the 1980s due to approaches that were rooted within the what works paradigms (Young 1994). This shifted the focus from understanding crime back to managing sections of society (Hale et al 2013). The late 1990s however saw this come full circle once again, with renewed interest in 'street culture' (Brookman et al 2011), and how the 'street' shapes young people's experiences of violence, this combined with the previous discussion provides a valuable framework, and the rest of this chapter will consider the role of place, space and masculinity and in considering violence.

Space and place.

The reason for considering the importance of place and space is twofold, firstly, this research was conducted in two different geographies, both in locality and demography. Secondly, the question of place and space is not only geographical but, as the above sections have indicated, the 'how', or 'when' something happens is equally important to understand the 'how' it matters and 'why' it matters in that context (Agnew and Livingstone 2011). Space can be viewed as dimensional, an area for which exists, a location that has no meaning or social connection to humans (Tuan 1977, Traynor 2016). Yet, place in contrast to this is distinct as it is subjective, Agnew and Livingstone (2011:2) argue that it is a 'distinctive coming together in space'. This is where things happen, and place is fundamental to understanding knowledge production and dissemination (Livingston 2007:71).

Hence, in consideration of the present study, the rural and urban setting is paramount in understanding perspectives on violence, these 'places' provide a social setting alongside definitional context. Consequently, knowledge creation in this sense and how young people choose to understand this may well be situated somewhere within their locale (Masolo 2002). For example, Anderson's (1999:13-14) seminal '*Code of the Streets'* research describes social milieus from a street in Philadelphia USA. He considered the subjective meanings which have

been applied to these places where he situates these understandings and codes of conduct on a continuum (Figure 8):

Code of civility
(Predominantly white demographic)

Code of the streets
(Predominantly black demographic)
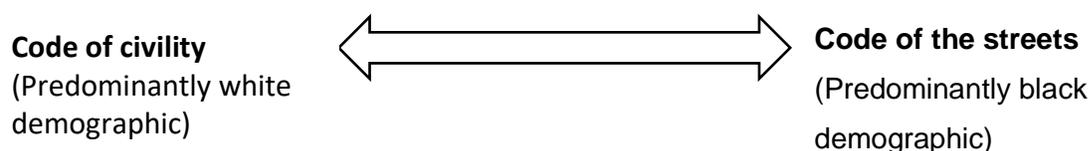
He observed that the 'code of the street' were populated with individuals who prioritise violence and aggression as a way of resolving conflict that arose. This form of behaviour is structural in its foundation, encompassing various forms of stigma, deprivation and marginalisation alongside discrimination. These codes for which Anderson has analysed and observed, would not fit, nor would they happen on the other end of the continuum, as place and space have significant impact on the meaning making and behaviour which is attributed to this area in Philadelphia. Hence, in most research, the focus on 'place' tends to be that of 'inner cities', but this research extends this understanding of young people's perspectives to add knowledge by considering rural space and rural ways of knowing. Meanings are thus formed not only in space but also interactions between others, and therefore takes meaning as social creations (Tynner 2011), and what a young person in an urban city or rural town understand as violence may be different. In doing so, it is important to outline a youth informed and focused theory which will be explored in more depth within Chapter seven of the thesis but has been equally informed by mobility theory discussed below.

Mobility theory

This theory develops the debate of structure, subcultures, space and place by considering the mobilities framework developed by Farrugia (2016). It is an approach that focuses on rural youth. It concentrates on three separate areas, two of which are considered in this review. First, the structural area considers the rural location of young people within mobilities of capital and labour. Secondly, there is the symbolic, this is the discursive construction of 'the country' and city as dimensions of youth culture (Farrugia 2016: 837). This theory complements and builds on the literature in highlighting the research gap in previous work with its lack of rural focus, but also provides a theoretical basis for rural research as well as contributing to the continued exploration of space and place (Urry 2000; Hopkins and Pain 2007; Massey 2007; Farrugia 2014). This theory

is further outlined below by considering the two areas mentioned previously, the structural and the symbolic.

The structural

This element refers to the structural dimensions of rural youth and their location within the flows of labour and capital. However, it is often observed that opportunities such as education and work opportunities are vastly concentrated within the city and urban centres. Thus, making young people structurally disadvantaged in contrast to their urban counterparts (Farrugia 2016; Rugg and Jones 1999). Cuervo and Wyn (2012) argue however, that if we approach risk by situating rural youth as structurally disadvantaged, this approach positions rural existence as being a deficient or 'faulty' youth transition. In contrast they argue that rural youth mobility lies in the wider structural processes. The structures which they are negotiating are also themselves constituted by mobilities of economic capital. These economic sites thus produce the rural and urban as sites of capital.

As time and globalisation continue to grow, flows of capital are accumulated predominantly within cities across Britain and London in particular. As a result, many rural young people who are at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum are at times unable to access the resources needed to create what Farrugia (2017) calls 'biographies'. With the decline of mining and increasing vulnerability of agriculture and manufacturing this has resulted in an absence of economic opportunities for rural youth (Aston and Kent 2009), however, not the case for the affluent rural youth who have the means to go to good schools, good universities and go on to get good jobs (in the city). Transitions for young people have become ever more precarious for both urban and rural youth and neo-liberal policy-regimes have paid more attention to the growth of inner -city projects, neighbourhoods and service economies. This hegemonic framework has resulted in services and amenities declining and, in some cases, non-existent for rural youth, and more recently, a similar trend is seen to be happening in urban city areas also (Farrugia 2014;2017).

With such increasing structural inequalities presenting themselves within contemporary Britain and across various countries in the western world, rural youth are forced to develop a relationship to the urban, for instance, for education opportunities or work, that may not be available in their local places (Jamieson 2000). Therefore, taking that flight to the city is a journey replicated over and again and was framed by that of the previous great industrial revolution of circa 1760-1830

(Clark 2002). Notably, this is where social class operates within the structure of rural areas, as those without the means to migrate out are often positioned as failures (Farrugia 2017), and in some cases their definitions of success are based on the valorisation of mobility. Bauman (2000) discusses this as 'lightness of capital flows' and this reshapes relationships between urban and rural young people's lives making them ever more precarious.

The symbolic

The symbolic dimension of this framework refers to the positions that young people acquire which make up their cultures and define their youth subjectivities. These youth cultures extend across various spaces and places and are thus fluid (Massey 1998). What is being argued here, is that the symbolic subcultures which are created locally in rural areas or more widely in urban areas, represent and articulate the style within the context that they are produced. These subjectivities are fluid and as Farrugia (2017:841) suggests:

> *"The cultural practices and symbolic resources that young people draw upon to construct youthful identities also contribute to the symbolic dimensions of the mobility imperative for rural youth."*

This separation of urban and rural is due to the position of city as place of newness, where modern life happens. Whereas rural areas are positioned quite the opposite, as idyllic and rustic, it is positioned as a retreat from the hectic day to day of city life. Bourdieu (1984) adds to this discussion by suggesting that these symbolic distinctions are central to cultural hierarchies and reflects class discourse. The city is not merely a place of opportunity but as a symbolic hierarchy is subjectively positioned as a young person's aspirations to their imagined future self (Bourdieu 1984; Jones 2004).

Furthermore, in some cases 'youth culture' and how it is defined with regards to consumption and leisure is defined from city and urban landscapes. Katz (1998:131) argues that the reach of the cultural flows creates '*a transnational burgeoning of desire*' they are the economies of cool and they create the hierarchies of coolness (Thornton 1996). In contrast, amongst all this symbolic coolness, rural young people, are positioned outside of what it means to be young and cool

(Farrugia 2017:842). What is argued here, is that the symbolic dimension of youthfulness is mobile, although it is produced within cities, it is consumed by both rural and urban young people, and symbolic distinctions that permeate youth landscapes are and will continue to change. If symbols and structure create and represent forms of youthfulness and essentially coolness, in considering violence it is also important to consider gender and in particular, masculinity and how this has traditionally been central in understanding crime and violence.

Gender in the discussion of violence

Symbols, codes and structures are aspects that have been discussed throughout this chapter, all of which have significant implications for how a young person identifies themselves and may have an impact on how they understand violence. If symbols and structures can create and represent forms of youthfulness and essentially 'coolness', it is therefore important to consider the importance between gender and violence. This section will explore gender in relation to violence and the link that is present, in doing so it will unpick what research is already available from a young person's perspective, alongside exploring how gender is asserted through violence. This is the final section of this chapter which will draw to a close with a summary and further implications for the study.

Gender and the link between violence.

Previous research exploring young people's perspectives of violence has done so from an interrelationship perspective and how gender impacts on discussion or understandings around violence, and feminist work in this area has done much to enhance understanding of gender and violence within this perspective (Connell 2008; Flood 2010; Hearn 2007; Stoudt 2006). What is argued, is that violence, as a material act reflects and then sustains certain versions of masculinity through such actions like violence. This is further enhanced through visual and discursive representations of what violence is. There is a common link between violence and masculinity, and this is sometimes an unquestioned assumption about how we understand this (Stanko 2002). Stanko (1994: 32) argues how violence is not only accepted within various media outlets but also rests upon those unquestioned commentaries of gender those of which include the peculiarity of female violence but the normality of male violence (Newburn and Stanko 1994). As a result, what

has occurred is that the 'normal', justifiable and naturalised violence that has occurred over time is extended to that of the male form (Sundaram 2014). Thus, the concept of masculine hegemony was appropriately developed to consider why historic patterns of domination continue to highlight the way masculinity is portrayed and positioned as an idealised form of manhood (Connell 1995). However, it can be argued that men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same males could also distance themselves from moments of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:841). This is where a distinction can be drawn between the power of men as a social category and the power of men as individual agents (Hearn 2004; 2012). Important to note here however, is that this study is not considering violence and masculinity as uniform but is taking perceptions from that of the participants both male and female. Furthermore, it must also be recognised that there are contradictions between what is socially and culturally valued and what individual males decide to do could vary with age (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

Just as this thesis acknowledges the cultural and social context, it highlights what some of the expectations and justifications both males and females provide for the use and understanding of violent behaviour. Therefore, it seeks to understand gender relations in the context of violence and more so the threat of violence (Sundaram 2013). Lombard (2011) discusses how young people construct their own and other gender identities. By doing so, the (social) construction of gender is understood through the lens of power and thus it can be argued here that this is the initial step in the process of analysing this relationship between young people, gender and violence. In the process of constructing gender, this happens discursively through performances but also language and this can in instances, be reinforced via their social and cultural structures (Lombard 2015). In considering this, these aspects not only have implications for opportunities and mobility but also the way one decides to behave (Kubrin 2005; Anderson 1999).

There have been questions however around the weight that has been given to 'normative' behaviours, yet time and again research has focused not only in inner city but also there has been a strong focus with and on male participants (Anderson 1999; Earle 2011; Willis 1977). To counteract this, Interpersonal violence in particular is a common research area for exploring gender and violence, and a few significant studies within the UK have sought to address this: (Burman and Cartmel 2005; Dublin Women's Aid 1999; Mullender et al. 2002; O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000). Research has found that young men are more likely to use violence and abuse

instrumentally whilst young women tend to use violence defensively (Stark 2007). It is therefore countered that we need to unpack the intentions, impacts and outcomes of this violence to get a clearer understanding of the dynamics involved, by asking young people how they understand this term is a start in unpacking such dynamics.

In the UK, the Equal Opportunities Commission (2001) produced research on young people's attitudes about gender roles and found that the majority of young people in their sample held very 'traditional' attitudes towards female and male gender roles, with men regarded as the 'breadwinners' and women as care givers (see also Mac and Ghaill 1994). Mandel and Shakeshaft (2000) found that the high school students in their research perceived a significant demarcation between men and women and that these differentiations were enmeshed with notions of heterosexuality and male dominance. Research with young people in the UK by Mullender et al (2002) also found a delineation between the views of young women and men with one-third of the young men in their sample agreeing that some women 'deserve to be hit' (2002:70). This resonated with the pioneering 1998 Zero Tolerance data (Burton et al 1998) that found one in two young men and one in three young women thought that it was acceptable to hit a woman in certain circumstances. With regards to how young people have been utilised to understand violence further, Lombard (2015) has also looked into how young people (11-12) understand violence within the realms of defining, constructing and understanding violence. This work looked specifically at male's violence against females. This research enabled young people to explore their own understandings of violence against women and in doing so how it relates to their gendered roles. This research study has in ways influenced this thesis by providing young people with a voice and exploring their own perspectives. Enabling young people to engage with the discursive issues of violence and explore their own perceptions can be one way to looks beyond the public or powerful appropriation of the concept. Part of their construction involved drawing upon their own experiential knowledge and everyday understandings, which may be at odds with dominant discourses or officially recognised definitions.

How is gender asserted through violence?

Feminist work in this area has brought up some interesting findings more generally on gender and violence, and although much has been done in the way of public awareness campaigns, interventions and legal reforms which have aimed to challenge gendered violence with a specific focus on interpersonal violence, violence itself is not decreasing. Therefore, the ways in which we understand 'violence' as term or action must be further understood particularly from the views of children and young people. There has been important work conducted to explore the ways in which people construct themselves and others when talking about violence, such discussions have been known to constitute gender differences (Enloe 2007). Research into and about violence among young people has analysed the ways in which children and young people's narratives may be revelatory in exposing not only the ways in which children absorb the culture on which they are commenting on, but also the ways in which they may manipulate or transform that culture (Miller et al 2007 cited in Sundaram 2014). Andersons (1999) work discusses how expectations of appropriately masculine behaviour can define how and whom can be involved with violent behaviour. This acceptance and tolerance of violent behaviour among males is a common finding of previous research that has explored gender and violence (McCarry 2007). As such, this study will explore if the female participants uphold, deny or justify males using violent behaviour, arguing that in constructing masculinity, the concept of femininity and how this is understood would too need to be addressed. This provides a relational context of further understanding how young people interpret violence (Ricardo and Barker 2008; Sundaram 2014).

In considering previous research in the area of gender and violence Ray (2011) argues that young people who are growing up within disadvantaged neighbourhoods may sense of 'loss of cohesion' which can eventually affect their self-esteem. For young males especially, this can create a sense of weakness and lack of control. Thus, in order to regain this control, violence can provide both an outlet for this frustration and a means of attaining respect and status (Ray 2011). This status and respect that has been gained as a result of violence would need to be maintained, because once you have earned it, you must aim to keep it. Connell and Messerschmidt (1995) emphasise that the performance is a choice rather than a learned behaviour. This behaviour can manifest itself differently in social situations and through various genders yet can also be influenced by race, class and age.

In considering class and some of the previous debates surrounding structures and frustration, violence and criminal behaviour more generally can in instances be utilised as validation for masculinity. This validation between the classes will vary and for the middle classes it is argued that males achieve masculinity and status through areas such as academic achievement, sports and career. However, Ray (2011) discusses how opposition masculinity can make those same young men deviate outside of school by being involved with petty theft and substance misuse. By displaying such behaviours is reiterates dominance to the group and reaffirms control amongst their peers. For those young boys in the working-class environment they tend to display this opposition masculinity both in and out of school through acts such as fighting, vandalism and other transgressive behaviour. This is not to say that there are not opportunities in the labour market for this group of young males, but due to the lack of opportunities to suit their skills they are more likely to use illegal means to demonstrate their masculinity. A failure to demonstrate this hyper masculinity or respect through such behaviours could be interpreted as weakness which would invite abuse (Messerschmidt 2000). Anderson (1999:49) suggests that if one fails to attain this respect it can be a *'a fate worse than death'*, thus both respect and hegemonic masculinity is fundamentally insecure and must be continually negotiated and renegotiated (Traynor 2016).

In the UK youth violence has frequently been analysed from criminological perspectives with youth offenders or those excluded from school or in referral units. Throughout much of this research factors such as race and class have been prioritised in explaining youth participation in violence (Herrenkohl et al. 2000; Resnick, Ireland, and Borowsky 2004). In addition, few have taken into account female voice in this research. An increasing body of research documents various forms of violence among young people, yet few have considered the understandings young people attribute to violence. Violence among young people occur predominantly between individuals and groups either at school, in neighbourhoods or in families and intimate partner relationships. There has been a great focus on youth violence from the perspective of teenage relationships, suggesting that more effective violence prevention should be aimed at teenagers (McCarry 2010; Sundaram 2013) there has been a large focus on masculinity and the use of this in shaping identity (Wilkinson 2001; Messerschmidt 1993; Anderson 1994), although this research will surely touch on this it is not the sole focus. A key study which underpinned much of this thesis, however, is Sundaram's (2013) work. This explored youth violence and investigated young people's understandings of violence with a focus on gender within intimate partner relationships. Whereas this research although focused on understandings and characterisations, has a more general

focus on perceptions and context due to location. Sundaram's findings in her subsequent studies have suggested that school-based violence prevention must fundamentally address gender norms and expectations to challenge young people's acceptance and tolerance of violence. Other studies have looked at violence from the perspectives of inner-city youth, gangs and school violence (Aldridge et al 2012; Brown and Munn 2008). Furthermore, debate surrounding the use of social media, music and violence has its corresponding links, research in this area of youth violence has sought to clarify this by exploring expressions and contextualise the mediatised world particularly with a focus on gang research. All of which have great merit and add much to our knowledge on youth violence (Pinkney and Robinson-Edwards 2018). Yet pushing forward the agenda of youth voice is an important part of this research process and will add to current debates and knowledge on violence among young people particularly with its focus on rural youth.

Summary and implications for study

The theoretical insights presented within this chapter provides a map for the researcher to follow from the findings and perspectives of others to a consideration of the researchers own position and findings on the research topic (Regional 2015). The research started with a question simply stated as: *How do young people understand violence?* In response to this question it can be argued that violence is seen as normative behaviour, brought on by the structural inequalities of day to day life. Thus, this thesis not only wants to enhance the visibility of young people's voice, but also wants to consider the environments for which the study takes place.

In considering context, it is interesting to see how literature that considers young people and violence, or crime, has a strong focus on urban areas of Britain. While continuing to operate within the confines of a constructivist epistemological perspective (discussed in more detail in chapter four), the literature presented has found both clarity and complexity. The researcher attempted to convey these important elements within the above discussions. Drawing on insights from chapter two, this chapter has provided a central assertion that structures and opportunity can influence an individual to commit transgression and is also a response to the structures of society. This provides an important tool to explore how young people interact, explain and understand their environments. As violence can sometimes overlap with these spaces and places (as discussed in chapter two) it can often be complex and multi-dimensional and is structured by normative orders of the environment. It is within these spaces that young people negotiate their way through

life, but also construct and re-construct how violence is accepted or justified within these social contexts, including the dialogue of the media discussed in the preceding chapter.

The concepts of opportunities and mobilities allows a multidimensional approach to understanding young people and violence, as it can incorporate the diversity required when engaging qualitatively with such phenomena. This requires a commitment to the voices of young people whose lives they are commenting on (Weininger 2005:120).

Consequently, the aim of this chapter is not to explain youthful transgressions but rather to develop a theoretical framework that allows the research to explore violence and young people qualitatively. This 'sets the stage' for the next chapter which operationalises the research questions and methodology utilised for the overall study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

This study explored how young people understand and interpret the term 'violence' with participants aged 11-20 from two locations in Britain. This present chapter outlines the methods and critically appraises them, alongside the epistemological and ontological underpinnings. It will also outline how the data was analysed and the ethical issues inherent in the above. The threestaged approach utilising the qualitative methods of mind maps which led to focus groups and leading into a selection of 'follow up' style interviews will be elaborated on; and the qualitative methodology and methods adopted for this research was used within both (urban and rural) locations of the study in the same order. This was a piece of research that privileges participant opinion as crucial for data collection. In short, a qualitative piece of research that prioritises 'being with' and 'being present' in moments of meaning making as they happen, rather than relying on joint recollection in a different time and space of the interview setting.

By utilising the three-stage approach (which is discussed further throughout this chapter) it aided both participant and researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the topic under study, by allowing development and reflection upon each method used. Furthermore, from a researcher point of view this approach provided the opportunity to develop a refined version of the first phase, but ultimately included all the main discussion points, the refinements surrounded my research skills as opposed to the study design. Following this, significant data analysis occurred using thematic analysis alongside NVIVO which is a qualitative data analysis software programme (QDA) as an assistive apparatus.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to explore and to understand, although it should be mentioned that this cannot be achieved without describing and attempting to explain. Thus, it is for that reason that the author has adopted a wide array of methods and analysis techniques to suit the different stages of the research.

Research framework

The research framework of this thesis establishes its structure and research strategy, as well as the reasons for the selections of the methods subsequently used. This offers the simplest means of engaging with the investigative process of this research project. The ensuing development of this framework has followed a logical course, whereby the purpose of the investigation has thus determined the choice of research methods and shaped the analysis as summarised below.
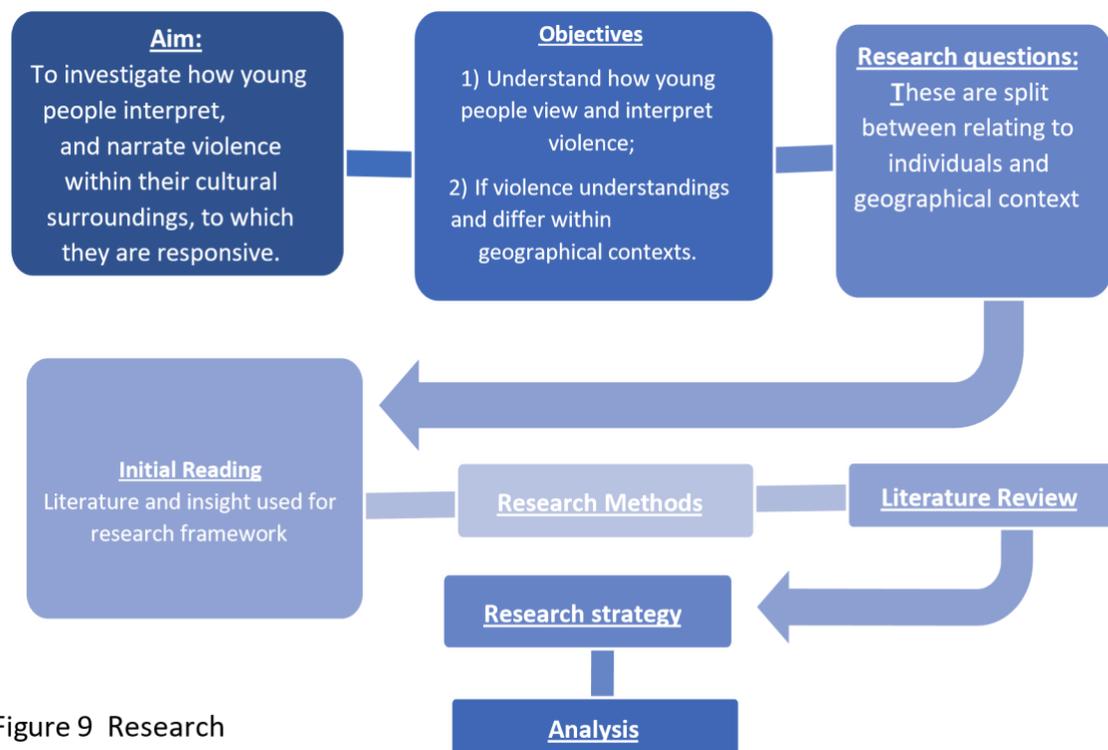
Figure 9 Research Framework

Aim

The central aim of this thesis is to explore how young people interpret, violence within their own cultural surroundings. As this will exclusively focus on their opinion and perceptions this will generate new insight into the relationships and understandings young people have with violence. The findings have been collated with the aim of generating a new theoretical framework, that may shed some light on the deeper reasons why young people use violence simply by how they understand the term itself. This thesis aims to integrate traditional and contemporary theory combined with the exploration from the literature for understanding the relationship between young people and violence.

The following subsections of this chapter is organised as follows. First, the research questions are presented and the influence such questions had upon the methods of data collection subsequently employed. Following this, the methodological approach adopted in the empirical component of this study is addressed. The research's ontological and epistemic basis- that is the theory of being, and the theory of knowledge that underpinned this project. Furthermore, a linear breakdown is presented of how the ontology of the subject lead to a specific epistemology, which itself then leads to a methodological approach for this research.

Second, the methods of data collection are delineated, including how the sample was chosen and accessed, what data collection techniques were employed and to what ends. From here data analysis shall be discussed in terms of its mechanical and interpretive process, therefore, what data analysis actually involved in a mechanical sense (in terms of which software used and the coding framework), alongside how the theory was applied to enhance the heuristic capacities of both.

Third, ethical issues are presented. This study was granted ethical approval by the Nottingham Trent University Research Degree Ethics Committee in 2015, but this was not before significant obstacles were overcome, which mainly involved research safety and safety to participants. Such concerns and the measures taken to alleviate them are presented here. To close the chapter, a brief review of its main contentions is presented.

The research questions

As discussed in previous chapters, there is somewhat of an absence in understanding young people's opinions and perceptions of youth violence within Britain; This is in despite of an array of literature on the proclivities and motivations for violence among the young, there is still a need for further insight into the understanding of such behaviour. In addition, there has been a proliferation of literature surrounding the models and alternatives policy proposals to handle and 'prevent' such behaviour, yet, arguably these often remain distanced from the realities of young people. Therefore, this research seeks to rectify and illuminate some of these understandings further; the main aim can be summarised within the following question, developed in the early stages of the research:

How do young people understand, interpret violent behaviour within the cultural surroundings to which they are responsive? From this the main objectives were to develop a study which answered the broader questions:

- Firstly, to engage young people to explore their understanding and proclivities of the term violence.
- Second, to consider what stimuli would compel them to use or justify violence.
- Third, to explore wider attitudes in relation to how they understand violence, and how this may, or may not have a bearing on how a young person understands or perceives violence.

The project, therefore, became characterised by two separate yet interlinked fields of study: on the one hand, we have the understandings from a young person's perspective on what violence is and, on the other, the potentials to explore if geographical location has any foundation on how young people understand violence. This second point developed into a topic of significance as the study progressed due to the sampling strategy and the locations of the study (as discussed within chapter 1). From this outlook, there was a clear yet divergent set of methodological approaches to utilise. To further such an investigation, it becomes clear, at this point, that different methodological approaches are necessary in order to focus upon the understanding, perceptions

and opinions of violence from young people including, thoughts, actions and motivations for inciting or exploring such behaviour. To do this purely from a theoretical perspective would lack enough depth thus an empirical exploration of this phenomenon would need to take place. Accordingly, the exploration of geographical context on youth violence relies heavily on the literature; that is, to have an over reliance from a small sample (which is not widely representative) would hinder the study.

Thus, a combination of the two is crucial for this section of the study.   At this point the original broad research question is divided into more specific and narrowly focused questions which are presented in the table below (Table 3):

Overarching Questions

Research questions related to personal opinions and understandings of violence and young people	Research questions which can garner information related to geographical context and the understandings attributed by young people to violence.
Who are the young people that are drawn into the so called 'violent society' and why?	Do young people feel youth violence is an issue?
What influences young people's understandings of violence?	Is violence from young people ever justified or accepted by young people?
What goals do young people feel violence (as they understand it) achieve?	Does cultural context have an impact on young people's understanding of violence?

Giving this research a dual formation proved to be the defining framework for the research. As a result, the study proceeded by conducting a primary piece of empirical research, with a sample of young people from two areas in Britain. However, the theoretical endeavour was complimented by non-academic materials too: film, TV, music surveying the cultural field's available to young people in modern Britain, overall providing a deeper understanding and context as to how young people view and understand violence. The rationale for this research is ostensibly simple- it was an exercise in 'expanding the criminological imagination' by combining a range of literature alongside a primary piece of exploratory empirical research. Tackling this piece of research this way, it provides a means for conceptualising 'crime' or in this case, 'violence' in relation to the social.

Running parallel to the above was the empirical investigation of young people's perceptions of violence. Providing that the overall research question is broad and inclusive, the project in this sense was exploratory in nature; designed to encourage opinions and perceptions of what 'violence' is to young people within the Britain today and how they make sense of it. This style of research suited a qualitative methodology, and a semi-opened one at that, the goal being 'naturalistic' ,in the sense that the research was to be carried out in places where young people feel comfortable and which were familiar to them (Trow 1957). In doing so, this also aided the choice of research methods as something that would help gain data for the research question but also be a method that can be used quite easily within the research settings. The mind maps and focus groups were adopted due to its broad nature and combined with the interviews provides an effective means of understanding the phenomenon. Focus groups allow the researcher to document the meaning and negotiation of answers within the cultural practices in which they are provided. The interviews allow for this to be furthered by developing understandings and confirming or discounting as or when necessary (Trow 1957).

As such, this project is representative of an approach that Bryman (2007) terms 'particularistic' in that it follows the lines of 'textbook style' discourses of the research methods literature which claim research questions dictate the methods used. More detail surrounding the influence of the research regarding the empirical component is detailed below.

Methodological approach

An important consideration during this process is to contemplate the paradigmatic foundation for the study itself. Various textbooks focus upon the qualitative versus quantitative debate by illuminating the methodological differences alongside the advantages and disadvantages. However, in designing a research study, it is important to consider how one established what they would do and from which perspective and paradigm it came. Guba and Lincoln (1994: 21) describe a paradigm as:

> *"A set of basic beliefs, that deals with ultimate's or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the 'world' the individuals place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts."*

Thus, by reviewing this essential quote the idea of choosing a paradigm is not a technicality but rather a necessity. Choosing a paradigm forces us to question our own conceptions and interpretations of reality (ontology) and thus begs the questions of what we seek in our own research. Subsequently, it is vital that we consider the balancing component of what we consider to constitute knowledge (epistemology) and consequently the approach we take to suit the principles chosen (methodology) (Bryman 2004). These terms will be discussed within the following sections before a more detailed outline of how the three staged research approach was utilised.

Interpretivism

The literature review presented a range of studies that have looked at violence and young people or violence more broadly. Many of those studies were characterised by a positivist paradigm and thus quantitative in design, which in some cases failed to represent the deeper understandings that young people bring through in their own stories, meanings and experiences. This research has therefore utilised interpretivism to provide the research and the participants involved with the flexibility to investigate meanings and experiences in depth and in context. Interpretivism is not a unified and unequivocal tradition. Butler (1998) identifies several variations of interpretivism, such as, conservative, constructivist, critical and deconstructionist. This research focuses on

constructivist interpretivism, this means that the analysis will focus on hermeneutic traditions to provide meaning, particularly allowing for the youth voice to come through in the findings.

The aim of understanding the subjective meanings of a group or individuals' domain is crucial within the interpretive paradigm. Weber (1964) was a strong advocate for this and distinguished between three modes of understanding. There are two broad types; firstly, rational understanding, this produces grasp of social action within its own context. The second is empathetic or sometimes known as appreciative understanding which involves grasping the emotional context of the action. Furthermore, Weber (1964) describes two versions of rational understanding. One is direct, and one is motivational; Direct refers to the understanding of human expression. This form is immediate, unambiguous and happens within an everyday situation, something that the research will achieve via focus groups as one of the research methods of data collection in the study. Alternatively, motivational understanding is concerned with the choice of means to achieve a set goal. This study will utilise Weber's mode of understanding whilst analysing the data. For this research however the researcher will mainly focus on the motivational understanding behind how young people view, discuss and express violence.

The core idea of interpretivism is to work with the subjective meanings already prevalent within the social world, areas that will be present within all 3 stages but particularly within the mind mapping methods that will ignite their thoughts on the topic. By aiding participants to engage with meanings that may be already present within the social world will help them acknowledge their existence and question them later. As with violence, by acknowledging young people within this context they will be able to express their opinions and reconstruct meaning in their own words, and as such we can then begin to use these as building blocks to theorise the phenomenon, (Goldkhul, 2011)

Accordingly, Schutz (1967) sides with German philosopher Husserl (1954) in that the *'life world'* of understandings is then carried into the scientific quantitative world. In doing so, it leaves particular things unexplained and unexamined. Origins of social science have their place in the 'life world' which positivists can in some instances fail to realise. Therefore, in order to get a full picture of what is really happening in any given situation or culture, and to put research on a firmer footing it is necessary to examine the character of daily life from the view of the social actors within it. Central to Schutz's (1967) analysis is the postulate of subjective interpretation whereby social scientific accounts must treat social actors as conscious beings whose activities have meaning

for them. Hence, why the social reality for young people and violence that may take place is the outcome of interpretations made by the young people themselves, and by combining the three stage approach to the research this will not only provide the participants with time to think through their own understandings, but develop them as the research process progresses.

Epistemology and the ontology of the research.

A solution would seem to lie in Trow's apparently sound advice that '*the problem under investigation properly dictates the methods of investigation*' (Trow 1957:33) Accordingly, the previous debate emphasises the philosophical issues which underpin much if not all of the discussion, which have been explicated at an epistemological level. Bryman, (1984) discusses how a distinction is drawn between epistemological and technical issues in relation to the qualitative and quantitative controversy. There has been a tendency for such debates to oscillate between epistemological and technical modes of expression (Bryman 1984). However, one should remember that it is not the case whether 'A' is better than 'B' but which is the appropriate technique (Bryman 1984).

There are three main questions that Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest should be answered before starting out on fieldwork and data collection. The first is the ontological question, which asks what is the nature of reality, and subsequently, what is there that can be known about it? Secondly, we have the epistemological questions which asks: What is the relationship between the known and would be knower (i.e. the researcher) and what can be known. As a result, the answer given to this question is constrained by the previous answer. Lastly, the methodological question; how can the inquirer (researcher/would be knower) go about finding whatever can be known? In order to answer the third question with confidence a researcher should know the answer to the previous two questions and to understand that not just any methodology is appropriate. As such, it is necessary to outline the following processes of the present research in the following manner: firstly, it's theory of the phenomenon (the ontological position); secondly, its theory of knowledge formation (its epistemological basis) and finally, how does this feed into its research practice, (methodological position) which ultimately dictated the methods used.

Ontology: Theorising the phenomenon.

What does it mean to be in the world? A question commonly linked with ontology, and for this research it is concerned with the human subject and its own understanding of its being in relation to violence; that is, how young people understand violence and how, if at all, violence fits into their social milieus. In a real sense then this is a project which concerns itself with the underlying nature of a human *being,* and how it relates to the issue of youth and violence. This research draws upon a Zezkian influence, an ontology that recognises the importance of material reality alongside the ideals and nature of human beings (Johnston 2008), this is a result of the participants involved, the chosen topic and the locality of the research. This research is dependent on a constructivist ontology, as Orlikawski and Baraudi (1991:14) suggest, *"The social world is not 'given' rather the world is produced and reinforced by humans through action and interaction."* Thus, the present research can be understood as adopting an ontology of the subject as existing at a two-way intersection; a phenomenon which is social (including the materialist components of violence among youth) alongside biological; that is, centrality of ideals and natural being. Hence the justification for the research being interpretivist in nature.

Epistemology: Knowing the phenomenon.

Importantly however, now the ontology is known it prompts questions around what is exactly to be researched. Furthermore, how much can be 'known'? As it is predicated on the nature versus nurture debate with regards to youth violence one of the main dimensions of the research is the social aspect as key focus for analysis. This is the dimension which most strongly accords with the research question; 'how do young people understand and interpret violence? To answer such a question in accordance with the above debate, requires an epistemology which is socially sensitive. To engender such an epistemic position can be found in the work of Jack Katz (2002:255) who claims that:

> *"If we start research by describing the nature of social phenomena as they are experienced, it will make a difference in structuring data gathering; in developing a research craft capable of seeing practice, interaction manoeuvres, and tacit embodiment; in shaping a research agenda; and ultimately, where we end substantively."*

Essentially what Katz is advocating here is a naturalistic social epistemology which sees social order and interaction as paramount for human existence, and as such, the sites where knowledge of such phenomena can be found. Arguably, the object of analysis here is how young people understand the term violence and the symbolic qualities they align to the term. This is in a constant state of meaning making; constituted through human agency. Katz's argument can be adapted to form the epistemology of this thesis; the belief of knowledge of young people's perceptions of violence is to be found within the social contexts of which it is used, again the epistemology in this context will largely be influenced by peers and geography, as different understandings, justifications and explanations of violence may take place. Resultantly, the epistemic position adopted here can be termed as constructivist. That is an epistemic position that recognises that biological and natural tendencies as 'real', but also that they are bound up dialectically with construction and constraint of social action. Based on the brief yet informative discussion on paradigms and the attempts to explore 'meaning' or 'interpretations of experiences or understandings' as the founding basis for this research can therefore be neatly encapsulated as an interpretivist study drawing on social construction. How this has informed research design is discussed within the next section.

Methods of data collection

A combination of data collection was used to provide a robust account of how young people understand youth violence within Britain; including literature reviews, field and desk-based research. The three empirical research methods employed were 1) mind maps, 2) focus groups and finally 3) one to one semi-structured interviews. These were used a part of staged approach to the data collection process. Firstly, the initial mind mapping phase provided the initial findings that aided the development, themes and base for the discussion topic that were used within the focus groups and interviews. All of which came from the young people themselves; by having this initial stage in the research process it allows for the rest of the data collection to flow freely as the young people have had the opportunity to think through some of their early thoughts. Following this, the focus groups were the second phase, and this aided in free thought discussion around the topic of violence, where young people can unpick their thoughts a little deeper whilst listening to others. The third and final stage are the interviews. The semi-structured nature of these

interviews allows for participants to draw on themes and issues discussed previous, whilst giving the flexibility for researcher probing.

The grounded thematic approach

For the purposes of data collection and analysis, a combination of Grounded Theory and Thematic Analysis was embraced. Combining the two is attractive in its design as it allows for flexibility. In view of that, these particular applications have several features, 1) to move analysis beyond the level of description. 2) To provide the researcher with the ability to define patterns within the data. 3) The opportunity to develop new concepts rather than rely on old theories, thus being able to theory build rather than theory test. 4) The use of memo writing as an additional tool alongside analysis in order to explore codes and categories, illuminating any gaps the data may have (Silverman 2016). Equally, the inductive approach is evident within grounded theory and thematic analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1990) alongside connecting with the researcher's epistemology and ontology of the study.

Such approaches (or reasoning) intend to aid an understanding of meaning, it is the philosophical idea based on the researcher's curiosity to gather data relevant to the predetermined topic, where theoretical conclusions can be postulated. Thus, the approaches adopted is applied successfully within the given context of the research. In developing summary themes or categories from the raw data ("data reduction"). These approaches are evident in many qualitative data analyses. With some describing their approach explicitly as "inductive" (e.g., Backett and Davison 1995; Stolee et al 1999).

By combining the two approaches for this study, it has allowed for a flexible inductive coding and analysis practice, rather than the more rigid use of grounded theory which relies upon 'open' and 'axial' coding (Campbell et al 2003). Although qualitative research tends to come under scrutiny by Positivists and more quantitative research, grounded inductive theory can offer a quality reassurance of data through the refinement of concepts eventually leading to a saturation in data collection and analysis (Kemshall 1998). Moreover, as this is a method which incorporates theory construction it is also a method which has developed over the years since its first conception from Glasser and Straus (1967) who aimed to construct fresh sociological theories though an iterative process using inductive qualitative data (Silverman 2016).

In respect of this study, the researcher has drawn on the work of Glasser and Strauss (1967), Charmaz (2000) and Layder (1998). Within their seminal text, Glasser and Strauss argued against the growing disciplinary trends, and sought to transcend shortcomings of the early influences. Accordingly, the core components of each analysis framework are to analyse categories the researcher develops whilst studying the data rather than using preconceived concepts on the phenomenon in question. By doing so, this moves the study towards an abstract analysis of the given phenomenon (in this case young people and violence) while keeping the ability to elucidate what is happening within the empirical world of which it is being researched (Maguire and Delahunt 2017).

As the above sections have illuminated, the research questions and aims, alongside the researchers existing ontological and epistemological stance require that a qualitative methodology is the only viable option here. In this sense two methods for data collection emerges here as obvious candidates with roots in qualitative, interpretive study. Focus groups and semi structured interviews. The research question requires to elucidate understanding on the topic of

'young people and violence' in terms of their opinions and influences for the use or non-use of violence within the cultural surroundings to which they are responsive, whether that be within a rural or urban centred environment. Thus, the selections of methods subsequently chosen was evolutionary, in a sense that it naturally developed due to the progress of all the above decisions during the study's development.

Summary

In summary, this is a small-scale qualitative research project which has aligned itself with the principles of an interpretivist epistemology alongside a constructivist ontology. As highlighted above, the research design was ultimately influenced by the research questions and overall aim of the study- "How do young people understand, interpret and utilise violence within the cultural surroundings to which they are responsive?" The aspects of grounded theory aligning with thematic analysis allows for a flexible and systematic way of collecting and analysing data. By combing the two concepts it has provided the study with the ability to move beyond purely descriptive analysis and move towards an analytical and deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The way in which the research design was operationalised is explored further, however, for now, other important facets of the research study are reviewed looking at the how access was gained in order to study the chosen field and how a sample was chosen.

Part 2:

Gaining access and identifying a sample.

One of the many problems that face researchers carrying out any type of research is that of gaining access and keeping it. Accordingly, when the topic under exploration is potentially sensitive, it can make the process of gaining access that bit longer and harder (Shenton and Hayter 2002). As a result, a considerable amount of time was set aside in this task to ensure that the gatekeepers were confident in my research ability and that they would provide the access needed to conduct this piece of research effectively.

To ensure that the data collected was rich, it was crucial to gain this data in settings participants were comfortable in. This is because, as Bryman (1988) states, "inside" or "first" person accounts can provide a real picture of an organisations (in this case young people) quirkiness. For this particular research subject, it followed the 'four-stage' access model proposed by Buchanan et al, (1998), that is- getting in, getting on, getting out and getting back, a model that is often referred to in the methodology literature (Lee 1993; Robson 2002). For this research, gaining access to these groups of young people presented challenges. I initially contacted several youth clubs, to explain my research, the importance of it and how it involves the participation of young people. The several gatekeepers who were initially contacted decided the research was not something they wanted to be part of as it was exploring violence and young people, which made them feel cautious and thus unwilling to participate.

As a result, I decided to utilise some previous work contacts to gain access. This turned out to be a successful starting point, resulting in two distinctive locations – one urban and one rural. Contact with the first location was initiated via a research conference where I was able to network with schools in the area. As a result, I found one secondary school that was interested and provided me with a further opportunity to present my research to some of the staff at the school in order to showcase how this research will be used, why it is being done and to what ends. Once rapport had been established with the gatekeepers of that school, they were able to provide the research study with willing participants. They also aided in the signing of consent forms from both participants and guardians which provided a quick and easy turnaround for both researcher and participants.

A similar result occurred when I utilised prior networks in my previous professional field of youth work with children and families. This enabled me to gain access to participants whom otherwise may not be involved in such research due to the rural location. Although I had a good relationship with these gatekeepers, I utilised the same techniques as before and took time to present the idea of the research, why it was important and explained how the willing participants were to be involved. This group of gatekeepers recognised the potential value of the project, as they had previous experience of involving young people within what some may call 'sensitive research'. Because of this, it was decided that utilising previous contacts and going via institutional access proved to be more successful than approaching young people on the street. Not only would this be unsafe but ethically unsatisfactory. However, by utilising previously known contacts who assisted with the initial meet and greet access for the part one of the research was a crucial turning point and kick started the data collection phase for the study. Furthermore, once these meetings were obtained with the respective establishment it was important to be clear about objectives, the time and resources needed (which was resourced by the researcher) and most importantly, deal with any apprehensions the gatekeeper may have in a positive manner (Buchanan et al 1998). In order for the establishments to feel confident that they were not being used and abused to the researchers benefit, a final executive report was offered exclusive for their institution.

Once the access had been approved and granted, access to the young people who participated in this study was more or less subject to the gatekeepers. These were the people who took an active role in recruiting and identifying participants for the study alongside the sampling information provided.

The sampling strategy employed for this research was a non-probability, purposive sampling technique (Blaxter et al 2001) – a 'convenience' sample. This strategy was used as gatekeepers were utilised in settings where young people were known to gather and provided access to participants who may want to take part in the study. These sites were therefore seen as 'convenient' sources of data for the research (Maxwell 2013). The use of convenience sampling is common in research with young people, particularly where participants may be from difficult to reach groups. The sampling criteria was deliberately kept open insofar as participants had to fall within the age range of 11-20 years-old.

Having the institutions on board and across two different locations in Britain it enabled the study to adopt a new geographical focus, and attention to the accompanying demographics. Of note,

there were obvious demographic differences in terms of ethnicity between the two geographical locations. Thus, the urban location consisted of a diverse range of ethnicities from BAME (black, Asian minority ethnic) backgrounds, and the rural location was predominantly a white demographic. Patton, (1990) suggests that although there can be a high level of subjectivity when using convenience sampling techniques, there are also various benefits such as having the opportunity to carry out data reviews and analysis simultaneously. Ultimately, after what was a long process of trying to gain access via a gatekeeper to then gain consent from these willing individuals, the sampling strategy chosen not only worked well in the long run but also fit with the outlined objectives and the context in which the research is taking place (youth club and secondary school). It also highlighted if young people's perceptions and opinions vary dependent upon their location.

Identity as a researcher

There has been a long-time debate among scholars as to how researchers may influence or have an effect on their projects. In the past, academics have focused on how researchers interact as 'insiders or outsiders' (Naples 1996). Insider research refers to when researchers conduct research with populations of which they are members of (Kanuha 2000). Thus, the researcher shares an identity, language and experiences with the participants. Outsider research refers to the opposite. It is a debate used which focused on the positionalities of the researcher. In the first instance as I did not know these young people nor did I share an identity with them; I positioned myself as an outsider, however, as time passed and questions were being answered, in some instances, I saw myself becoming an insider (to an extent). To further clarify, the insider binary I was experiencing at the time was more to do with empathising with their understandings, situations and perspectives. For example, it became easier to understand certain perspectives when cultural influences such as music or television were discussed.

Frequently, issues such as 'race' and 'gender' can become topical within the discourses (Young 2004) and Young (2004) discusses how researchers who do not share these categories with their participants, find it more difficult to gain their participants trust (p187). From this perspective, the debate continues as women interviewing men hold outsider positions as women, "non-whites" interviewing "whites" hold outsider positions as "non-whites", and so on. Such a view leads to a

rigid dichotomisation of the insider versus outsider binary, which scholars have recently challenged (Young 2004:190), an aspect that was taken into consideration when conducting fieldwork.

Before commencing on this project, I was aware that a professional identity has the potential to conflict with personal identity, being that myself- a young mixed- race female, could have an impact on how the young people respond. Not necessarily to the questions asked but to the overall presence of myself as a female researcher. Possibly, young teenage boys reacting in a more macho way in order to 'impress' or show off. Furthermore, being a researcher in the Northwest of Britain held its own concerns, although this was a familiar area (from previous work experience) it felt different being there not as a project worker but as a researcher, I became very aware of my presence; being an ethnically diverse female within a very (almost exclusively) white area.

The reason being, Britain had just voted to leave the European Union via the 'Brexit' campaign, and this area voted majority 'leave'(Electoral Commission 2019). Prior to this, naivety may have consumed my being to the point where I did not see myself apart from anyone else. However, in the constraints of this research project I became aware of it more so after the political (and media propelled) campaign and remained aware as I commenced on the fieldwork in this part of the country. Having said that, there were no negative reactions, the young people were willing to talk about all aspects of youth violence, it was a pleasant experience. As a result, I did not position myself as an 'outsider' or an 'insider' but pivoted between the two (Corbin-Dwyer and Buckle 2009). By doing so, the rapport between myself as the researcher, and all the young people who participated grew faster and stronger within the period given. Furthermore, when certain instances such as cultural influences were present, this gave me the opportunity to 'be one of them' and probe further and this was further enhanced by understanding my positioning as a researcher within the field of study and how this shaped the research.

As this study aimed to understand violence form the voices of young people, an aspect that is viewed important both methodologically and philosophically to the study design, it was important to think about my positioning and how it would aid this. Taking the above reflections and insights into account and to further elaborate, I tackled my own researcher identity from seeing myself from three perspectives. The first is my reasoning for doing the research; I wanted to further understand how young people interpret the term violence, and in doing so, this need for further

understanding and knowledge was underpinned by the following two areas of my professional and academic background. My professional background as a youth worker with at risk young people not only drove my research interests, but also made me understand young people not as a homogenous group characterised by broad labels or dichotomous categories, but to accept that young people's lives, and understandings are a lot more complex and their subjective experiences of everyday life have a place within academic research. Although some of these understandings may seem irrational, they are subjectively rational to the young people who are discussing them (Ungar 2004; 2007; Magnus and Scott 2020). Such work needs to sit within the criminological tradition, and although criminology has a wealth of knowledge and understanding on crime and violence, there is a need for more research to be done with young people from their own perspectives (Arani et 2019; Smee et al 2019). To achieve this there needs to be a stronger appreciation of the nuances and gradients that young people bring to bear, thus constructing research that considers *their* perspectives and experiences (Wood 2009). As this research takes on concepts of societal understandings along with the criminogenic nature of violence, this research has two strands of sociological and criminological enquiry. Whilst the researcher acknowledges the diversity in the field, emphasis is placed on the understanding of violence from the voices of young people and bears in mind that such exploration does not stand impartial from the impact of society and how this may alter how one understands or accepts violence.   The following sections of this chapter will now consider the methods of data collection.

Methods of data collection

A combination of data collection methods was used to provide a robust account of how young people understand youth violence within Britain; including literature reviews, fieldwork and deskbased research. The main methods of data collection were used in three-stage approach that used 1) mind maps, 2) focus groups and 3) one to one semi-structured interviews. All methods were conducted in that order across both locations. All participants had the opportunity to be part of each method but due to timing of exams there was an overall attrition of eleven participants from the entire study.

Unheard voices and the methods to get them heard.

Before the fieldwork commenced the topic of violence and young people was studied, providing the researcher with a full understanding of the research context. With broad extensive readings of criminological and sociological literature, this allowed the researcher to position the argument within the wider dialogue of youth and the displacement of young people's voices. Thus, the study's primary focus was giving young people an opportunity to have their voices heard on a topic pertinent to them. Social language is what we learn and how we speak, and within the context of this study it is the socially constructed and significant varieties of language that will be highlighted. Within this particular context, the term 'social language' will be used to talk underline how young people use language and terminology to discuss violence. Furthermore, this involves a lot more than just language, this can involve ways of acting, interacting and feeling, all of which is important to consider when looking at the understanding of violence (Gee 2014).

Granting this study is not an ethnographic piece of research, popular ethnographic methods still have advantageous uses for this study. It can situate the research within a cultural context, which is vital when constructing and understanding violence and young people's perception of it. Willis (1977:3) notes for example, that *'use of 'ethnographic' techniques is dictated by the nature of interest within the cultural'*. By using such techniques, they are suited to record sensitivity, meanings and values. By combining the use of cultural criminology, (as discussed in the previous chapters), 'ethnographic' methods reflect tradition of deep inquiry into the situated dynamics of criminal and deviant subcultures (Ferrall 1995: 399).

The wanting and ultimate needing of criminological 'Verstehen' in terms of imperative understanding and sympathetic participation can be tricky to come by. Using the chosen methods (as mentioned briefly above) the researcher can manoeuvre deep inside the cultures of youth and their perceptions of violence. The concept of gaining verstehen thus includes the researcher, and the researchers own situated experiences in the collective construction of (violence and) reality (Ferrall 1995;400). In order to fulfil this requirement, a variety of techniques and methods were adopted, and these are discussed within the next sections of this chapter, in the order that they took place.

Mind mapping and application of method

In order to break down the hierarchal relationships that can be involved within research I wanted to include the young people as part of the process. To do this effectively mind mapping was used

to get the young people thinking about the topic of discussion. A mind map is a diagram used to represent concepts and ideas that are linked radially around a central concept or word. For the purposes of this research, the word 'violence' was the main concept (Burgess-Allen and OwenSmith 2010). From previous professional experiences, I felt this was important to do, in order to provide the participants with a bit of power and autonomy. Furthermore, not only is it a fun way to get the participants initially involved in the research process but it was a chance to break away from traditional research by involving the 'researched' in some stages of the research process (Pain 2004). Some examples by the participants are provided below in figures 10 and 11.

Fig 10: Example of map from the Urban Cohort
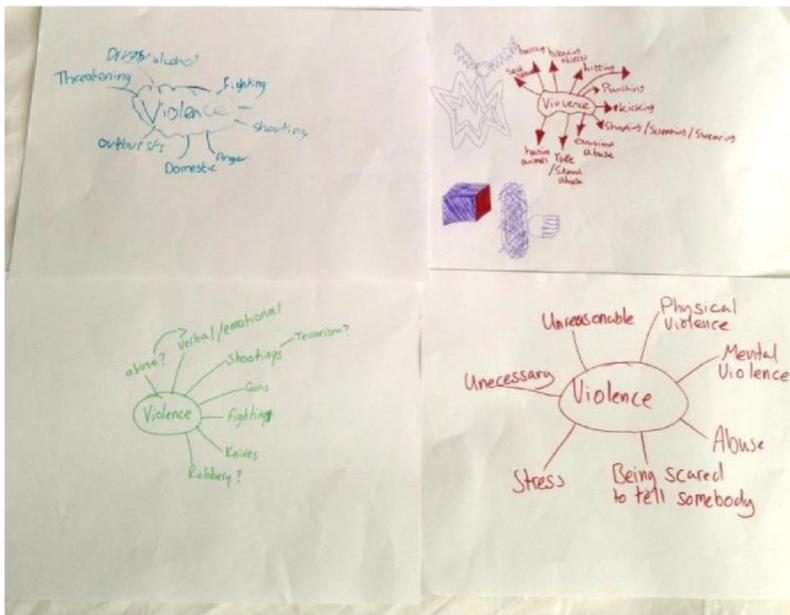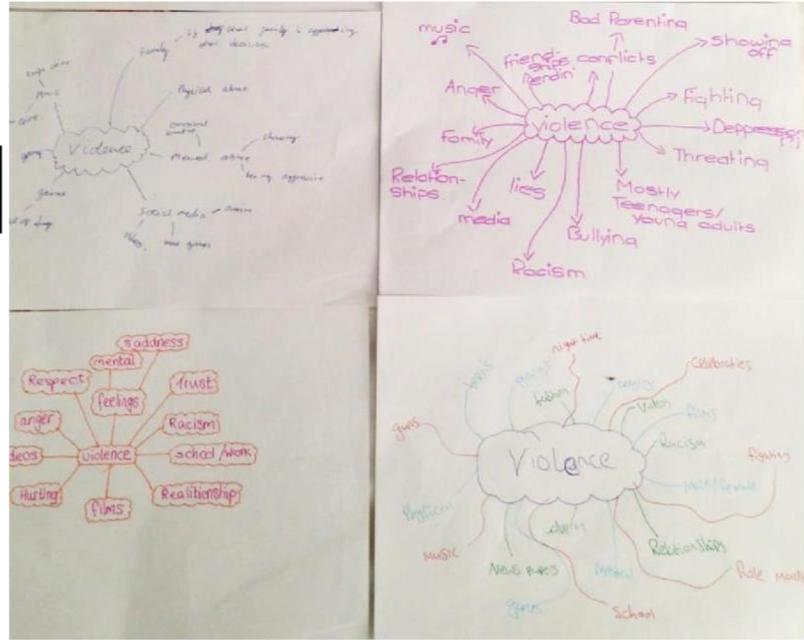
Fig 11: Example mind map from the Rural Cohort

By using the mind maps to start the data collection it provided a nice route into the focus group work as an extension of what they have already been involved with. Furthermore, it has prepared them mentally, for the discussions that are about to take place, and from this the young people approached the research with a lot more enthusiasm and focus. Additionally, as the mind map develops the researcher has the opportunity to generate coded categories 'live' as the process is happening, as it is visibly available; a process which for example in traditional methods take place after transcribing (Burgess-Allen and Owen-Smith 2010). A significant challenge when using mind maps is the validity, especially avoiding researcher bias via interpretation. In order to avoid this

potential pitfall, the mind map exercises were followed up with focus groups and interviews in order to clarify any contradictions or unclearly expressed statements (Burgess-Allen and OwenSmith 2010). From here the findings would be thematically analysed, hence ensuring validity of the research is intact. How the focus groups were carried out is discussed in the next section.

Defining focus groups

There are many definitions of a focus group in the literature, as such, features like 'organised discussion' (Kitzinger 1994), 'collective activity' (Powell et al 1996), 'social events' and 'interaction' (Kitzinger 1995) identify the contribution that focus groups make to social research. In a simplistic explanation, this is group discussions surrounding a particular topic.

Morgan, (1997) suggests that focus groups are a form of group interviewing but it is important to distinguish between the two. Group interviewing involves interviewing a number of people at the same time, the emphasis being on questions and responses between the researcher and participants. Focus groups however rely on the interaction within the group, based on the topics suggested by the researcher. Therefore, one of the key characteristics of focus groups is its ability to produce data that provides insight and interaction between participants.

In order to produce this insight on a topic that is potentially sensitive such as violence, we must also consider that it is a social issue. Focus groups provide a tool that would not ignore the shared social and cultural aspects and the meanings young people attribute to violence during discussion (O'Neill 2001; Renold and Barter 2003). Interaction between participants will capture knowledge production and the ways in which situations occur and how location may affect understanding (Barter and Renold 2003).

Kreuger, (1988) suggests that focus groups are used at the preliminary or exploratory stages of a study; as such, this is what happened for this research project. The focus groups were utilised after the mind map exercise and prior to the semi-structured interviews. This is in order to highlight any similarities or differences the young people may have towards the topic of violence and how this was communicated between one another. Methodology literature states that this method can

be used on its own or in triangulation with other methods to complement one another. For this research, I found using focus groups alongside semi-structured interviews gave me the ability to double check understandings (Morgan 1997) or examples provided.

As with all methods they each have limitations and advantages. Kitzinger (1994; 1995) contends that interaction is a crucial for focus groups to operate efficiently. Effective interaction highlights participant's views of the world, or in this case, violence. Furthermore, by doing so it provides them with a space to discuss their beliefs and values in relation to the topic of discussion, but also, an opportunity to reconsider their own understandings in relation to one another in the group. Contradictions and illustrations were provided throughout. Furthermore, young people's definitions of violence changed as debates and discussions moved forward. The young people (participants) were almost trying to re-evaluate what they thought violence was as others voiced their opinions.

Application of focus groups

For the focus groups to work effectively, the groups were arranged by age and gender. In total, there were five focus between the two locations. In the urban locality, there were three focus groups due to the sheer number of participants. One group consisted of females, one group consisted of males and the final group was mixed gender. In the second (rural) location, there were two mixed groups as the participants felt more comfortable doing it this way as they all knew one another. Upon reflection, this decision was probably due to the participants being of an older age and being more confident discussing this topic between themselves. Whereas in the urban locality it was overall a younger cohort, and some felt more comfortable being separated by age and gender, particularly the youngest participants. Again, for the mixed group, they were older and more comfortable discussing the topic of violence between themselves. By asking, the participants how they would prefer to conduct the focus groups gave them some autonomy over the research process, and splitting the groups up this way worked effectively, generating good discussion and a good discussion was created.

As a result, focus groups can elicit information in a way that allows the researcher to find out why an aspect of a phenomenon is salient (Morgan 1997). Thus, not only does this method allow

young people to have their voices heard which is pertinent for this research but accordingly, the gap between what people say and how they understand this can be better understood (Lankshear 1993). Lankshear goes on to argue that if multiple understandings and meanings are revealed by participants, multiple explanations of their behaviour and attitudes will be more readily articulated.

The focus groups were split into three discussion points; Causes and triggers, gender and violence and defining violence. The first part was very much an open discussion that young people guided which explored two areas:

- What do you think causes young people to use violence?

- Why do you think violence happens with young people?

Probing was a key element within the focus groups and there were a few instances, where the researcher intervened to expand the debate or enhance any specifics that arose during conversations. Although, some (Ritchie and Lewis 2003) may argue that intervening can alter the 'natural;' course of dialogue, intervention at all times were based on the conversation at hand or as something that had emerged as a component of violence and young people.

Continuing with the importance of providing young people a voice, this project along with the chosen research methods should not be underestimated. It provided the participants with the chance to work collaboratively combined with having the chance to be involved in the decisionmaking progress, they decide which direction the discussion moves in, how much information they want to provide and so forth. This for young people is empowering, because for that moment in time, they are valued as experts, within their own right as young people (Race et al 1994).

As a researcher I am also aware of the limitations this method beholds, contradictory to empowerment is the feeling of intimidation, and inclusivity was a key objective, yet, you cannot force somebody to speak. As such, I did not force them to talk, I found the less I forced the more they spoke. The focus group would work best where the researcher would participate only at the beginning allowing for a semi non-directive approach to take place, therefore only interjecting when necessary to keep the discussion going (Barter and Renold 2003). A probe here and there

was enough to engender an environment where the young people felt they could make a difference. Providing the young people with questions such as *'if you were in charge, how would you stop or prevent youth violence?'* gave them a chance to become actively involved (Race et al 1994). In keeping with the participant involvement, the interviews were conducted next and are further discussed below.

Interviews as a research method and application in the field

Moreover, the data collection was enhanced further by using semi-structured interviews. The interview has become one of the most widespread and knowledge producing practices across the social sciences, (Brinkman 2014). Dunn (2005:79) explains that interviews are verbal interchanges where one person attempts to elicit information from the other person by asking a series of questions or prompts. As with the focus group, the semi structured interview provides a basis for a conversational tone, thus offering participants a chance to explore the issues important to them.

Interviews were conducted via a 1-1 basis with the majority of young people who participated in the focus group. All interviews were audio recorded as were the focus groups and transcribed verbatim directly after. In total, there were twenty-one interviews. There was an attrition of eleven participants due to external circumstances (as previously discussed), however, as the researcher I felt theoretical saturation was reached from the data already garnered, and it was at this point I concluded the data collection phase of the research process. However, to make this work as effectively and as efficiently as possible with the participants I had, I shared control of this exercise with the respondent (Henn et al 2009), and in doing so this allowed myself as the researcher to better understand the respondent's viewpoint. This is a crucial link between my overarching aim and this method. It is allowing individual's voice to be fed through and highlighted within the thesis.

Silverman (2005:154) refers to interviews as a "*a realist approach, It treats respondents answers as describing some external reality or internal experience as if such data provides factual accounts of people's lives.*" By using semi structured interviews, it allowed the researcher to develop important lines of enquiry, whilst allowing for rich and meaningful data to be collected. This method has been beneficial as it takes account for past and present as opposed to attitude

surveys that elucidate mostly dominant and explicit present time perspectives (Wengraf 2001). Nevertheless, it should be understood that absolute objectivity can be an issue and open to critique when using this method. Conversely, it can be argued that all research is subjective (Henn et al 2009). The interviews conducted were audio recorded, and participants were made aware of this prior to it commencing. The ethical consideration will be looked in in more depth in the next chapter.

Regarding methods discussed, the wanting and ultimate need of criminological 'verstehen' in terms of imperative understanding and sympathetic participation can be tricky to come by, using the aforementioned methods this has allowed deep movement inside the cultures of youth and their perceptions of violence. By dismantling dualistic epistemic hierarchies that position the researcher over and apart from the research methods, the concept of gaining verstehen thus includes the researcher, and their own situated experiences, in the collective construction of crime or in this case, violence (Ferrall 1996).

Overall, as the previous sections has elucidated, the methods chosen were the most appropriate, providing access to complex contextual data concerning perceptions, motivations and understandings from the target group under investigation (Silverman 2005). Whilst I recognise that the interview data gathered through this study has its limitations, for instance, making generalisable claims (Bryman 2012), I am satisfied that the methods chosen are the correct ones for this this research study. The next section of this chapter will discuss the ethical consideration involved within this research project and the data analysis techniques used to interpret findings.

Summary

The research design was influenced by the original research question of exploring how young people understand violence. This is reliant exclusively on their perceptions and opinions on the topic. Thus, gaining the right sample, and using the correct methods were of high importance. As the study moved forward the interplay of theory and data had been considered, and this is further explored throughout the following chapters of the thesis. For now, we turn our attention to other important facets of the research design, starting with a review of ethical considerations which this research is located.

Part 3:

Ethical considerations

The intentions from the start of this process and especially when designing the study were to be as transparent and open as possible. When considering ethical approaches this also means bearing in mind, the processes and systems involved within the research itself. Especially about how potentially sensitive the topic was. With studies that focus exclusively on children and young people, researchers can face a number of challenges and ethical matters. Most importantly, including informed consent, confidentiality and access are among the few. This is such within all research, but these issues take on extra substance when involving young people (Einarsdóttir 2007), therefore, making it ethically appropriate was vital (Sieber 1992).

Ethical standards

Nottingham Trent University College Research Ethics Degree Committee granted the ethical approval required to carry this study forward towards the end of 2015. To effectively gain this approval, a comprehensive report had to be written and submitted; outlining the ethical procedures and considerations for the study. That particular document has guided this research, and although the majority of the procedures have remained intact, a reflective account was embraced in order to fully understand the process and consider how effective the procedures and methods used were.

Informed consent

To ensure this was effectively conducted, informed consent was gained throughout the research process, from both participant (young person) and their care giver, (in the form of a signed consent form). This meant that participants were entering the research process voluntarily, by having a full understanding of the nature of the study and the danger or obligations that were included within participation, (Bodgen and Bilken 1998). To confirm that the participants were fully aware of the

research and its processes, they were provided with information in a language that was appropriate for their age, it also stated their voluntary nature and right to withdraw at any time, (Parson and Stephenson 2003). Such considerations can become an issue for researchers working with children and young people, and these can become problematic for several reasons, the most important of which is the power inequality that can arise between the researcher and his or her participants, (Einarsdóttir 2007). As a result, participants may feel that they cannot withdraw from the study because of the adult to young person context. However, by viewing consent as an ongoing process throughout the study, this potential pitfall and uncomfortability for the participants has been averted (Alderson 2000). Participants were fully informed of the research aims and objectives prior to agreeing to be part of the focus group and again before being interviewed were advised of their right to decline any particular question(s) and to terminate the interview if they so choose.

Confidentiality and anonymity

In addition, I have taken all the necessary steps to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants by using pseudonyms within the write up of the thesis to hide any participant or institution that was involved. Not only was this to protect the young person involved within the research process but also to assure them that their trust and confidence will not be betrayed, (Hill 2005). Furthermore, participants are made aware of the debriefing process after the interviews and focus groups, and if needed can be directed to the appropriate networks who can deal with their issue in an effective manner.

Additionally, I made a conscious effort after reviewing the focus group data, to engender an environment within the interviews where the participants felt they had power and support to say what they felt, rather than what they think should be said. My intention here was to abandon traditional hierarchal relationships, between researcher and participant (Mies 1993), and I adopted the strategy of giving a brief biography of my past work experience with young 'at risk' people and some various situations I've dealt with, to let them know that I do understand the issues that can arise, and I was not just 'another adult'. This had the added benefit of allowing for a fuller sharing experience and assisted with the desire to conduct ethically sound and transparent research.

Legality and debriefing

Prior to the study commencing the health and safety of the participants and the researcher was paramount and was to be considered throughout. The researcher had undergone all the necessary legal checks required by the university's ethics committee and the government prior to commencing any fieldwork with children and young people. For this particular study, it was the process of having an 'enhanced disclosed' check as managed by the criminal Record Bureau. Furthermore, for young people to feel completely comfortable during the study a debrief form was presented to them before the study commenced. This provided information on who to talk to if they felt at all uncomfortable, but also reassured them that they are fully supported if participating in this study.

Summary

This study had utilised a three staged methodology for data collection. The two main data collection methods were focus groups and semi-structured and 1-1 interviews. As an introductory and exploratory phase of the research mind maps were initially used to get the young people thinking about what they are about to discuss. Ethical and methodological issues were reviewed in their application to study, alongside potential pitfalls and how they were overcome. In the next section of this chapter, the procedures for data analysis and coding are reviewed. This part of the chapter also includes a review of the transcriptions and data recording methods used, the approach taking to coding and the analytical steps in developing the data.

Part 4:

Data management and analysis

This study used Thematic Analysis, with aspects of grounded theory to guide data collection, as discussed in previous sections of this chapter. Thematic analysis is a search for themes which emerge as being important to the description and understanding of the phenomenon. The process involves the identification of themes through careful "reading and re-reading of the data" (Rice and Ezzy 1999:258) which will provide the reader with various 'codes' (by this I mean the research provides the codes via interpretation of the text) which have to be further analysed when interpreting the findings.

Coding

The coding was developed using the NVIVO qualitative data analysis software. This allows sections of the data to be highlighted and become identified as 'extracts. From that point codes can be attributed to the extract; they can be linked to other extracts; and/or they can be tied to individual participants. Essentially, the analysis process involved extracting the field notes paragraph by paragraph (at times line by line) and applying the appropriate codes that were created by the researcher. The codes were developed through both a theory and a data driven approach, whereby they were identified through the features of the data as well as my broader theoretical concerns of the research. As coding development is an iterative process (Ryan and Bernard 2003) it is important to create codes that have meaning to your research.

The process of coding

Although this is rather self-explanatory coding is an aspect of grounded theory which I have used in the analysis of this data. Although I haven't explicitly used line by line coding, I have coded words, phrases or segments of texts to generate categories. By doing so, coding forces the researcher to verify and saturate categories, and also offers insights and leads to pursue as you

code. The overall paradigm of this study is of an interpretive nature and focuses of meaning and understanding to generate or locate theory. As such, these are the aspects of grounded theory which I have applied to the analysis of the data for this research study, one area I did not pursue from grounded theory was theoretical sampling. This states that rather than predetermining the characteristics and size of the sample, the developing theory directs the researcher to new informants and appropriate locations (Goulding 1998:53). The reason this was not an aspect of this study was because sampling was convenient to get the correct participants for the study. Once the data had been collected, there was no need to sample further using this process, as the data had reached theoretical saturation.

The process of coding for this study took on two elements. Firstly, was the simple coding of rereading the transcripts and coding anything that was relevant or theoretically driven. By breaking down the data into distinct units of meaning that can be labelled to generate concepts are initially rather descriptive (Goulding 1998). Secondly, in order to analyse this at a deeper level the researcher used an aspect of thematic analysis called Thematic Networks. This takes the concepts that have been generated by the coding procedures, and then re-evaluated for their interrelationships through a series of analytical steps. Finally, they are gradually subsumed into a hierarchal order which provides the reader and researcher with 'Global Themes. This is an aspect of the methodology that is discussed at more length in the next sections. Below is an example of part of a transcript that was coded.

> people want to be violent because they wanna' get to do something, so you might have to be violent to achieve that. Like in school as well, if you're not popular or you're not like the best looking, or the smartest, some people use violence to get to the top, or be well known in the school.

This was an example of a focus group participant discussing violence, this was coded at the node: 'Influences'. The 'influence' in this regard was subsequently also coded within the 'status' node. As such, if qualitative data is to yield meaningful results it is crucial that the findings under scrutiny are analysed within an efficient and methodical manner (Attride-Stirling 2001). For that reason, adopting Thematic Networks enables a methodical systemisation of textual data and analytic process, and aids the organization of an analysis whilst allowing for a sensitive insightful and rich exploration of the text's overt structures and underlying patterns (Attride-Stirling 2001: 386).

Thematic networks

As an analytical tool Thematic Networks aim to explore the understanding of an issue or the signification of an idea, rather than reconciling definitional point of views (Attride-Stirling 2001). By doing so it seeks to unearth themes salient within the text at differing levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structure and depiction of these themes. Although this is not a new method, it does share key features of any analysis that adopts a hermeneutic approach. Hence methodologically, it fits well with the rest of the research process.

Thematic networks systemise the extraction of: 1) lowest order premises evident in the text (Basic Themes); 2) categories of basic themes grouped together to summarise more abstract principles (Organising Themes); and 3) super-ordinate themes encapsulating the principle metaphors in the text as a whole (Global Themes). Once this has been accomplished it is them represented as in diagrammatic form in web like maps depicting the salient themes at each of the three levels discussed above, whilst illustrating the relationships between them see 'figure 1' taken from Attride-Stirling, (2001: 388).
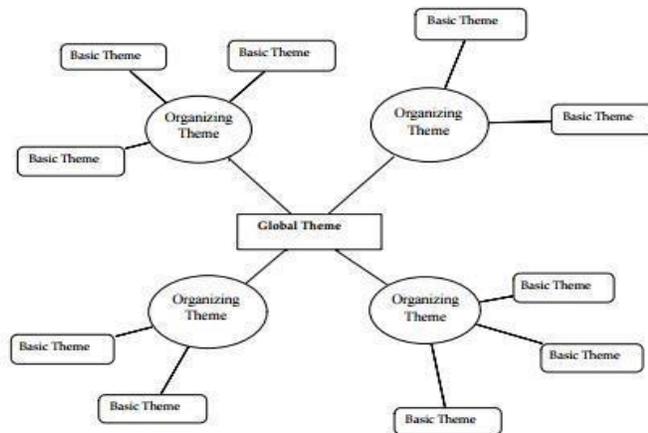
FIGURE 1. *Structure of a thematic network.*

Figure12.

In order to understand this better, an example from one of the 'global themes' developed form the 'basic themes' is presented below.

Key for Thematic Network Colour Scheme:

Global Theme:

Organising Theme:

Basic Theme:
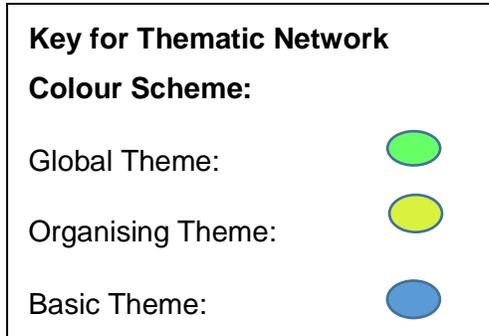
Figure 13 Thematic Network Key and diagram.
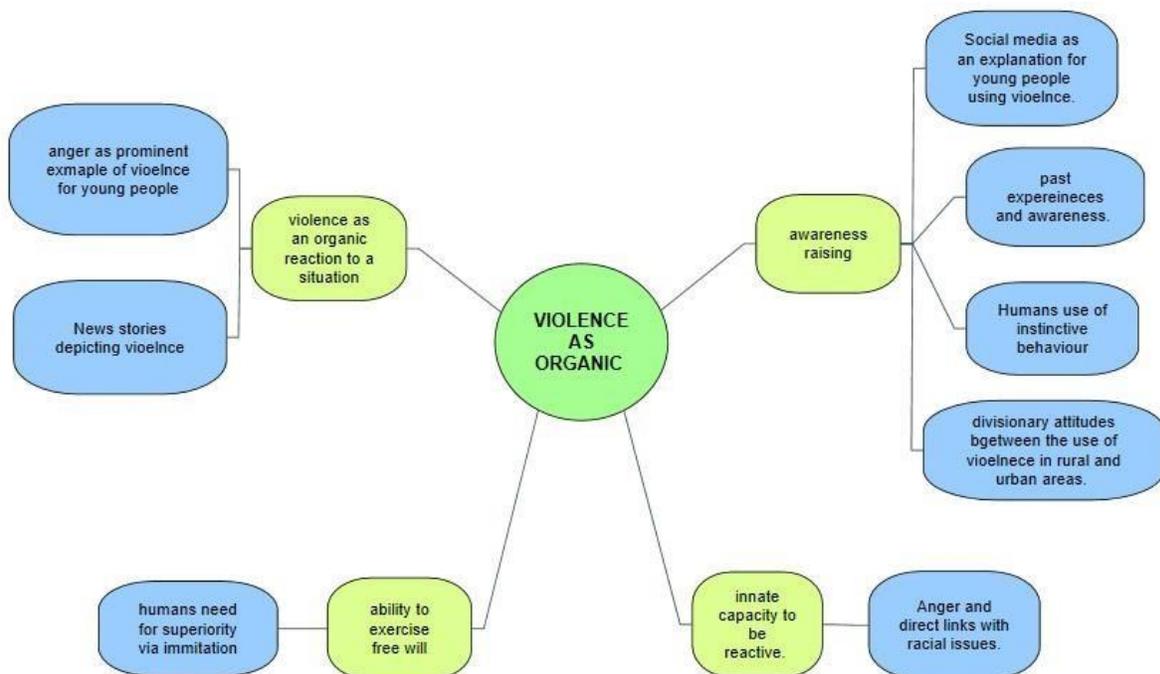
The raw data has been coded, analysed and refined to generate 'Thematic Networks' (AttrideSterling 2001). Each network consists firstly a global theme, indicated by the green tone (chosen by the researcher) and usually located at the centre of the network. Secondly there are the organising themes, they surround the global theme and have been given the yellow tone.

Thirdly, the networks each have Basic Themes, and these are branched off from the Organising Theme and have been given a blue tone. With this process it became apparent to the researcher that there were two main themes emerging, but within each of these were sub themes that emerged as more data was gathered and analysed. The first is named under the umbrella term of 'organic violence' this considered youth voice and how this has links with aspects of gender and the media and the physical forms of violence. The second theme becoming apparent was how locality can have an impact on how youth view violence labelled here as 'societal stimulants', this explored further the impact of locale on perceptions and understandings, whilst also theoretically considering the impact. As a result, the final thematic map was more concise:
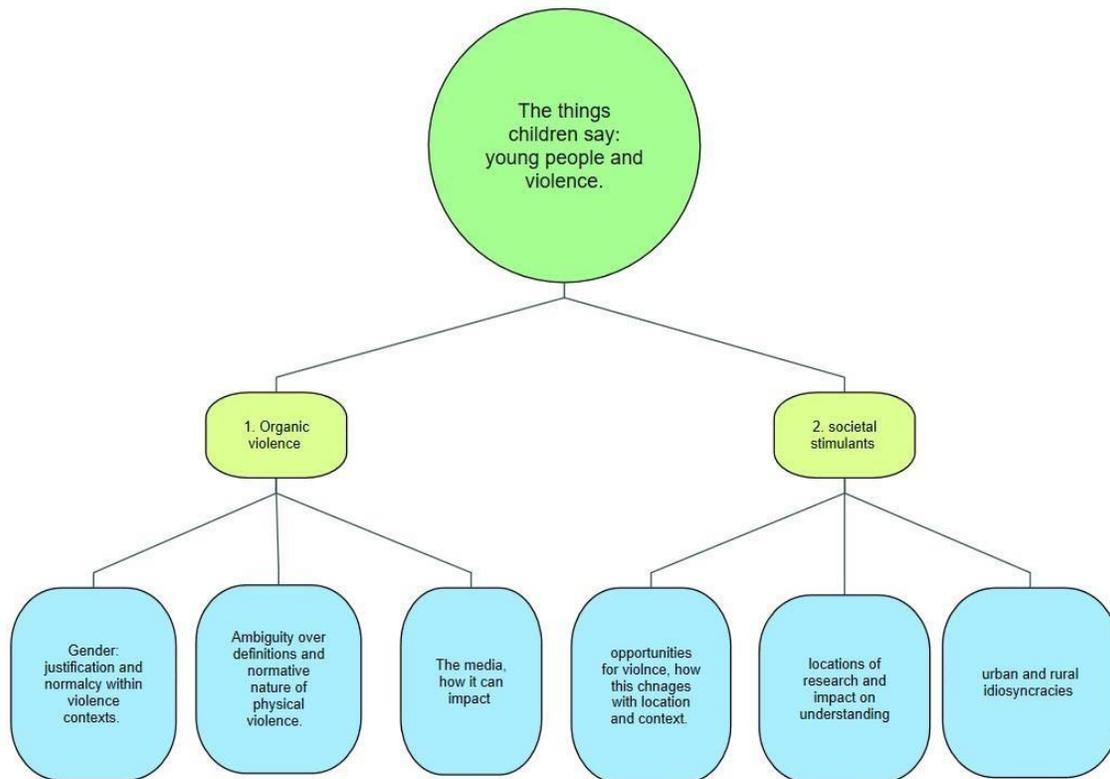
Figure 14

Summary

The last section of this chapter has discussed the coding framework used within the analysis of this research and the use of thematic Networks in establishing a deeper understanding and connection with the research. It has demonstrated via an illustrative manner how these networks were mapped in a hierarchal format. By transitioning from line by line coding to focus coding through to thematic networks provided the researcher to answer analytical questions beyond the research questions in order to account for the individual parts of how young people view and interpret violence. Analysis was further enhanced via theory that was discussed within chapter three of the thesis. The final section of the methodological chapter (chapter 4B) will now be explored which will map out the structure for the rest of thesis alongside provide a deeper insight into who the participants are and a clearer overview of the sample and method breakdown.

Chapter 4B: Participants, location and presentation of findings.

Introduction.

This final section of chapter four will briefly map out the themes and structure for the rest of this thesis whilst also providing the reader with a breakdown of the participants involved within the study. Furthermore, the locations of the study will be highlighted as to provide context and understanding when reading. This will finish with a summary before moving onto the findings of the thesis.

This study has utilised a staged approach to fieldwork, stage one (mind maps) was concerned with undertaking an initial exploration of how young people define and understand what violence is. Constructed as a pilot study, stage one contributed to the university's MPhil/PhD requirements, but also served as a process of greater significance. The young people involved in this section of the study set the parameters of the investigation for stage two and three (focus groups and interviews).

Structure of the findings

To understand how the data has been analysed it is important to relay how the findings will be presented throughout the following two chapters. Each chapter will be looking in depth at a theme that has emerged from the data. This will be organised into various sections each discussing an avenue of the thematic network. By viewing the data using thematic networks we can better understand the inclinations and motivations of how young people view and perceive violence within their own cultural surroundings to which they are responsive. All of which are explored in detail with reference to the findings established by the raw data. Quotes and excerpts from transcripts will be used to illustrate and highlight arguments made. All participants have been provided with a pseudonym to protect their identity and uphold any concerns about anonymity.

The findings emerging from this study have been analysed and are set in context through various themes in chapter five. The themes discussed are initial understandings, masculinity, gender and the media. Chapter six has themes which have a focus on the structure of the study sites and

how this can influence a young person's perceptions of violence this predominantly explores the rural within a theoretical framework. Here, relevant criminological and sociological theories as discussed within the literature are adopted to highlight the main issues around the young people's constructions of violence and to help explain their underlying assumptions.

Themes and structure of the chapter.

The dataset comprised of five focus groups and twenty-one interviews, a sizeable amount to work through for a PhD study. To briefly recap, in each focus group three main areas were discussed alongside a set of prompts for each section. The interviews, (informed by the focus group data) included three stages, the first two were open questions and the last stage was a set of everyday scenario-based vignettes. In order to give an effective description and analysis of the data gathered within the confines of a single thesis the researcher set parameters from the start of analysis by remaining within the frame of the original research question: 'To explore how young people understand, and interpret 'violence' to the surroundings which they are responsive'.

However, as a researcher I am aware that there may have been other lines of enquiry that have not been explored. Although Thematic Analysis has allowed for the saturation of data to culminate towards a thematic network with various areas of inquiry, there are other avenues which have not been explored. This is largely due to the limitations of time, space and resources that are all inherent factors of the PhD process in conjunction with small scale qualitative study. However, the research intends to address some of these through a re-analysis of the existing data through a revisiting of the material (see concluding chapter eight) and these will subsequently be addressed in the researcher's future-plans.

Defining urban

The traditional concept of 'urban' would typically be a built up area which has a service core, with a sufficient number of shops and services. This term can be difficult to define at times as this is a concept which has changed over time. Historically such towns have continuously grown and developed over the years. At the other extreme, some historic towns have become stagnated and

have lost central place functions (Hudson 2011). The researcher has specifically chosen an urban area which is identified as a city and is continuously developing and growing.

East midlands

The locations chosen provided a wide range of young people from different backgrounds, ethnic origins and ages to participate in the study, as this would essentially make the context of the data more diverse. The School located in the midlands was at first known to have a troubled past, as told to the researcher by the point of contact and 'gatekeeper'. However, over time, the school had worked hard to overcome the labels attached to them and although a few issues concerning behaviour may persist; it is in a much better place and is thriving towards success (OFSTED report 2015; 2018). The locality of the school was near the city centre and surrounding local towns. The nearby area comprised of residential streets and main roads leading to and from the city centre. The information provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2015) depicts that this area scores high on all indicators of deprivation except that of access to housing and services. Furthermore, the demography of this location consists mainly of BAME young people. During our initial meeting, the gatekeeper discussed how three quarters of the school population are of a non-white, ethnic background. Furthermore, they established that the school has a higher than average amount of disadvantaged students for whom the academy receives extra funding. As such, although this study is not primarily concerned with socioeconomic status it is important to consider all variables when conducting research in order to provide a robust perspective on the issue being explored. Accordingly, it should be made clear that the backgrounds of the participants had no bearing on their participation in the study. The researcher does not know this information as the question was not asked of the willing participants, but it was informative to establish the general socio-economic context of the study.

Defining 'rural'

It can be argued that there are various levels of rurality for instance small but thriving market town is vastly different to a remote farming community which has no schools or shops, yet both are

referred to as rural. To meet this diversity, there has been a call to have more 'plural rural' (Chakraborti and Garland 2004), what is meant by this, is highlighting the social spatial complexities of rural life. The problem with defining rurality is an issue which has been debated within academia (Farmer et al 2001). For the purposes of this study the rural location is considered so by official documents which suggest that it is located within the 'rural north' characterised by small towns and open countryside, farmland and small villages (Topic Paper 2007).

North West

When looking for a second location, using the researchers previous contacts in the North West was ideal. Not only was there access to young people within the age ranges specified. But also, the demography of the area is 94% white British and the other 6% is BAME therefore providing another variable to analyse and explore (ONS 2015). The youth project located in the North West is part of a charity organisation funded by the National Lottery. They run youth groups and inclusion projects for young people in the area, some of who have bad behaviour or may be at risk of offending. Both areas of study have similar socioeconomic status with 35% of the population in the second location considered as 'hard pressed living' from the census data provided in 2011 (Strategic Intelligence Team 2015), and had one of the largest concentrations of children and young people in that part of the North West region (Children's trust 2012). This area scores in the mid-range on all indicators of deprivation, apart from those of living and housing, where the score is more towards the higher end of the spectrum (ONS 2015). The local area has a rural feel with fewer shops, and although transportation links were good, they were more traditional from that of city life as it was purely busses or cars, with a local train station nearby. As such, the local town was small and the main 'hangout' area for young people was a small-sized McDonalds. Interestingly, the location of the study was also near an area the young people called 'millionaire mile' known for large houses and 'footballer families'. The youth centre was located off a main road and surrounded by residential housing, and bordering the local council estate, which had a notorious reputation, with a couple of local shops nearby. As part of the programme, young people who attended could take part in activities such as sports, art or cooking whilst others preferred to take part in the music programme provided, where they get to learn to play instruments and produce music.

The sample: A closer look.

During the project thirty-two young people in total were included within the sampling and as the study progressed, there was an overall attrition of eleven participants (more than 1/3). This was due to the timing of the study and with some of the older participants having exams during this time. The following will outline the number of participants that took part in the various stages of the study. This will be discussed as one participant group, then broken down via location.

Stage	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Subtotal**
Mind maps	20	12	32
Focus groups split into age ranges.	5	3	8
	1	4	5
11-14			
	1	2	3
15-17			
Interviews	11	9	21

Table 4

In line with ethical research, participation was voluntary and although some participants may have agreed to take part in the study, some were unable to attend on the day preventing them from taking part in the subsequent stages of the study. However, having a complete lack of any sampling control measures might have resulted in not meeting any young people at all. Therefore, in order to provide the study with best possible data collection there were initial parameters to be set:

- The use of an initial information gathering period at the outset of data collection to identify locations and access to potential participants.
- Contact with both males and females aged 11-20- this is in line with the age crime curve, with 15-19 being the peak ages (Loeber and Farrington 2014).
- To have contact with a rage of young people who are ethnically diverse.

During the project, thirty-two young people took part, the table below provides a deeper overview of each participant involved with the study, and brief descriptions of what they were like in the process. The range of participants were broad, from age to ethnicity and this was due to the

locations chosen. With some individuals, contact was brief, this was due to a variety of reasons. In some cases, the participants could not partake on the days scheduled, others had exams, or some simply did not want to participate. Where this was the case although rare, other willing participants were on standby to take part. This worked well as it provided variety of responses, from a wide range of young people. The table provided below can provide a brief insight into the behaviour of the individuals and some general demographic information. All names provided are pseudonyms (Table 5).

(**F=**Female, **M=** Male, **EM=** East Midlands, **NW=**North West)

Name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Location	Notes
1. Preeti	F	12	Asian	EM	Quiet, but got involved in the conversation.
2. Vanessa	F	13	Asian	EM	Outspoken, confident.
3. Moza	M	13	Syrian	EM	Came to UK due to conflict in his country. Had some interesting insights.
4. Jackie	F	16	White	EM	Confident, outspoken, likes to make jokes.
5. Ahbey	M	15	Asian	EM	Quiet, preferred the group work.
6. Idris	M	14	Multiracial	EM	Articulate, spoke on certain topics, little eye contact, insightful.
7. Sophia	F	14	White	EM	Little quiet, listened and observed more than spoke.
8. Stewart	M	14	Black	EM	Confident, quiet at times, was able to provide some good conversation to the group.
9. Alicia	F	15	Asian	EM	Quiet but provided opinion on reason why you might use violence. Observed a lot.
10. Darren	M	11	Black	EM	One of the youngest in the group, on the honour roll and leader for his year, confident.
11. David	M	11	White	EM	One of the youngest, confident, was open to discuss violence.

12. Steph	F	12	White	EM	Very quiet, more of an observer of the conversation than saying anything.
13. Brad	M	11	White	EM	One of the younger ones of the group- had some good insights about gender.
14. Abdul	M	14	Asian	EM	Very quiet, didn't say anything.
15. Luca	M	14	White	EM	Very quiet, observed more than spoke, fidgets a lot.
16. Asif	M	11	Asian	EM	Quiet, laughed along with conversations did not say much
17. Sharifa	F	14	Multiracial	EM	Nodded along to comments made but wouldn't elaborate or say anything extra.
18. Alice	F	14	Multiracial	EM	Only available for the first half of focus group- was quiet, and observed.
19. Nathaniel	M	12	White	EM	Quiet, observed a lot, nodded along to comments made in group.
20. Faizah	F	15	Asian	EM	Feisty, small and was open about how it made her feel when bullied about her height.
21. Lucy	F	16	Multiracial	EM	Loud, funny, wants to be heard.
22. Malcolm	M	16	Multiracial	EM	Outspoken, understanding, articulate, knowledgeable and confident in his approach.
23. Odette	F	16	White	NW	Enjoyed the group discussion, but didn't say anything to elaborate on points.
24. Tilley	F	17	White	NW	Outspoken made some really interesting points.
25. Carl	M	17	White	NW	Open and honest about his environment, what's happening in the area- provides some good examples.

26. Harlow	F	20	White	NW	Quiet, focus was on physical and mental abuse (possibly previous experiences) no children. Insightful opinions.
27. Sally	F	19	White	NW	Loud, vibrant, likes to talk. Went off topic a couple times, but liked providing insight on violence.
28. Andy	M	19	White	NW	Views on violence were usually within the realms of gender for Andy, he had a lot to say about this.
29. Johnathan	M	19	White	NW	Very outspoken and confident in his opinions and perspectives.
30. Louise	F	16	White	NW	Outspoken, likes to be heard, seems to know a lot about her area. Analytical in her approach.
31. Freya	F	17	White	NW	Had some good insights- well spoken, confident in her opinions.
32. Jack	M	19	White	NW	Very outspoken, confident, likes to get his opinion across.

Summary

This section has been written purely for the reader's interest. It has been able to highlight and showcase where the study took place and who the participants were and what they were like. It also provides a good referencing point to look back on should the reader need it. This section of the chapter although small is insightful as it has defined the locality of the research study and highlighted how different each location was, alongside showcasing how the themes and analysis have been narrowed down to the themes and chapters forthcoming within the rest of this thesis.

The following chapters will now consider the findings, the discussion and concluding chapter on the thesis.

Chapter 5: Positioning young people in the debate of violence

This chapter intends to address the findings gathered from the methods utilised as outlined in the previous chapter. As indicated in the chapter four, this research utilised a staged methodology that underpinned the epistemological stance of the study. Thematic Network Analysis (TNA) was used to identify the main themes discussed amongst the participants and provides the tools needed to delve deeper into the understandings of the phenomenon. As a result, this staged process has led to the development and saturation of key themes to be explored in this chapter. The stages occurred as follows; this firstly began with the participants creating mind maps based around the word 'violence'. This was then further explored and broken down via focus groups and one to one semi-structured interviews.

In the literature review it was debated that research needs to consider the voices of young people and their own perspectives as experts in their own right. From this, we could argue that as adults (not necessarily researchers) we cannot fully claim to understand the motivations and reasons for their behaviour now as we may have when we were that age (Hine 2009; Ungar 2004). By exploring such perspectives, it has the potential to enlighten violence prevention and understanding among other young people. For example, 'deviant' behaviour labelled or perceived as such from 'outsiders' may in fact be navigation strategies that young people employ in order to ward off greater risks (Ungar 2006).

Therefore, this chapter will begin by exploring how the participants of this study understood the word violence and this will be further broken down into various sub sections. There are three main areas to be discussed and explored within this chapter:

1. Understanding violence: Looking at the definitions and concepts of violence and the influences and understanding young people have attributed towards it.
2. Perceptions of violence: exploring how violence is noticed and how perceptions can alter via status, class and family culture.
3. Legitimacy and rationalisation: exploring violent behaviour, and the justification of using such behaviour.

The above themes have evolved from the three-method approach utilised in this study and participants involved within the various methods have ultimately established the parameters of the investigation and helped develop these main themes.

Understanding violence

The findings of the study began from the mind maps that was originally used to break down barriers between researcher and participants, and to gain that rapport. Firstly, the participants (N=32) had the opportunity to freely explore their opinions of violence through mind maps. The mind maps explored two key questions:

1. Have you heard of violence before? – The answer to this initial question (by a show of hands) was unanimous. All participants have heard of the term before.
2. What do you think of when you hear the word violence? - For this the participants answers were collected (from the mind maps) and themed within the below speech bubbles.

The participants primarily associated violence with behaviour that is more physical or perceiving it through something tangible:

Murder

Bullying

Fighting: kicking, punching

Guns and Knives.

Shouting and anger
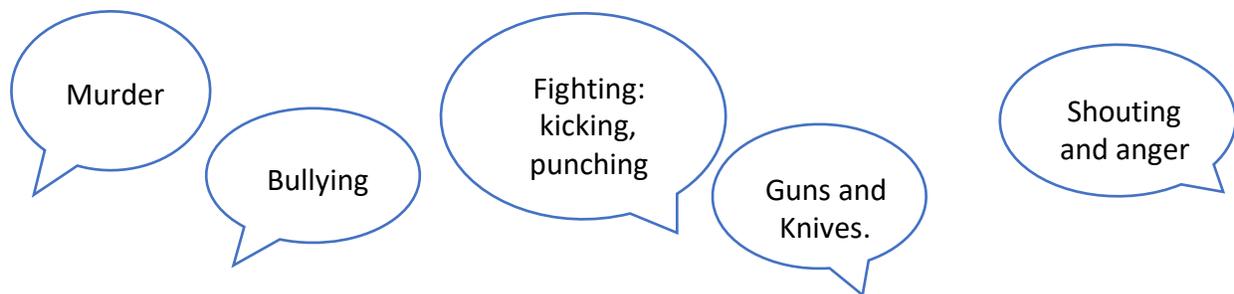
The second leaned more towards a set of definitions or how they understood it:

Family/relationships

Terrorism

Media

Racism
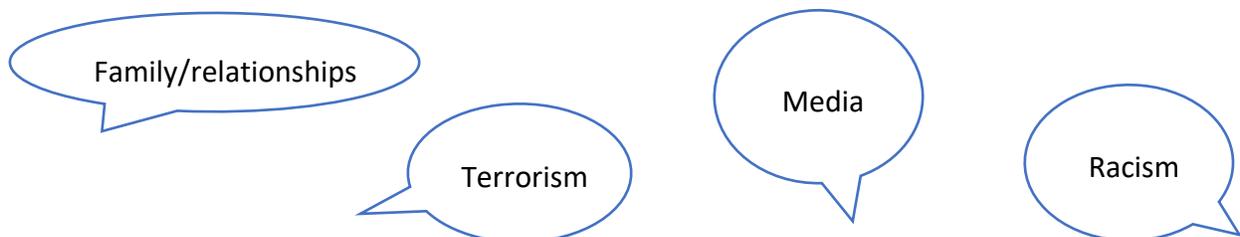
The variety of answers that came from the mind maps were insightful but were not designed to provide depth, and at this point it was not established if these written and drawn answers were due to what they have learnt, heard or experienced. Therefore, to further establish what this

meant, focus groups and interviews were then utilised. Many participants spoke of physical actions such as 'fist fighting', 'kicking', 'shooting' or 'knives'. When the participants were asked *'how would they define violence?'* It became much harder for them to articulate their understandings of it, and they struggled to 'define' what it meant to them.

"I am not sure of what violence is because everyone seems to have their own definition. You can't really pinpoint it as it is a mix of everythin" (Interview, Louise, F, 16, NW).

"Ye because it is important for us to know what violence is, and be able to understand that, because they (young people) could be doing something and not really think that it is violent." (Interview, Idris, M, 14, EM).

Although participants initially found it difficult to define violence, they further discussed this concept in terms of tangibility and physicality.

"Violence is when you get mean physically or verbally aggressive with someone. I would define it as an act of err brutality or out of well for your own reasons attacking it physically to somebody else." (Interview with Tilley, 17, F, NW).

"Basically fighting [what think of when they hear 'violence'] like, if someone does something to you, you have to fight. Like if someone lost somebody [such as a loss or bereavement] or something like that, he may get abuse [teasing at school] for that… I would fight back." (Interview, Ahbey, M, 15, EM).

The participants discussed when thinking or trying to discuss violence, that the use of verbal intimidations including 'threatening someone' or using 'violent speech, like profanity' was common. As the excerpts above highlight the young people in this study have utilised the physical actions of violence to try and define this. Other participants further elaborated on aspects of violence such as 'fist fighting', 'kicking', 'shooting or knives'. It becomes clear that the participants were finding it hard to define exactly what they think violence is, but they were also eager to understand their perceptions and influences of what violence is and means to them. For Idris, he

discussed how young people should understand what violence is and therefore be asked about this, provided the opportunity to discuss this. As a lot of the time they may be utilising behaviour that is violent but may not be aware of it. Lombard (2011) discusses how young people tend to be averse to physical violence that can result in injury but are unaware that interactions which can be regarded as dummy fighting or banter may not be regarded as real violence.

The majority of definitions focus on the outcome of violent acts, the legal, psychological, emotional or physical actions that can cause pain and injury. Therefore, it is unsurprising that young people in this study have focused on the aspects of violence within the frameworks of which they are familiar. The definitions and understandings of which are functional, tangible, and labelled to categorise and legalise incidents. What these initial discussions have lacked was local or cultural influence which can at times add to understandings and perceptions of violence (Yonas et al 2004). The last excerpt from Ahbey discussed fighting which was one of the most popular buzzwords on mind maps and discussions, as a result, debates surrounding this area were further explored under the concept of how the participants were understanding violence. This was particularly relevant for the participants of secondary school age which arguably has links within this adolescence phase and some would suggest that the resulting hallmarks of adolescence would be the ability to willingly engage in violence and to resolve personal conflicts through physical prowess (Anderson 1994; Messerschmidt 1993). As Ahbey's emotive response almost legitimises the use of violence to uphold integrity within the given situation, others in the study also suggest that violence in some instances can be an emotional and a reactive instinct:

> *"Well, sometimes it's not necessary [violence], but can be justified, but generally it's not needed...If someone is angry they don't want to sit down and talk to them [to resolve it] they want to smash their face in"* (Interview with Johnathan, M, 19, NW).

> *"Violence is a deliberate act, it is something you do right there and then, like, I'm gonna' do this to hurt you. It's an abuse of power*." (Interview with Stewart, M, 14, EM).

This is where violence and all of its complexities begin to take shape, violence is considered emotive, instinctual and reactive. Underlying all of this is the question around intentionality, an assertion that is deeply micro-political, as the associated label brings with it different outcomes. Participants describing violence as fighting and not wanting to back down is in line with the fundamental premise of interactionist theory where people construct action according to how they define the situation (Katz 1988; Jackson-Jacobs 2014). In relation to this, although the participants

are wanting to defend themselves and their feelings, a second point here is the intent to cause harm, and this along with violence is culturally determined (Walters and Parke 1964).

Salmi (1993) discusses the individualisation of violence and how social structures are somewhat dismissed in understanding violence. Yet, participants in this study have the opportunity to explore not only how they understand violence, but *why* they understand it that way, as a result, they are able to unpick what influences their understanding. The obvious signals of violence are what is shown daily for instance; acts of terror, crime and civil unrest. As such, this form of violence is performed by a clearly identifiable agent, it is somewhat tangible. Thus, it is not surprising that participants have initially drawn on the tangible such as fighting to start their journey of understanding what violence means to them. Interestingly here, is the way in which participants give meaning to violence and as Stanko (2003:13) suggests, *"if violence has meaning then those meanings can be challenged"*.

Gender

Whilst participants discussed their understandings in terms of fighting and emotive actions, conversation continued to challenge their own assumptions, and in doing so, discussions of gender became prominent within the findings. It began with commentary around alpha maleness, and power.

> *"Peer pressure and culture, so like, macho, and girls thinking that like the stronger the more violent you are or more powerful"* (interview with Jack, M, 19, NW).

> *"I don't know really know I think it's just a human thing some people just want to be the alpha male."* (Interview with Jack, 19, M, NW).

> *"I think it's just the fact that boys use more violence, more physical violence with other boys purely because it's like the alpha male thing in your head. Where if you asserted dominance in your group then you'll be like the alpha in the group whether you actually are or not."* (Interview with Andy, M, 19, NW).

The above quotes initially discussed violence aligned with maleness, a common discussion in the group, yet below some of the discussion turned to how females and violence link. A lot of which is arguably tied up within common gender stereotypes.

"They [girls] *can be like really annoyin' towards each other but they're not like violent... for boys to use violence is alright, because girls use violence as well. But like...*

Alicia [another participant**]** *"boys are used to it"*

.... but against each other, it's like, if a boy is fighting with a girl it's not right cuz', why should like a girl be like disrespected like that by a boy, erm.. but it's alright for them to fight with other boys, because that's the same gender and they have the same kind of power and strength. (Focus group with Jackie, F, 16, EM).

The below discussions around gender considered the 'acceptability' of violence among females and touching on how they *should* be.

"I think its frowned upon more [for girls]. *Cuz' I think you expect that macho kind of status* [from boys] *than with girls."* (Focus group with Harlow, F, 20, NW*).*

"Yeah! They [girls] *should be soft."* (Focus group with Carl, M, 17, NW*).*

Young people learn meaning and behaviour through their peers and as part of this discussion, gender and peers had an impact on how the participants understood the term violence and in particular, what is considered 'acceptable'. The everydayness of violence for these young people has a strong connection with gender and this for them provides a strong link between understanding and justifying what violence is and who it may come from. Jack discusses how violence and power are in line with one another, discussions of being alpha male suggests that the net outcome of these processes is for violence and crime to be increasingly seen as a premiere way of proving one's 'manhood' (Plummer and Geoffrey 2010). Andy, Jackie, Harlow and Carl all discussed violence, acceptability and gender (particularly males) as one in the same type of discussion. It was central to their idea of what violence is and is not, and more importantly the concept of toughness was a particular focus around the male form. Debatably, ideas around violence in part, are based on shared beliefs about human bodies that reinforce the perceived

naturalness and ultimately the invisibleness and thus normalisation of these ideas (Hollander 2001).

Just as the previous discussion explored fighting as a form of violence that the participants could draw on as an example, the above further elaborates the need to fight or stand up for one's integrity [as Andy discusses] or honour (Wilkinson 2001). Therefore, these displays of 'alpha maleness' that they are debating can be positioned within the wider performance of what is known as the male habitus particularly in the way participants are discussing it, as providing young males with kudos or reputation by asserting your dominance as Andy mentions. It is this 'doing gender' and in some instances the 'unavoidable nature' of doing gender that is significant in terms of how these young people are understanding how they interpret violence (West 2000). Goffman (1990) discusses, that he does not directly attribute the performance of such behaviours to socialisation. He does however point out that the individual need only use this behaviour enough times to gain the desired effect just as the participants above have discussed. Thus, the discussion surrounding 'alpha maleness' acts as this vehicle towards popularity for young males among their peers (Parkes and Connolly 2013).

The discussions on gender and violence have thus far been relegated mainly to the male form, as it continues females are discussed more particularly within the focus groups, this method enabled more co-production of knowledge and as a result some varying views around females and violence and more so the acceptability of females using it or others using it against them became apparent.

"Do you think violence between males and females are different?" (Researcher)

Quick distinctions are made between the genders and reasons attributed to such distinctions are mentioned.

"Yeah, because of the media, err... and the way we've [girls] *been taught how to act as well. Males have to prove themselves and males are raised to be into sports and their stronger stereotype... girls get catty and tend to slap each other, It's just the way it's been shown in the media."* (Interview with Harlow, F, 20, NW).

I think very much so [that violence between males and females is different], *I think males are a little bit more aggressive in a way that the reasons they physically attack.*

Girls especially for me, if someone said something bad about my mum or me I'd get very offended whereas if it was about the area where I live and the surrounding area I probably wouldn't be bothered. Because it's personal, I would probably get into violence about that. (Interview with Tilley, F, 17, NW).

"Ye the violence is different because with males, they kinda' get into more of the fistly fights and want more blood and most of the fights I've seen between females is mostly hair pulling and kicks it's not always one on one it's a gang beating up a girl because of a boy or just because she's someone." (Interview with Stewart, M, 14, NW).

Within the focus groups they discussed how violence would be used differently, if at all on females.

"Boys shouldn't hit boys but if girls start annoying boys, they should stop them, but not hit them." (Focus Group excerpt, Moza, M, 13, EM).

"So male on male is full on harsh and everything. Male on female you wouldn't hit them as hard as you would a male, and I don't actually know the reason why." (Focus Group excerpt, Darren, M, 11, EM).

"That's a violent response, cuz', cuz' he just cuz'...if she's trying to like limit the argument to wherever it left off, and he's obviously trying to sort of go at her even more, it would lead to more violence. Cuz' obviously if he grabs her, she's more likely to hit im', and she hits him, he's obviously got to hit her...Because that's what happens, if a man gets hit, he hits whoever hit him. That's just how it works!" (Interview with Andy, M, 19, NW).

These gendered debates although predominantly male dominated showcase what may be perceived to be protecting 'traditional femininity', is somewhat counteracted with the 'alpha male' discussions that were had at the beginning of this debate.

"They would think the woman is weak" (Brad)

"*Ye because if you fight with a different gender, it's, like people think its sexist."*
(Darren)

"Ye I agree to a point ye, but a lot of girls are goin' on about havin' the same rights as guys but then when they go round hitting guys they expect not to get hit back, I'm sorry, but if a girl hit me then you're gonna' get hit back." (Brad) (Focus group excerpt with Brad and Darren, 11, M, EM).

The data so far reveals that although masculinity and the male form is somewhat accepted, when it comes to females, the issue of femininity is not as readily accepted in the discussion around violence and is understood in different ways (Henrikson 2017). Part of the participants understanding can be attributed to the key components of how society, research and media have portrayed, understood and expressed violence to be an act committed more so by males (Regoli and Hewitt 2003) just as Harlow and Stewart discuss. Whereas Tilley, Moza and Darren utilise debates that emphasise females and their use of violence as less than that of males within the contexts of which it is being discussed alongside some discussion that mirror protective factors. Although in some cases, it remains unclear as to why *"you wouldn't hit them as hard as you would a male, and I don't' actually know the reason why."* (Darren).

Here, it is useful to utilise Connells (2008: 137) considerations on identifying 'masculine vortices.' This describes areas of school life where processes of masculinity formation are 'intensely active.' Furthermore, Connell discusses this within an education context suggesting particular classes that have or used to have connections to gender-segregated professions. Thus, it is not unusual for young people to acknowledge the links between violence and males as common understanding, whereas although some participants are aware that females can and do commit crime and violence, they may be more aversive to inflicting harm just as some of the discussion above has highlighted.

Such discussion has showcased how violence within a male context is more upfront and aggressive and as a result, much more accepted. Whilst is was unclear why such violence might be used and there was a mostly negative stance on the use of violence on females there was still the suggestion of using such power and strength to vindicate the male body, just as Moza discusses… 'If girls annoy boys they should stop them, but not hit them'. Halberstam (1998) argues that masculinity can be appropriated by both males and females, and that within this gendered performance there are connotations of power, privilege and legitimacy (Halberstam 1998 cited in Henriksen 2017: 332). Tilley mentions that her use of violence would depend on

how personal or disrespectful it is, thus utilising violence in this instance is justified to regain respect and power.

Furthermore, as some of the above excerpts highlight, the capacity for violence is developed through an apparent disrespect which is arguably a pre-emptive tactic and serves to deter future violence (Jackson-Jacobs 2004). Yet the data also reveals that there are gendered limits on the appropriation of violence, especially by young females (Henrikson 2017). Carl (participant) previously suggested that 'girls should be soft' and others within the study also suggested or stated that females interactions on violence consist largely of less overtly brutal attacks (Flekkoy 2000; Henrikson 2017), such as hair pulling and slapping as Stewart stated, rather than punching and kicking. Debates that have been showcased previously in criminological research focuses quite largely on males (as discussed in chapters two and three) and arguably is being reflected within this study from the opinion and perspectives from young people here that make behaviour violations (such as violence) exceed that of females, in frequency, serious and acceptability (Regoli and Hewitt 2003).

The acceptability of such violence is also discussed within the realms of aggravation. Andy discusses how he *has* to hit a female back, because that's what a man does. It could be argued here that Andy is constructing a symbolic boundary between violence that is perceived as 'unprovoked or aggravated' and therefore illegitimate in contrast to violence which someone has 'asked for or deserves', and thus more understandable. This boundary that Andy has created, has contextualised himself as "the hit back kind of person," not the one who starts a fight, thereby identifying with the morally acceptable identity available here (Ravn 2018). Furthermore, Andy has created a symbolic boundary that can be seen as corresponding to stereotypical views of what constitutes femininity (the emotional) and masculinity (the rational), respectively (Hochstetler, Copes, and Forsyth 2014). Some of the discussion around gender and violence has resonated with Hollanders (2001) finding that vulnerability and femininity are associated with one another, alongside masculinity and danger or strength. Furthermore it echoes Hearn's (2004) theorisations of hegemony of men as a class that can be used to understand the apparent and expected behaviours of different genders that the participants have discussed (Delphy 1988; Sundaram 2014) and the subjective practices of individual males and females.

This section has elaborated on the concept of masculine domination and male habitus through exploring violence. Krias and Marston-William (2000:578) explore this and suggest that clear and

gendered subject positions within social structures and how the idea of 'symbolic violence' implies a certain complicity on the part of the dominated regardless of gender as this was showcased form both males and females. As such, here we have the male habitus to be implicitly seen to incorporate the symbolic order of the patriarchy, violence and aggression reinforced even in modern day. All of which are seen as a means of domination and power, integral to male habitus (Butler 1990).

Furthermore, the distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable violence were made here, such that while the above discussions could be labelled as unacceptable or wrong, it could still be viewed as a somewhat 'natural' response to a given situation for a male. For example, what Brad discussed or rather reinforced is that there are gendered notions of violence, and how he understands violence in this context is within the realms of equal rights and he reiterates that if females have fought for equal rights, this therefore puts them on the same acceptability of receiving violence as would a male. What's more, the above discussions have raised questions regarding the acceptability of violence in relation to self-defence.

The below discussions further showcase social constructionist perspectives of violence, how it is somewhat justified, accepted, gendered or allowed. The excerpts highlight self-defence and, in some cases, the need to fight back.

> *"Sometimes ye, because if someone is violent towards, and then you obviously you have to defend yourself, so I think it can be sometimes. But you never really go try and fight someone."* (Idris)

> *"If it's something to do with family or relationships, I think if you have a conflict you resolve it like not too harshly but as well if it's been an offence against you I mean an eye for an eye in a way but not?"* (Interviews with Idris, M, 14, EM, and Tilley, 16, F, NW).

Some of the articulations of violence, were aided by examples to further highlight how justifiable it is to use violence in certain instances.

> *"Sometimes it's necessary, depending on like war and stuff. So, like if you're not violent then you die, it's like self-defence. You're not gonna' stand there and let someone beat you to death."* (Interview, Jack, 19, M, NW)

"I think some people do [violence] *to show they can do it. and to big themselves up"*
*(*Idris, M, 14, EM)

Providing participants with scenarios around (what may be perceived to be) trivial matters such as someone grabbing your arm in an argument for instance, gave some participants the impetus to vocalise their understanding of how violence could play a part in those situations.

"Like if I didn't fight back, because people would think that err, like I dunno, like a little child, like I don't have words or nothing. Some people do it, like they swear at you and you swear back and they just walk off. So, for me that's not a man." (Interview with Ahbey, M, 15, EM).

"It wouldn't be seen, if a group of people were to sort of think of this scenario they would think the girl is being courageous and not violent even though it would be violent, it wouldn't be seen as violent as if the lad hit the girl...because if the lad hit the girl, he's seen as a woman beater and an abuser and everythin', but, if a girl hits a guy, she obviously standing up for herself and being courageous. (Interview with Andy, 19, M, NW).

The focus with the above lies the actions of individuals, and importantly, the institutions and social network members that ascribe meaning to those actions. Just as Idris states that they do it to 'big themselves up' or that you have to fight back. Violence is arguably constructed through actions and social interactions that form at a young age and inform understanding (West and Zimmerman 1987; Connell 1995). Furthermore, central to gender and the associated dynamics, the above statement by Idris discusses how this is not simply about meeting your expectations of 'manhood' but also being viewed as successfully competing against others (Connell 1987; Kimmel and Messner 2001).

The data has revealed that young people are understanding violence at different levels and aiming to understand it within different contexts, yet, physicality and male bodies were at the centre of the conversation and continuous throughout. As such, young people were showcasing and drawing on examples to show how they understood violence by displaying attitudes that comprise aspects of hegemonic masculinity. Although overall the issue of youth violence has been viewed in a negative light, the same 'masculinity' which has governed this violent behaviour has tended to overlap with the justification for the use of male on male violence. This governance of male

bodies within various social situations combined with perspectives on masculinity and violence is surrounded by considerations around what it means to be manly or masculine just as Ahbey feels as though it would not be manly if he did not say or do anything back. Messerschmidt suggests that a young male's construction of masculinity is in part dependent on the *'capacity for power that he embodies'* (Messerchmidt 1999:214). Therefore, what Ahbey is emphasising is that an individual's status must be maintained, arguably there is an underlying ideology here, male violence is acceptable and justified within varying contexts and rarely restricted in comparison to female violence. It is interesting to hear how young people and males in particular accompany conflict resolution with violence. Adams and Coltrane (2005) and Hatty (2000), observe similar findings and suggest that aggression and violent behaviour from young males form this response to conflict solutions. Such attributes of masculinity are developed as discussed previously in the adolescence stage and the ability to willingly engage in violence and to resolve personal conflict through physical prowess is showcased within a variety of different social settings, whether that is school yard, fighting back, or recognition (Anderson, 1994; Messerschmidt 1993; Magnus and Scott 2020).

What can be problematic about this recognition, is the understanding that male behaviour and violence goes hand in hand, and thus goes largely unnoticed among young people to challenge this, and consequently becomes invisible through the naturalisation of the everyday trivialised nature of such performances (Connell 1987; 1996). This concept of 'trivialised violence' approximates to what other scholars have called normalised violence (Miller 2008; Stanko 1990) to describe how violence permeates social spaces in a variety of forms and everyday lives. While there is extensive evidence for normalised violence it is important to understand the social processes (Henriksen and Bengtsson 2018) of how young people understand this. By doing so, this can lead to a better understanding of how both the minimisation of violence and the accumulation of violent experiences may lead to such trivialisations. Therefore, to understand what young people attribute to 'everyday violence' it is those discussions, the mundane and trivial experiences that crop up in variety of settings that can shed light on how violence is further understood. By utilising the method of vignettes (within interviews), it demonstrates a gateway through which young people can converse and transmit ways of understanding a social phenomenon. Just as one of the participants (Andy) discussed previously, his views on perceived fairness and 'that's just how things work!' The question was posed to him, asking him to discuss how he would feel if a female grabbed his arm whilst in disagreement. Andy's answer has a twotoned approach on the one hand we have a male who understands that it is wrong, or at least

viewed as wrong to hit a female. Yet, he is also exploring is understanding that for a female to hit back at a male is wrong, yet also understands that this could be viewed as brave compared to if it was the other way around. Interestingly debates within his response although limited, subtly explored how females can be constructed as being simultaneously feminine yet, empowered and feisty (Sundaram 2014).

Viewing the gender and violence debate through this narrative now emphasises that acceptability of violence is not only from males but also acceptable when females adopt a hypermasculine form to stay safe. It is interesting to see the participants unpick how they understand violence and how they attribute acceptability or justification to differing situations. Henriksen (2017) argues that these gendered limits are emphasised within late teens, as special meanings of violence which arguably change with our bodies. This builds on the back of Thornes (1993) argument which advocates that children's play in their primary years of schooling is a highly gendered activity. Since then, scholars around the world have argued that males and females in primary school come together in the playground as 'gendered beings' and 'gendered violence' gets played out (Swain 2006; Batholomaeus 2012; Blaise 2005). This intersection between gender and violence becomes central in boundary work and negotiations of legitimate violence particularly with masculine identities. Involved within this, is also the factor of gaining status and respect amongst your peer groups and friends. The young people within this study discussed how this can be an important factor in using or not using violent behaviour.

Status, respect and class in discussions of understanding violence

The following section focuses on the theme of status, respect and class, in doing so it highlights the participant voices form both locations. Such discussions have developed from previous debates on gender and violence and the intricacies highlighted in the previous section. A lot of how young people have discussed violence has come back to a theme of status or respect that is important to young people within this research.

> "*Its different to what they have now, they might be living in a crappy house, might be on benefits, don't have a job. So, when they see something like that, they think, what is the quickest way to get money and that's what might lead to violence*" (Interview with Alicia, F, 15, EM).

"OK, so not trying to be stereotypical or anything, but like lower class is probably more the violent side than like the middle classes" (Interview with Johnathan, M, 19, NW).

"Like, where the mugging happened in town, she doesn't know why, but they don't have the same level of education, well, they do have the same level, but they don't have it at home, and their parents are different (Interview with Harlow, 17, F, NW).

I *see it happen* [violence] *in the town. But where I live it's a nice location, but I do know of it. Because there's a couple of rough ends of town and you kinda' hear about it on a weekly basis. (Interview, Harlow, F, 20, NW).*

Discussions thus far have considered class as a differentiating point when discussing violence, and this is further broken down within particular locations of where the participants reside. As conversations continued it reverts back to the importance of status particularly among the male participants who were more vocal than females during such discussions.

Young people want to be violent because they wanna' get to do somethin'...Like, if you're not popular or like, the best lookin', or the smartest in the school, some people use violence to get to the top or be well known in the school." (Interview with Malcolm, M, 16, EM).

"Well it's on that hierarchy of being known as a somebody, being known to be fearsome...just to have that power of being known and you want to try and be one of those grime rappers making money, women and that's it." (Interview with Stewart, 14, M, EM).

"If someone pushes you, because this is what happens in school, like if I push her fam [friends], over an over again and he just says 'stop', I'm not going to stop. But let's say the first time I push them, and he punches me, then ima' learn, I'm not gonna' push you in a way, cuz' you're gonna' hurt me. So ye, respect." (Malcolm, M, 16, EM).

"There are codes...hierarchy, it about hierarchy" (Malcolm, M, 16, EM).

"To get comments from your friends, like ah, you're so cool!" (Interview with Faizah, F, 15, EM).

Participants understanding of violence centralised around hierarchy, and being recognised is then developed further, to acknowledge that understandings of violence may also be influenced by family and feelings of disrespect and defending one's self.

"If someone done something to your family or you or something, then you can just do whatever you want... if someone does something to your family, you're not defending yourself, your defending your family." (Interview with Brad, 11, M, EM).

"It depends what experience they had it would make them more violent, because if they go through hard times they would want to stand up for themselves. Be who they are, they won't let anybody just walk over them, so they will actually fight for what they want. But then if you kinda' live a lavish lifestyle, you won't really get into violence because you'll think of morals or if you can use the person, you'll think of all the possibilities. (Interview with Stewart, M, 14, EM).

As these discussions begin to form around defending one's own family or honour, the below excerpts in places refer back to the alpha maleness and respect that so many of the participants have discussed in their initial conversation about violence.

"Because sometimes like somebody is being cheeky or something you can't just go off like somebody swears at your family or something somewhere you have to sort it out and defend yourself... its self-esteem. (Interview with Adrian, M, AGE, EM).

"Well obviously if you're that muscular guy who can actually pick on someone, or you will actually do it, because you know you got the strength. But if you're that tiny guy who don't have much muscle or anything', you can't just pick on that big guy, because you're gonna' lose. But it depends if you go the mentality to stand up for yourself" (Interview with Stewart, M, 14, NW).

"To big themselves up...they might tryna' like make friend or tryna' like, just like feel like they're the boss or something." (Interview with Alicia, M, 15, EM).

Discussions flowed well throughout the interviews and the participants felt they could really open up about their perspectives on violence.

"Well it's trying to be on that hierarchy of being known as a somebody, being known to be fearsome..." (Interview with Stewart, M, 14, EM).

"While fighting them you get to understand what's the reason for me fighting them, because anybody can jump into a fight for no reason. But at the end of the fight and stuff might be resolved, but then it can cause more trouble because someone might die or suttin' (Interview with Stewart, M, 14, EM).

The first half of the time spent with these young people across the two locations provided an early insight into how these young people understand violence. As time passed, and the participants began to feel more comfortable with the research setting, they started to delve deeper into what violence means for them. Violence was not relegated to its physical function exclusively as previous discussions have us understand. A benefit of using semi-structured interviews when addressing a sensitive topic is that it allows the participants to speak freely about the inconsistencies, anxieties and understandings of the topic. One of the participants Alicia also instigated dialogue about violence within the context of money, houses and material possessions and how this can have a bearing on the practice of violent behaviour. In this context Alicia is very aware that young people feel the need to buy material things in order to improve their lives. Alicia also highlights the need for this to happen quickly, here there is a need for immediacy. This immediacy is interrelated with financial motivations and the drive to succeed, and these factors may underpin decision making for young people to become involved with violence. Although the above statement is normally associated as an adult concern, the understanding and need for getting what you want in some young people is instilled at a young age via circumstances beyond their control. Here the conversations move toward class and how this has a bearing on violent understandings.

Johnathan and Harlow whom are both from the rural cohort discuss class, and although other respondents within the study did not touch specifically on this topic, this issue may have arisen in this location due to the peculiarity of its location; for instance: the rural location is located between an affluent area and also a council estate. As such, the young people who participated within this study, could have been from varying backgrounds but attend the same youth centre, as many others have been closed down. Furthermore, because of the location, socio-economic variances are more pronounced than within the urban cohort. Yet, it is important to note that previous research resonates with what some of the young people are expressing in this study. As it has

been found for a variety of reasons that young people from low income areas have experienced or witnessed violent crime and behaviour (Bell and Jenkins 1993; Ritchers and Martinez 1993).

James Cotê (2014) suggests that it is important to realise that when discussing youth that we as scholars tend to do this in an exclusionary sense. We focus on the disadvantaged lower class, and the focus in research has been to objectify and focus on inequality and the associated links with offending behaviour. Although the data has now begun to focus on this issue this thesis will not so much be looking at class a dominant feature but to make the reader aware of how within this study specifically, the young people descend from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities and therefore, to keep in mind, as inequality has the potential to widen over the next decade these young people may face the brunt of these changes. Thus, these significant divisions that the participants have discussed within the sample are major features of young people's lives. Within the many facets of youth violence including status and how this informs their understanding or justification of violence. Davis, (2014) discusses how from a young age working class boys learned that violence was customary means for males to vent their anger. It was perceived as powerful for men to fight in public and they could earn powerful local reputations and considerable status from displays of courage and fighting prowess. Accordingly, Davis also mentions how when men had 'fair fights' in which men fought with bare fists, this was an established means of settling grievances in working class districts. Common links have been made between the data within this study and what William Bowen wrote in 1880:

> *"I can remember as a boy one Sunday afternoon...a crowd came out of a public house with two men stripped to their naked waist who began to fight, and they fought until their naked bodies were streaming with blood. I thought, when I am a man I would like to be able to fight like that."* (Cited in Schneider and Tilley 2017).

It is clear whether we are in the 1800s or the 21st century, seeing displays of violent behaviour through physical prowess from males highlights to young boys that toughness is one of the masculine virtues (Davis et al 2014). Furthermore, from learning by example that this is both a necessity and legitimate means of self- assertion. On reflection, the discussions around class and violence blur between class and status. Particularly among young males, the status of an individual regarding their use or non-use of violence and their need to be noticed. This was something that Malcolm mentioned about becoming that 'top boy' within the school environment.

It was refreshing to hear young people speak so openly about the realities of school life and the numerous avenues a young person can chose to gain status amongst their peers, all very aware that if these legitimate options are not viable violence is another feasible route. It is important to recognise how young people express themselves around violence and how this translates into traditional criminological theory. General strain theory highlights the negative social relations and emotions that can pressure individuals to commit crime and or violence. Importantly, it has special relevance to urban youth violence as young people in this environment are more likely to experience strains conducive to the use of violence (Brezina and Agnew 2012). As Malcolm discussed, young people aim to find their niche within their own world, which at this stage in life is school. The reality in which young people now live in a world that is heavily mediatised and gratified and thus provides status through these vortices as natural entities an area that Stewart touches on by linking power with being fearsome, about masculinity and status.

Furthermore, there is also discussion around status and how this is reinforced with how peers' function as a reference group for young people, especially young males who partake in localised hegemonic masculinity within their groups are thus responsible for monitoring and patrolling it (Steinberg et al 1997). Smiler (2013) terms 'peer groups' as; identity groups' (Smiler 2013:94) and argues that one clear theme to emerge from research on young boys concurring with this research is that 'masculinity has to be proved over and over; it is never a given' (Smiler 2013:99). It is here that young people within the study constructed violence and the masculinity of young men as a two-part concept, such concepts have been broken down by Malcolm as either rejection of peers by not standing up for yourself or by 'pushing back' and thus gaining some respect through fighting and maintaining the 'hegemonic ideal'. Accounts such as Malcolm's reiterated the importance of standing your ground and reaffirms Smilers (2013) argument about masculinity being proven and masculinity is not a biological given but something in which you have to gain and then keep. Here we have an environment where individuals may utilise forms of violence in an attempt to build their reputations and status, as a means of gaining respect. Just as the above excerpt demonstrates, traditional criminological theory such as 'the code of the streets' (Anderson 1999) basic premise is transferable from the 'streets' to the classroom. Thus, one way to gain status and guard it is to act aggressively, this may especially be the case if an individual is being tested or fearful of further attacks.

Discussions among focus groups (Malcolm's quote) around hierarchy got a lot of the participants nodding in agreement and it appears that the discussion of status and codes have been

transferred from peer to school context. These codes and hierarchies are used as a mechanism of protection, similar to how residents did In Philadelphia where Anderson conducted his ethnographic study (Anderson 1999; Henson, Swartz and Reyns 2017; Brown 2004). Such discussions also led to violence being seen as impressive via peer groups as Faizah outlined about gaining comments from your friends and saying, *'you're cool'*. The aggressive or violent proactive behaviours the young people are discussing within this thesis are important to recognise as these are their own understandings brought up without any predefined terms from the researcher; and therefore, should be understood in the context of age-related vulnerabilities (Hamby et al 2018). Furthermore, by adopting this behaviour, it provides young people with an alternative source of peer status which resonates with Andersons (1999:97) discussion: *"When students become convinced that they cannot receive their props from teachers and staff, they turn elsewhere. Typically, the street, encouraging others to follow their lead".* However, within this context the streets could arguably be viewed within the confines of peers or school rather than the streets as Anderson references too.

In discussing the 'street' the localities of the data collection are altogether different, but one thing was clear, respect. Young people in both locations condemned the use of violence, but found loopholes and justifications for using it, thus making it acceptable. Such justifications can be seen from Brad's quote (refer to page 121), we see how a young person has justified their use of violence they have adequately adopted What Matza (1969) describes as "techniques of neutralisation". He argues that individuals can regularly adopt this technique to absolve themselves from behaviour such as violence which the wider society would usually deem as deviant. Yet, as the above excerpt highlights, the deflection of wrongdoing is found in the ability to provide justification and for Brad, this has been his family. He almost describes this within and altruistic sense, '*you're not defending yourself, you're defending your family'*. Therefore, even if such actions are deemed as criminal by the legal system. Certain actions become justified as morally acceptable, or at least permissible in a particular context. This is more than just making a decision, this goes deeper into the morality of violence and how weighing up the use of such behaviour can maybe not only earn individuals' rewards but also earn respect and status from peers.

Charles Murray (1996, cited in Lister 1996) discusses how young men, specifically, male teenage behaviour is simply a caricature of the barbarian male. He describes how these young males will

retaliate against the slightest from of (dis)respect and try to sleep with as many girls as possible from a young age. Resultantly, violence is ultimately a sign of strength, something that Adrian and Stewart both touch on about standing up for yourself keeping that form of respect from violence and showcasing that strength. This in-depth perspective of male strength versus mentality is interesting, reiterating the hierarchies and codes which young people have created and sustained based on gender and physique, all the while generating techniques where they can justify using violence. It is all about status and respect for young people, just as Alicia and Stewart discuss, the data has revealed codes, hierarchy, gaining respect, how this respect will be tested and how you can keep it.

Following on from this, it seems that what participants within this study are trying to articulate, is that status during adolescence is important. Not only is it used a survival technique but also because it regulates the rules of using violence, in whichever form this may take. Therefore, being able to legitimate or challenge the use of it. Stewart discusses how in order to fight someone; you must have a basic level of respect. Here we have two outcomes, a young person gains respect from standing their ground 'like a man' but also, once the fight it finished there is the possibility of more trouble which can result in serious harm, which initially began from fighting In the first place. This study has highlighted the inherent culture of how young people understand violence and how it is presented to them. In both the urban and rural cohort violence has been discussed within and around the context of the physical realm. This choice of description and examples provided throughout this chapter thus far has been motivated by the cultural meaning of fights, how they have interpreted violence through fighting, gender and status, and to an extent, class. Male participants in particular are attracted to the 'toughness' and competitive nature of fighting, not necessarily violence for its own sake. Understanding violence from young people in this manner illuminates the spectrum of 'violence' in social life.

Considering that violence has been discussed via definitions and gender, rationality has not been discussed as often. Violence thus far has been discussed in emotive contexts. Rationality lies at the heart of classical criminology which states that offenders contemplate the costs and benefits of anticipated behaviour against a backdrop of alternatives and decide whether to move forward with their actions to offend (See Cornish and Clarke 1986). Young people in this study expressed how sometimes if you wanted to be somebody, then being violent was the way to do it and get respect. By taking a deeper look at rationality, the deterrence doctrine is normally situated at the end of the decision-making process rather than at the beginning of the theoretical funnel that

serves progressively to narrow choices (Jacobs and Wright 2010:1741). The theoretical approaches in criminology essentially rest on the assumption that offenders or in this case, violent young people are information processors (McCarthy et al 1998). From this we can analyse 'violent actors' and how they aim to shape how others will interpret or categorise the behaviour in front and around them. Young people are not willing to stand by and be attacked or disrespected, when academia and popularity are out of reach, they aim to proactively shape reactions by witnesses, peers or agents of control, and indeed by themselves through the willing use of violence or other contemplated ideas (Jackson-Jacobs 2004;2013;2014). As Jackson-Jacobs states:

> *"It is important for social scientists to perceive the fight as a form of interpersonal violence and a label, by looking at it from the perspective of its principles, and the audiences involved and thus the downstream consequences.* (2014;167).

Race in understanding violence:

Thus far, this chapter has considered primary understandings of violence, and unpicked the concepts that participants found applicable to how they may define and interpret violence. This final section of this chapter considers some of the social and cultural factors that young people identified as their own understandings about violence. The media in its various formats is considered a big impacting factor for young people in this study and how they assimilate their understandings of violence with wider concepts and globalised society. This was pre-empted however by discussions around race and how these concepts at times interact and thus feeds into their perceptions of violence.

Demographically the ethnic diversity among the two cohorts differed significantly, and although this was an outcome of the convenient sampling, it showcased the two different locations well and further highlighted the (sub) cultural aspects imbued within the violence discourse and narrative. The focus on two geographical locations was purely exploratory in nature but proved to be one of the biggest significant factors for both the study's analysis and knowledge making, particularly because rurality is lacking in criminological research. While violence seems to play a frequent role within the lives of young people, whether through narrative or via physical forces, it does not seem to have a desensitising effect as some previous studies would suggest (Garbarino et al 1991). This study alongside previous research suggests that it teaches children that violence is normal

and therefore acceptable. Indeed, the majority of the understandings have come from a place of powerlessness and violence as a prospect to overcome this feeling. Furthermore, young people discussed race and the bearing this has on how they perceive violence. Such emotions on this topic were clearly conveyed in a young girl's response when I asked: *"What images come to mind when thinking of violence?"*

'Malcolm...look...He looks like a fighter.' [Faizah]

'What?! So his appearance makes him look like a violent person? [Lucy] *"So what? Dark coloured people? '* [Malcolm]

"No , no I didn't say that!" [Faizah]

(Focus group excerpt with Faizah, 15, F, Lucy, 16, F, Malcolm, 16, M, EM).

"No, this is what I'm saying, when you think of violence you don't think of two white people fighting do you? Honestly, let's be honest. You think of dark people..., simple as, period. It's not racist you do, cuz' its more advertised on dark people, like 'WorldStar" [Website with street fighting videos clips, predominantly with black people from America] *it's all black people fighting.* (Focus group excerpt, Malcolm, M, 16, EM).

This focus group above was an interesting and insightful one, as a researcher I was eager to hear the responses, but I was also very aware that this could go awry and was ready to stop the focus group. Yet, this was not necessary, the young people handled the comments well and took on board such perspectives and provided a response that highlighted reasons as to why that young person could have these perspectives.

"They kind of twist it a bit, like they can go. 'Oh this man was shot' and they twist it like 'this man was shot in a terror attack' or somethin' like that. Like that's been done quite a lot in my opinion." [Interview with Louise, 16, F, NW].

"Ye I think sometimes if it was a white person-based crime they would just go this man was shot. But if it was like a Muslim that was shot or somebody else, they would make a song and dance about it." [interview with Louise, F, 16, NW].

And in the rural cohort discussions of race were open and honest, the participants in this study not only felt comfortable in opening up about this topic to a researcher, who was of mixed heritage background, but also unpicked their perspectives as they communicated their understanding. *"Ye I think they [young people] take note and they just go like aww most people have that thing with them like white people are good and the other are associated with bad people. Because I think it's sometimes with films, like in films it is usually like, I don't know. Like in horror film it is like the black person dies first. Ye I think because of the whole colour separation thing, like the coloured (interesting choice of word) people hype it up. They're like 'oh we're like portrayed to be this, so I'm going to act like this because this is what we're meant to look like, so I may as well live up to it."* [interview with Louise, 16, F, NW].

As previously mentioned, during particular points, these conversations got tense and in places uncomfortable (more so for the participants than myself), but participants within these conversations allowed one another to voice their opinions and tried to understand the reasoning behind it. Malcolm in particular wanted to understand Faizah's perspective more. During this, Faizah initially speaks explicitly about her own perceptions of violence but also entangled within this were other participants views who seemed to have taken offence or misunderstandings of what was being said. Interestingly, Malcolm elaborated on Faizah's comment and provided a justification for what she said. This particular young person had a view about race and violence that had not been discussed previously, but also highlighted how the media and its impact can affect (although subconsciously) an individual's thinking about violence and the links with various ethnicities.

As the conversation moves on within the rural cohort Louise also spoke about race freely and how she perceives it. Louise was acutely attuned to how the media have power to twist and shift perceptions. I was highly aware how my presence as a mixed-race researcher (interviewer) may impact participants opinions, (although I hoped it wouldn't) especially during the political time of Brexit. I was conducting these interviews within the Northwest of the UK where the Brexit vote was predominantly leave with around 60% (Electoral Commission 2019: Democratic Audit 2020). Yet, this white, young female was open and honest about her opinions on race and the media and she discusses the differences she sees within the media or news outlets. Furthermore, Louise goes on to discuss how race and the media can skew or unintentionally cause unease towards other ethnicities or subcultures within the UK similar to how Malcolm was elaborating on Faizah's comment.

To critically analyse this aspect Jon Garland's work on 'the criminological other' (2001) has relevance here; this concept draws on morally charged orthodoxy, rather than looking at this argument from the lens of sovereignty and state, this concept has scope here to be transferred to the media and what is understood as 'the state' would be the media.   To further elaborate citizens are encouraged to consume products, and as a young person this may be the latest app or social media platform. They are to operate within a climate which is pervasive with risk and fear, websites such as Worldstar or social media platforms like, Facebook and Snapchat have the potential to depict 'dangerous outsiders' as a form of entertainment. Thus, the media and market in which it sits are ever present in reproducing and engaging in the vilification of particular groups (Welch et al 2002), which was noted by the participants within this research study.

What was interesting about these conversations in the rural cohort was the terminology used to describe opinions on different ethnicities. I was aware before conducting this study that the demographics of this neighbourhood are predominantly white, and with the current state of affairs within the country at the time I was prepared for hostility, but there was none, as a researcher I felt comfortable. Although, many would take offence to the term 'coloured' this had no negative effect on me, I wanted to let this young person speak without fear of repercussion or the 'disappointed or surprised' look, which may cause her to stop talking, but allow her to explain through exploring her own understanding of what she was aiming to articulate. As the rural cohort is predominantly white, the area has more than likely also had previous generations of the same ethnicity. Therefore, it could be argued that the terminology used is saturated within the social structure and identities of the neighbourhood, which may shape young people's understanding of race (particularly within this rural area) and how they equate this with how they conceive violence (Walker 2005). It is almost as if this participant is not only unpicking how she herself understands violence but also how the discourse of race and racialised identities are being reproduced (Walker 2005) through narrative and the medias' portrayal of ethnically diverse youth. It is becoming clear that the understanding of violence along with terminology and race are dovetailed within the personal, cultural and structural facets of society.

To analyse this area of conversation further, we can break down race, terminology and understanding by utilising Thompson's (1997) anti oppression model that has three areas the Personal, Cultural and Structural (PCS). This model can be used as a form of analysis to understand how discrimination and inequalities feature in social circumstances. Thompson developed this approach to analyse anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practices within social

work. The approach utilises three levels, these levels (P, C and S) are closely interlinked and thus constantly interact with one another (See figure below).

(Adapted from Thompson 1997:21 fig 2.1). (Figure 15)
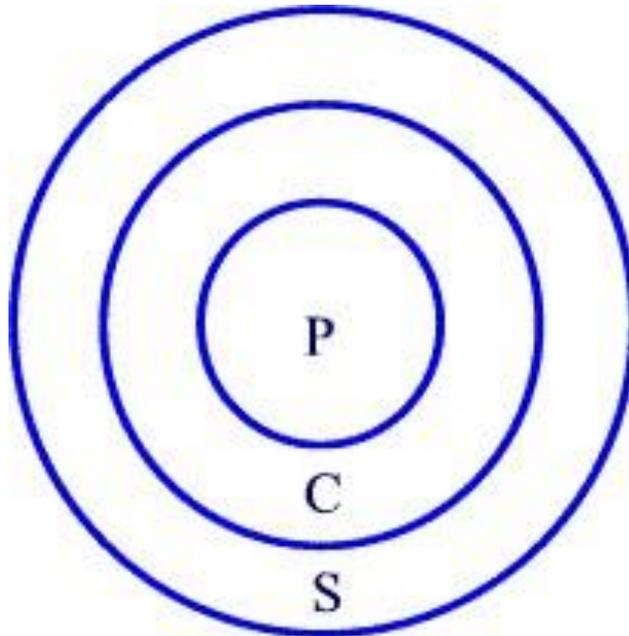
- The **P** refers to the personal; here, it is individual thoughts, feelings and attitudes. These thoughts and feelings will be shaped buy our experiences at the personal level.
- The **C** is for cultural, it relates to shared ways of seeing and patterns of thought and commonalities. A common consensus about what is right or normal.
- The **S** this demonstrates how common consensus is sewn into the fabric of society via institutions which support the cultural norms and personal beliefs.

(Thompson, 2016).

The PCS model permeates different aspects of an individual's life and this model is transferable in looking at youth violence and how it also pervades young people lives on each level. By working on an individual or the personal level as many youth workers and agencies do initially, you are able to challenge behaviours. Having said that, by accounting for how the model is structured it is important to understand that this would also take place on the cultural and societal level also.

For example, if we take the conversation between Malcolm and Faizah concerning violence and race:

- **Personal:** Malcolm is assumed to be violent because he is multiracial; *'look at him, he looks like a fighter!'* Although Faizah denied that this is what she meant Malcolm interpreted it this way.
- **Cultural:** He lives within the inner city, ethnically diverse. Yet, during this time period (Brexit started in the news) cultural and personal views are more pronounced.
- **Societal:** Popular, tabloid and media footage depict black and mixed-race people fighting more than any other race. Some leaders within political campaigns also support the discontinuing of migrants or 'non-whites' into the country, and although this is for a variety of reasons it is pushed forward as a race related issue. There is an overwhelming use of power used in varying forms of structural life.

By using this example from earlier on in the chapter we can begin to unpick how this analysis not only highlights why Faizah perceives 'violence' this way but that this understanding runs deeper. Here we have an 'othering' process or what Dominelli (2002:44) discusses as the 'the-us' dyad. Although we have discussed that young people living in rural areas of the UK can be at stark disadvantage it must not be forgotten that this analysis highlights, that inequality is further compounded for Black and minority ethnic young people within housing, education and healthcare and the Criminal Justice System (Bowling and Phillips 2002: 57).

Considering this form of analysis, this thesis has been able to explore the opinions of young people and violence and not only understand it from their point of view but also understand their underlying assumptions and reasoning for thinking that way, from the terminology used to examples provided. By using this analysis, it can aid in further understanding why young people behave in certain ways or carry out such actions. The personal level has been concerned thus far with young people opinions and individual views. The personal is at the centre of the diagram because although this thesis has a strong underpinning of representing young people's voices this level is supported by two other levels. As a result, we move towards the cultural, where this analysis relates to shared values and as Louise was describing how 'coloured' people are portrayed differently this would have an underpinning within the society she grew up in and also the lack of contact this participant may have with young people from other ethnic backgrounds. This use of terminology when discussing violence has not been used in a racist or derogatory way

yet, arguably it is sewn into the fabric of her society as a norm. Here is where we can bring in the structural level of the PCS model, there are institutions within individual society, demographically or through the media which can cement beliefs and norms (Wood 2001).

The discussion from both urban and rural not only reveals how complex understanding violence is and the varying facets that are intertwined within it. But resonates with traditional thinking and the process of 'othering' and the steep insecurities that society has created. As Young, (2001) discusses this othering involves a distancing and diminishing which ultimately creates binaries of them and us, perceived as normal and deviant.

Therefore, on the one hand this part of the chapter argues that the media is part of the driving force behind the 'othering' of various young people. Then, we also come across how social media has the potential to greatly increase a young person's status or reputation. This discussion highlighted the power media can have on perceptions and understandings of violence amongst young people. Although this thesis has provided discussions from participants that at times can be contradictory it is important to view the data from the inside out and understand that fundamentally, underlying this dialogue, is a deeper- rooted issue surrounding the potential control media has on values and norms within urban and rural societies.

Media and the (un)intended impacts on understanding:

The media is one of the final themes within this chapter, an area of focus that not only impacts our everyday lives but was identified by the participants as an area of importance to their understanding of violence. As such, the use of various media platforms is a way in which young people (and a lot of adults) gain their news, updates and understandings of the world, alongside socialising to promoting their identity and networking. It plays a central role, and that role is solidified as the majority of young people have smartphones, laptops or tablets that all have access to the internet, and therefore can enter online platforms or various media outlets at any point throughout the day. As such, recent surveys have indicated that 96% of 13-18-year olds use social media platforms (Lenhart et al 2015) in their daily lives. This resonates with the Baudrillard notion (Kellner 2019) of hyper reality, and specifically this section of the chapter will discuss how this 'blurred vision' becomes reality amongst British youths.

The daily intake and participation in social media have left the boundaries between being online and offline very blurred, with access to 'live streaming' and 'posts', gratification for young people

especially, has almost become instant. With such technology readily available real violence can be streamed live for anyone to watch regardless of age. For example, the mass shooting at two mosques in New Zealand in March 2019. This was streamed live but almost filmed like a video game. Furthermore, young people can be very selective in what they view, and this can help reinforce attitudes while they avoid contradictory opinions.

The below excerpts highlight some of the importance young people have attributed to media and how this has influenced their understandings around violence. It starts off with participants across both locations discussing how social media enhances the need for aesthetics and the 'nicer things in life', some of which can push young people into criminality and violence to achieve such realisations.

> *"I think it's got worse. Like Instagram and stuff, like taking pictures of your outfits and stuff like if you the best clothes or whatever, you obviously feel like you're better than somebody who doesn't wear all those brands and stuff which is obviously why uniforms are worn in schools and makes everyone on the same peg."* (interview with Johnathan, M, 19, NW).

> *"Like, Facebook, it shows like, loads of rich people with big houses, and because its aesthetic to you and you like the look of it, you want that. And you know you have to work hard for it, either through selling drugs, violence or being smart.* [Focus group excerpt with Malcolm, 16, M, EM].

As the conversations moved on participants began to utilise the theme of media to think about how it may influence some young people to act violently.

> *"Music, it advertises it [violence], in like a good way, like, it promotes it in a way, it shows that you should do that if you have a problem".* [Focus group excerpt with Malcolm, M, 16, EM].

> *"Sometimes young people like to copy characters [on TV] because you want to be like them... Like in a film, where you see somebody fighting or getting a knife out, you wanna' do the same, if you have a problem with someone, you wanna' do the same and take a knife out on that person."* [Focus group excerpt with Adrian, 15, M, EM].

"I don't think it matters like in films if there's violence. Because they know it's not real."
[Focus group excerpt with Idris, M, 14, EM]

The entertainment value of violence was a talking point, and debates were had around the impact of such 'entertainment', furthermore, they emphasised how 'violence'; is categorised and how this affects their understanding.

"There can be videos of people fighting, and people might find it entertaining and funny" [Focus group excerpts with Vanessa and Faizah, 15, EM].

"Not really because in school, they put bullying and violence apart really, bullying in different categories like cyber, physical and all that, but at the end of the day they don't say bullying is violence." (Interview with Brad, 11, M, EM)

"*It's true! It's something that happens daily* [crime, violence and other aspects in these films], *it does happen like where we live* [East Midlands city area], *not just in one place* [like in the film is based in London]*, it shows that people crave power and greed."*
[Focus group excerpt with Malcom, 16, M, EM]

Within the previous chapter, class was discussed alongside how violence is attributed to certain people of socio-economic backgrounds. However, as cultural criminology argues, the significance of class delineations has diminished and accordingly, there has been a failure to create subcultures and to resist the inequalities of capitalism. Although young people may be less inclined to create a subculture, the cocktail mix of media, violence and young people simultaneously aim to resist the status quo but also strive to live up to middle class status and aspirations. A participant in the study discusses this in the context of fashion and how such issues are comparable between branded and non-branded clothing. Examples like this, also led to discussions around the media (in all its forms) and status alongside aspirations become blurred together as reasons for using violent behaviour this is arguably, when all other legitimate options have been exhausted.

Hayward (2004:8) argues that consumer culture and aspirational culture have now become locked within what he calls a 'deadly embrace', suggesting that each one is begetting the other, much of what Malcolm highlighted within his discussions around social media and music. Therefore, it could be argued that this 'embrace' be visualised, controlled and enacted by young people and

what is more, it has become clear that young people and contemporary communications go hand in hand to constitute the gauge by what is established as important. Hayward and Young (2004) discuss how pop culture and serious news media become blurred and the lines between reality and hyper reality are indistinct. Hayward and Young (2004) discuss how the street scripts the screen, and the screen scripts the street. As a result, we end up with images of crime and war that are repackaged as entertaining digital escapism, and unreal 'reality TV' moments shape moral values and social norms (Hayward and Young 2004:259). Perhaps it is important to understand, that just as upbringing, community and neighbourhood have an impact on a young person's understanding of violence, so too can the media. The mediatisation of day to day life can thus alter and change young people's norms and values, especially if packaged in an entertaining (for instance music, as exampled above) or humorous way.

As music seems to be one of the biggest impetuses for arguably using or what this thesis argues as understanding violent behaviour within the urban cohort, I asked young people to provide me with examples of who. The participants suggest I listen to a UK group called 'Six Seven' who fall into the genre of Grime and Drill, which often feature lyrics about gang disputes, drugs, guns and stabbings, alongside mocking rivals (Broomfield 2017). The current debate surrounding this music suggests that drill music can be seen as the catalyst for the recent youth violence within London areas (Beaumont-Thomas 2018). Fans of this music, however, suggest that the genre reflects the lives of young people in deprived areas, and specifically, city estates. The young people mentioned that they feel they can relate to this music more because they are British, and it represents their lives better than American. As with a lot of popular culture in the UK this genre has been adapted from Trap music which is the original and Americanised version of drill. The main tenants of the genre have stayed the same, yet, one of the most iconic is the nihilistic fixation on violence. what is of most relevance within this genre (drill) is that it is defined by the ability to be estate bound (dominated by inner city complexes) thus it becomes hyper-local and as a result, produces a mentality that is structured around pre-exiting gang rivalries.

An excerpt from one of their songs are below, entitled, 'Let's Lurk': An extract of the lyrics are as follows:

67 Lyrics	Translation
Turn up on your block, ten toes, man will do it,	I show up on your street, you start running, I will do it.

no plan, man will do it, no plan	Without a plan I will do it [assumption here is violent act upon another person]
In four-door trucks, I took risks, man,	In a truck with four doors I will take a risk
soon gon' bring out the chopper in the van (skrr)	I will soon bring out the assault rifle which is in the van.
I was in the trap on Snapchat watching everybody turn up mad (mad)	I was in the crack house via snapchat watching everybody have a party.
Can't lie, that shit got me mad but I was hugging up all them bands	I cannot lie seeing them have cocaine upset me, but I had a lot of money
Just done road with Snoopy (trap),	Just committed some crime with fellow colleague
bare Uncle Fest and amm	A lot of marijuana smoking and...
Got my face all droopy, bro got guwop like Gucci	This has made my face relaxed but has my me making money like Gucci Mane (rapper).
See him in Stoney, not Gucci (Gucci)	You see others in Stone island and not Gucci (high end designer).
The ops used to laugh at my truck but they cut when they see that hooptie (skrr skrr)	The enemies used to laugh at my vehicle, but they respect me when they see my new car.
Whip that skeng out the coat, watch it sink like Susie (bow). (Six Seven, 2015, cited on Genius 2018).	I take the knife out of my coat and watch it go into someone like it went into Susie.

Table 6

Although some may argue that this is simply music, some young people interpret this and bend their experiences to relate it to their lives. In Catch 22's report (2017) Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney state how it is essential to highlight that the majority of music within this genre (grime) constitutes a raw reflection of the lives that young people creating music are living. In their report they suggest that it does not however incite further acts of violence, but it depicts young lives which the younger generation relate to. This is where arguably lines become blurred between reality and fiction, as Malcolm touches on how music videos and lyrics such as the one outlined above suggest that you should use violence if you have a problem. The young people in this study however, although expressing their opinion, did not suggest that they have used it because of listening to such music, but find it relatable and understand the acceptability of violence as a result. Although many young people watch videos that contain violence and listen to music that highlights such behaviour in order to achieve goals, many in fact do not want to live that chaotic lifestyle that is often glamorised within the media (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney 2017).

However, we must remember that this contemporary debate related to music, violence and arguably 'challenging' behaviour is nothing new. It has a long-standing history, with debates about music and film and the potential 'bad' influence on the younger generation going back to the 1950s. The influence of rock and roll was both a uniting yet dividing force and the division usually came between the younger and older generations. One of the rebellious acts was the changing attitude towards African Americans, mainly amongst teenagers (Gilmore 1990). Historically it was majority of white teenagers who listened to music that was inspired and performed by black singers, just as today a big following of hip-hop, rap, grime and drill in the UK is followed by white middle- and working-class youth, and by doing so, they embrace a part of a culture that is 'cool' and youthful.

Farrugia (2016) discusses symbolic mobility (see chapters two and three) and how symbols and discourses can make up youth culture, and the most valorised will be defined and reproduced. As with music the element of 'cool' that comes with listening to music predominantly made and performed by black people has also had elements of violence within their lyrics, and as a result, this fuels the tension between the youth and violence nexus. This continued change in youth culture provides young people with differing prospects, one of which is identity shaping or making, which has been intersected by both traditional media and computer technologies. As a result, we have a generation of young people who can form their own identities or find other (sub) cultures that share similar norms and values or which they can adopt. Thus, creating their own autonomous

space where identities can be created, gratified and repeated through the combined lens of youth and social media. This combination arguably creates a two-sided coin; one the one hand, youth, crime and violence combined with the media has created a culture of consumption (Best and Kellner 2003), yet, alternatively, on the other hand, it creates counterproductive subcultures where young people have defined themselves against the common rhetoric of society.

Idris explores this when he talks about how you can sometimes 'copy people on tv', discussing that If you have problems with someone violence could be a possible answer, but this is where the blurring of right and wrong can come in when utilising media as ways of knowing and understanding. However, Idris also made clear that this may be different for social media because you are more aware that it has been filmed 'for real'. However, this blurring of what is real and what is fake, is arguably tied up within how society is reflected within these media images and how young people understand them. Throughout all these discussions we can relate some of this back to the 1970s when Punk burst onto the scene, the fashion and anti-establishment sound resonated with youth discontent at the time (Mohdin 2017), and just as Rock n' Roll, Punk and Rap have brought about the same debates so too has Grime and Drill, it is considered cool in society, and underground sound that has impact.

However, this (as most) music is a working-class genre, like punk it originated from the very people austerity measures and government policies have hit the hardest over the past decade. As a result, the symbolic natures and cultural flows that come with grime and drill provides a method of identity formation (Mohdin 2017; Mullen 2017). Another argument can be made of 'video nasties' that rapidly emerged as a threat to the social values and interests of society during the 1980s. Newspapers warned that young people are understanding that they can watch sex and violence through their parent's video machine at home. Such discussions around the media's impact on understanding and interpretation of violence have been explored among participants, and they have highlighted that depending on how the video is portrayed it can alter how they view and perceive it. During a focus group, Vanessa [participant] discusses that; "*Majority of videos on social media platforms are done so to create entertainment*". Due to their funny and humorous nature, the content may not be viewed as violence. While the comments may seem trivial in their response, it critically highlights how young people are aware that violence is readily available on their screen whether this is via home DVD or less used video players, or their tablets or smartphones, laptops. It gives prominence to social medias impact on young people's understanding of what violence is.

During the course of this research social media has been rife with live videos of young people directing violence at one another, whether this is through bullying or simply arranging a fight, so it can be filmed and get 'likes' and thus boost ratings for social media. However, bullying was a short conversation for the participants, they did not readily equate violence and bullying as the same thing, as Brad points out that such issues are also discussed separately in school and violence and bullying are never equated to one another. Thus, not only do young people separate both bullying and violence, more prominently, what can be established here is that young people have fallen into this hyper-reality, they openly discuss how they will film fights, and this is due to the entertainment value that posting videos like this can get- it comes down to status. Fiction, media and likes are being blurred into real life, in exchange for instant gratification. Ironically, a quote from a film called 'Fightclub' nicely summarises how social media may affect youth of today:

> *"We've all been raised on television to believe that one day we'd all be millionaires, and movie gods, and rock stars. But we won't, and we're slowly learning that fact, and we're very, very pissed off."* (Chuck Palahniuk, Fight Club, cited on Good Reads, 2019).

Looking deeper into this issue however is how entertainment and crime are combined and thus, not only creates a hyperreality but also blurs the potential understanding of the potential impact, from the use of violent behaviour. So, as perceptions move from to fear to entertainment, it not only desensitises but is reproduced in youthful cultures across various places as forms of entertainment and shared for the world to see.

As the focus groups continued, I began to probe deeper into what the potential impact young people feel it gives them from seeing violence on TV or other electronic devices. Specifically, I was looking to see how real they find programmes and if this has any bearing on their understanding. A participant from the urban cohort suggested two UK films that they felt was relatable to their lives. The first was 'Top Boy' and the other 'Kidulthood' [a British drama where most of the characters in the film generally behave in a violent and lawless manner, engaging in crime, sex, and recreational drug use.] Instantly, they all enthusiastically answered '*YES!*' the focus group in the urban cohort revealed (Malcolm in particular) that such UK programmes are relatable because they see crime and violence happen daily in various forms where they live, and although such programmes are London based, they have been able to see the same power and greed that is depicted on their own streets.

Accordingly, although the last section of this chapter has focused predominantly on the hyperreality of the media frenzy and video-nasties debate. We should further acknowledge these discussions from both participants and literature on the wider and political scale. Resultantly, one of the favoured and echoing factors of this type of film and music is that it resonates with youthful discontent, at a time where there is antipathy towards the British Government alongside the precarious nature of their futures (Mohdin 2017; Mullen 2017). The relatability of British films to British youths whether in rural or urban landscapes highlights the grim outlook on how life can or will be for some young people. The discussion surrounding economic difficulties, boredom and media overload, as Best and Kellner (2003:76) suggest, is that the postmodern adventure is a wild and dangerous ride, a rapid rollercoaster of thrills and spills into the unknown. This may be an exciting prospect for some, albeit for a short while 'i.e. youthful years', but the reality is for some young people, this may be an everlasting reality, for which they can ride the front seat of continuously into adulthood, where the structures of society will add to this continuity- this will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter summary

The analysis so far has focused primarily on unpicking what violence as a term means to young people and how gender and status have bearing on the use or legitimacy of violent behaviour. Violence thus far has taken on a cultural aspect, interlocking what it means to be 'young' in Britain today. These understandings by young people were initially understood through several lenses, each one adding to a deeper understanding of the next. Moving on from initial understandings and definitional points of view the data reveals that class, gender and status are at the forefront of the debate holding a strong connection with the participants. Gender was a significant discussion via the lens of masculinity and femininity and how branding violence in such ways legitimises or illegitimates the use of it. It was comprehended that masculinity and male habitus were interlocked within the violence paradigm and thus have been normalised and almost expectant of young males. In an academic context, the practise of violence can be used and understood as the ability to exploit power, how, where and whom, is within the individual limits of that group.

Within this group of participants, they have discussed and understood violence as they have comprehended it. The social construction dialogue is inherent throughout but is also underpinned

by boundaries that participants have attributed, thus making it boundary driven. The following chapter will look at the aspect of neighbourhood by critically looking at the two sites of study, the urban and the rural. By doing so we can take this debate one step further by arguing that there are two kinds of violence which are altogether different. One is personal violence- an act of violence by male or female against another human, the type of violence which has been explored and discussed throughout this chapter within a variety of contexts. The second is the violence in which we rarely see or chose to ignore, social violence. This has been well documented via concentration camps, warfare, down to the benefit system (Leigh 1990). This social violence creates personal violence as its antithesis. Looking at environment, violence is directionally proportional to the power it has to deadens one's mood which is possessed by the environment (Leigh 1990:98).

To cite the words of the seventeenth century English philosopher Hobbes:

> *"Life in a state of nature is nasty, brutish and short, not because of primal thirst for blood but because of the inescapable logic of anarchy, as such, the resulting fear of attack will tempt their neighbour* (or in this case another young person) *to strike first, which in turn will make the prior agent strike first and so on* (Hobbes cited in Pinker 2012).

By taking young people's comments into consideration along with the environments they inhabit, we may begin to see that violence for them is not a mindless act, but a technique adopted to fight their way out of a mindless trap.

Chapter 6: Findings 2: The geographical nature of understanding youth violence.

The previous chapter considered how young people understood violence from exploring what the term meant to them by delving into their own understandings. This included areas of focus such as gender, status, masculinity and femininity. The focus in this chapter will be to familiarise the reader with more of the core problematics as discussed within the literature review such as the location of the two studies and how both locations have similarities and differences. Place became a significant theme for this thesis, as a result of the sampling strategy and in how young people talked about their everyday meanings and experiences. This chapter does not seek to provide a comparative analysis but identifies both similarities and differences in how young people understand violence due to where they live and how this impacts their interpretation on aspects of violence. Debates and discussions about violence have often, in criminological literature, focussed heavily on urban centred research and rarely acknowledge some of the wider systemic links that touch rural youth (Magnus and Scott 2020). This thesis aims to highlight youth voice on their understandings of violence but in particular shed light on rural youth and how they understand violence within their location and as such is one of the original contributions of this thesis.

Drawing on aspects of rural criminology and structural theories, this chapter will provide a broader understanding of violence perceptions that occurs between adolescents, preteens, towards early twenties. Thus, moving the youth and violence dialogue away from aberrations or maladjustment of young people and towards a youth centric understanding of violence. Here, we explore various elements that underpin young people's interpretation of violence, but importantly, we begin to underscore the meaning and character of rural society for young people in Britain, and how violence may manifest itself in such areas. The domains outlined below draw on the analytical framework of the study, including the dynamics of power, race(ism), neighbourhood and isolation.

Domains Emerging from Narrative

Table 7: Analytic domains from interview and focus group data.

Power	A self-fulfilling system to generate likeability or fear; humans want status and respect and ultimately financial stability; social media absorbs materialisms into a real-world context.
Isolation	Lack of services; lack of mobility; working class violence; portrayal on TV.
Race(ism)	Media depiction of ethnic minorities; news twisting crime material.
Neighbourhood context	A Normal accepted phenomenon; violence surrounds youth in various forms.

Rurality and the criminologically ignored.

This section will begin by firstly recalling a specific field note I made whilst on my way to the second research site in the North West.

> *As I drove to meet the young people I noted down the characteristics of the neighbourhood as I passed them. I looked at my satellite navigation system and took a mental note of how far away I was from my destined location (it said 10 minutes away). However, at this point in time I was driving up what was known as 'millionaire mile'. Known to house footballers and their families. I thought, if this is only five minutes away from the other location, how do these young people feel about their neighbourhood and aspirations? As a researcher, I could understand how one may become frustrated with their current situation. Especially as I got into the local town, I quickly realised there is not much to be excited about. (Field Note reflection: The Drive Up).*

The following excerpts are taken from participants in both focus groups and one to one interview. They reflect some of the opinions from participants within the rural area, discussing what they see, what happens and how particular situations may be handled. This is not to say that they are

comparative quotes from the urban participants but are here to purely illustrate how rural youth further understand violence within their surroundings.

> *"Its [violence] more likely to happen with boredom, because there's not a lot around here." (Interview with Andy, 19, M, NW).*

> *"Within bigger cities, there is always something to do, there are more shops. (Interview with Andy, M, 19, NW).*

> *"You see kids just hanging about doing nothing, and someone will walk past that they don't like, and they will start shouting abuse." Jack goes onto say "There are some things to do, there is nothing you can do on a whim...there's shops in town where you go to buy things, but not much to do if you wanna' doss around with your mates."(Interview Jack, 19, M, NW).*

Some of the above quotes have reflected the lack of activities within their areas, and boredom as a result for some of these participants is an impetus for utilising or understanding how violence can happen.

> *"Ye, but not really here. There are like certain places around my high school and like, I don't wanna' say it like in the rough areas I mean it's, I don't wanna' say it but it's kinda' true...ye, there's [rural area 1] where it's more upmarket and [rural area 2] where it's old council estates." (Interview with Freya, 17, F, NW).*

> *"You see violence happen in town, but where I live it's a nice" (Interview with Harlow, F, 20, NW).*

The impact of where one resides and the stereotypes and judgements that come with that are reflected in some of the participant responses above. Yet, discussions of understanding violence soon turned to *who* can influence your perceptions.

> *"I was in MacDonald's err yesterday and there was a group of 4 lads and there must have been about 12 or 13 (years of age) and they were like wrestling each other, this is in the restaurant, wrestling each other like on the floor, on the floor like, and in a public, public place. And I was wondering if they are willing to wrestle, I don't mean*

like playful wrestling, like proper wrestling with each other in this restaurant. And I was thinking to myself if they're doing that here what are they like at home!" (Focus group excerpt with Sally, 19, F, NW).

"Friends may peer pressure you into doing criminal acts, as a form of initiation to be part of their group. .... Probably something like get told off and slapped on the wrist or something." (Interview with Louise, F, 16, NW).

"Family members have a lot to do with young people's understanding of violence, maybe that triggers them to do that and be violent as well." (Interview with Alicia, F, 15 EM).

"If they were not told when they were younger, they begin to form norms which accept it as a way to solve a problem. (Interview with Freya, F, 17, NW).

The use of cases to highlight how violence is perpetrated within their areas, the use of media (as previously discussed) was the way in which this information was shared beyond their local community.

"There's a big case, erm when was it, a few months ago now (round here), this girl beat up an autistic kid and she, she got sent down for it obviously....in [rural area] ...I know she got charged but not sure if she got sent down for it. But this was a helpless kid and she just started.

[Sally] "apparently he thrown a brick at the family, at her family window or something, then after school she went after him and kid's videoing and it went all over Facebook and stuff."

[Carl] "Horrible to watch".
[Sally] "You could hear him screaming and she was punching him." (Focus group excerpt between Carl, M, 17 and Sally, F, 19, NW).

As the researcher I also was keen to understand how they felt about the city areas around them- or how police and other forms of authority figures affects their usage of violence.

"In my opinion, I think it would stop [violence], just because like, you're not in your area you're in town..." [Malcolm]

"Full of police." [Lucy]

"Ye community officers and full of police you won't mess around, in your areas there's no cameras so you have to behave in town [because there are cameras]." [Malcolm]. *(Focus group excerpt with Malcolm, M, 16, and Lucy, F, 16, EM).*

"Ye seeing them it hinders people from being violent, and at night you don't get the PCSO's doing the beats and that when the town turns into its dark side." *(Focus group with Carl, M, 17, NW).*

Some participants discussed how abandoned buildings had the potential for some young people to utilise deviant behaviour more, yet they felt more should be done.

I think some areas need to crack down on it [violence] more, especially my area it's a pretty rough area. For examples the swimming baths the old ones have shut down and its eighty years old. But now it's shut down people think it's a good idea to go in and vandalise it n' all that. I remember I was just in a park one day and someone broke in and decided to set the fire alarms off. Which again, some say it has direct links. And the fire service turns up and I said ye its 3 lads n' this girl that broke in and they were like where have they gone? And they went to deal with that and they [perpetrators] obviously ran off. And I think they got the police out looking for them and hadn't seen and I couldn't give a full description. They were only literally 10 or 12 year olds." *(Focus group excerpt with Carl, 17, M, NW).*

Embedded within the analysis were thematic areas of how young people understand violence. Young people within the study contextualised violence within rural areas as driven by economic and social challenges, these were often depicted as a reality for inner city urban youth, yet this was seen to be the reality for the young people in the rural cohort. As Andy discusses that location and environment seems to have a negative impact on young people within his area due to boredom. This highlights the importance of neighbourhood context in the shaping of involvement in crime, something which has been discussed for decades. Shaw and McKay's (1942) social disorganisation theory (SDT) has been dominant in explaining neighbourhood influences on

various criminological outcomes. The theory holds that structural characteristics such as concentrated disadvantage and residential instability impact neighbourhood social mechanisms, including that of social efficacy, social ties and cultural norms (Sampson et al 1997; Warner and Rountree 1997; Bellair 1997). By considering SDT, neighbourhoods marked by traits of poverty offer youth limited educational, social and physical resources (Fagan and Wright, 2012;65). This is an area that Jack who is also from the rural cohort points out within interview showcasing the limited nature of the space young people occupy is something that was noticed by participants in the study. Particularly those in the rural area, they compared the lack of shops and how this differs in the city.

Although boredom has been noted as a reason for becoming involved with deviant behaviours, the heavy focus on urban youth crime draws a dichotomy between the two locales. The urban counterpart has been used as defining a stereotypical criminal or violent youth, or identifying a criminal underclass (Smith, 2010). As a result, crime and violence which occurs in the countryside has consistently been neglected by criminologists (Yarwood 2001). Thus, a myth emerges surrounding deviant behaviour in rural areas, that it simply does not occur, rural areas are perceived to be crime free idylls (Cloke 2006). As Cameron (2000:7, cited in Davies 2002) reinforces:

> *"Ask most people about social exclusion and they will not think of green fields, beautiful countryside and pretty villages."*

It has been argued that social deviance theories as discussed within the literature review cannot be applied outside of urban discourses. Yet, by challenging criminological norms, deviance theories can be broadened to account for crime and violence in rural areas, this will be further discussed throughout this chapter and the next (chapter 7). There is a strong sense within the town where this study took place that lives may not be, the tranquil and rural idyll as so many magazines and literature have suggested, nor does it boast a completely private space either. I was noticed, I was the outsider, I was different. Although such observations were unintentional, they became the source of knowledge. As a researcher, I understood how within such smalltowns, observation could easily slip into being more akin to surveillance (Philo et al 2017: 234).

This was exemplified by a couple of participants whose local knowledge seemingly stemmed from 'observations'. They mentioned 'certain places around town' areas that they referred to as the

'rough parts' or that they see violence in certain parts of town but not their areas because it's nice. An effect of such practices and knowledge is the diminution of anonymity, which becomes much harder in situations and places where observation may so readily shade into surveillance. This in turn has produced the seeds of formation and resulted in local knowledge as the participants have expressed above. Shared knowledge about people and everything local (Philo et al 2017).

Within this research site there are significant places which are the source of local knowledge, the local convenience store, McDonalds, the abandoned swimming pool, the youth club, the park, they are all key points of exchanges for young people within this rural setting. Not to say that this is specifically unique to rural areas, these are areas that can be found all over the UK but for youth in this study, in this area it was where they themselves gained knowledge and utilised them as spaces of observation and gossip. Such local hot spots coincide with where these young people tend to hang out. It is interesting to see how information and knowledge is created, understood and exchanged within these arenas. Interestingly Freudenberg (1986) found that rural communities may be tolerant of instances of petty vandalism or in this case what may appear to be 'petty violence' due to personal acquaintanceship within the community. Although Sally did not discuss the consequences of such actions or 'petty violence or crime' Louise did, discussing how such behaviour can occur as a result of peer pressure, yet, the consequences from authority were perceived to be 'a slap on the wrist'. Louise shrugged it off more unbothered than disappointed that authorities do not seem to take more control. The facets of this statement can be debated by Osgood and Chambers (2002) who refer to informal means of social control as employed in rural areas; compared with more formal means used in urban areas. As a result, authority in rural areas are found less likely to formally charge any but the most serious crimes (Osgood and Chambers 2002). Furthermore, rural communities have been characterised as being dominated by (extended) family, thus seen as a protective factor in a young person's life.

Accordingly, the onus of responsibility and discipline may be on the family rather than authority who control, pervade and monitor within urban societies as a matter of importance. Freya and Alicia touch on the responsibility of family and upbringing as their understandings of why some youth may be violent. Having listened to the participants' understanding of space, class and punishment, rural characteristics are seen to have protective factors for youth. Yet, when participants express their opinion, the rural idyll is not exactly what is articulated, they express cynicism of class and attribute violence to social learning. Freudenburg (1986) suggests that the community may allow instances of 'petty violence' to occur as they have the knowledge of who is

committing the crime or violence and the likelihood of it escalating would be minimal. In comparison there are forms of violence which young people have experienced or witnessed within rural towns that do not go without repercussions. A focus group between participants in the North West discuss a case that was located within their local area but went viral on Facebook. The discussions highlight how space place and power are all interlinked within a rural community, this was news that travelled fast between young people in school and around the local area.

When conducting this research, I sought to explore young people's understanding of violence within the context through which they reside; not necessarily to essentialise their lives, but to draw attention to some of the similarities and differences rural youth have with their urban counterpart. Young people within these areas have raised their concerns regarding particular hang outs and information about their town which has informed their understanding of violence. The difference between these two cohorts with regard to location is down to how they are 'informally' controlled, in the city young people are used to CCTV. As the focus group including Malcolm and Lucy explore how you tend to behave more if you know you are being watched either by CCTV or police.

Participants within the rural cohort, discussed the use of PCSO's, a form of 'authority' that in some ways provides surveillance, or a panopticon feel by patrolling the streets. Participants discussed how this hindered young people from acting out in the day, yet they were aware of PCSO's not being there during the night and thus the town turning to its 'dark side'. Resultantly, many young people within this rural cohort express how they are provided with various opportunity to find alternative spaces to hang out, due to this feeling of being watched either by authority figures or community eyes watching. Therefore, facing greater surveillance from the 'rural panopticon' with the possibility of feeling less empowered. Hence, Bentham's (1791) Panopticon was designed most logically as to adapt to an urban phenomenon. Yet, there is an argument here that identifies this rural vision of a self-regulating place (Philo et al 2017). Important to remember here is that rural youth, regardless of where they reside face a multitude of challenges, which arguably could be equal to or greater than inner city urban youth, a debate that will be considered throughout the rest of the thesis.

The concept of the rural idyll is constantly challenged by young people, as participants from the rural cohort discuss abandoned buildings and criminal or violence taking place. From such perspectives such as that of Carl, we can see how areas of rural life for some of these less

advantaged places in Britain may impact on teenagers lived experiences, which are challenging the constructions freedom and the rural idyll. Despite such ambiguity among these issues, the concept of the 'rural idyll' remains an important construction of how rurality is defined from the 'outside'. Johnston et al (2000) explores how rurality promoted as an 'idyll' is in fact impacting upon young people's freedom and their construction of it. particularly, if we take into account the setup of this rural area on one side, we have an affluent, tree lined streets, boutique coffee shops and on the other we have run down council estate with an abandoned swimming pool. This may be promoted to young people as something to be grateful of living in the countryside but in fact it could make them feel, powerless, less than, and controlled, more than one may realise. Research on rural areas has highlighted opinions of what 'rurality' should consist of and Garland and Chakraborti (2006) found that in rural areas, country dwellers believe their communities should be the preserve the middle-class families with conservative values, although within this rural town one could assume that this may be the case for some. Yet, the exclusion and alienation of young people on the 'other' side of town should be taken into consideration. Just as class within urban city areas is forthright and pronounced, the class differences within rural areas is highlighted even more so.

However, as excerpts and examples have shown, it is evident that certain rural areas allow instances of criminal behaviour to occur without much retribution (Barclay, Donnermyer and Jobes 2004) contending the fundamental assumptions of social disorganisation theory (Kubrin 2009). Rural and urban differences in social interaction between young people could be frequently attributed to the corresponding differences in value systems. Additionally, Goodson and Bouffard (2017) argue this point, suggesting that the structural characteristics that have been identified within social disorganisation theory (SDT) have relatable aspects. For example, Goodson and Bouffard state that neighbourhoods experiencing high rates of residential mobility (normally within urban areas) may have lower levels of informal control and cohesiveness, which allows disorder to flourish within a community (2017:4). This falls on the back of what Sampson et al (1997) discusses when a community suffers from economic disadvantage and heterogeneity, as a result, collective efficacy may decrease due to the social isolation in which these communities and young people face in rural towns. Research suggests that 'cultural, spatial and material marginalisation' can differ amongst rural youth, which is true for this cohort who live in a seemingly deprived area compared to the rest of the community who may live a more lavish lifestyle, (refer back to field note: 'The drive up').

Below participants further discuss their area and how violence in a variety of forms seems to play out amongst young people. The discussions began with a focus on making distinctions between the rural town and what they know of the city.

"If you live in the big city there is a lot more people, and a lot more like, you almost get like youth gangs, and you don't really get that in rural towns." (Interview with Jack, M, 19, NW).

"It's more between friends, like it would be more fun to pick on that person." (Jack)

"There have been scraps, but like friendly scraps, like as a joke." (Harlow)

Conversation then moved towards peers and postcodes, participants reflected on how their area and surrounding vicinities can impact how violence is not only understood but also used.

"Obviously, sometimes if one person like group violence can kinda' just start with one person [victim] then others join in, and other times it might be that someone is having an argument and it's a one on one situation... friends have a big influence on young people's usage of violence." (Interview with Harlow, F, 20, NW).

"Some places have postcode wars but one big one where I am, one of the schools, which again as in the paper. You have your Slovak and Polish sorta' students, and then English groups and there was this massive kick off in school. And I, I dunno' I go to school in [rural area] but I remember doing something for school which was when I was at this school which was on the same day all this violence happened and I didn't realise, and it was only when I seen it in the papers the next day." (Focus group excerpt with Carl, M, 17, NW).

As previously discussed, rurality is promoted to the public as an object of desire and safe havens from the violence depicted daily in urban city life (Robinson and Ryder 2014) which may be exactly so for the young people living down 'millionaire mile'. However, considering geography in relation to the overall thesis question it is interesting to see how literature has had the tendency to focus on youth violence and gangs within urban settings, yet when the young people from the urban cohort discussed youth violence, this was not something they mentioned explicitly as a big issue. Few studies highlight violence within the lives of young people particularly within a rural context (Kulig et al 2008). As such, by critically analysing the perceptions of violence within this study we

can begin to counteract the 'rural idyll' (Donnermyer et al 2013). Cloward and Ohlin (1960) provide an adequate theory of delinquent subcultures. This explained not only the origins of deviant pressures but also the particular adaptions made by people variously located within the social structure. A number of scholars have provided a substantive analysis of how the illegitimate opportunity structure shapes deviant adaptions to strain (Featherstone and Deflem 2003; Thorlindsson and Bernburg 2004; Adler 1975). Such writings have contributed to an understanding of how the social structures regulate involvement in various types of crime or violence.

However, for the young people within this study, this is not the case, they are marginalised from the city, and with that are restricted on what 'opportunities' would be available to them. Part of these restrictions are the various types of peer groups formed Jack, describes how he feels it is different for him where he lives compared to the city, suggesting that gangs are more of a city problem. We can draw on Durkheim's (1950;1893) work on anomie here; on the one hand we have discussed how the rural boasts of communities, teams and other social groups which share responsibility of their members, a trait apparently more common in the rural than urban areas. What Durkheim argues, is that if these cohesive forces are to become damaged, the community will fall apart and go into a state of anomie. Anomie represents a serious departure from a state of health for the community as a whole; the decline in community functioning, in turn, poses a threat to the health of community members (Fullilove et al 1998), that economically, and socially depressed communities can encourage feelings of detachment and can therefore highlight the anomic state these communities are in. This is how Jack's comment about youth gangs become relevant. If the argument suggests that youth gangs develop out of socially depressed states, it is interesting to see that these young people who are living in and amongst deprivation do not refer to gangs in their community yet the discussion and responses the young people gave highlighted group formations. Just as participants in the urban cohort discussed that to be successful you have to either be 'smart, good lookin' or violent' in order to get to the top, we can see snippets of such behaviour (using violence) is utilised here. Groups of friends picking on others or having 'friendly' scraps as a joke, all the while, these young people are discussing how peer formations and groups can have an impact on what you become involved in and how violent you can become.

However, for young people today especially those who are disadvantaged, success in the mainstream economy is rare. This is not to say that those who are not fortunate enough to succeed are without these qualities. On the contrary, it may be that family responsibilities and

other sources of adversity have simply proved obstacles too great to overcome for these young people, anomie turns to frustration and frustration to turns to violence (Alvardo 2008; Fullilove et al 1998). Finding peers who are in the same 'position' however this is termed; 'friends' or 'gangs' will have feelings of isolation and ascribe to cultural familiarity with one another, and although this is relative to geographical context rural youth may have more in common with urban youth than they realise if not worse off due to the geographical location of spatial, mobility and job alienation. Research on gangs and inner-city youth tend to showcase how gang formation, crime and violence occur as a by-product of such deprivation. This provides an opportunity not only to make money via illegal activity but to also showcase their individual and collective power, ambition and hard work- this portrays symbolic values within their society showcasing that they can be invested in (Alvardo 2008). It could be argued that by taking on board the discussions and debates had throughout this study, participants within the rural cohort may have more in common (symbolically) with urban, city youth than they may realise.

Such commonalities lie within the language used, the context of group violence discussed by Harlow, Jack and Carl was contextualised as 'friends' yet when the rural youth discuss how they feel it is different they use the word gang. This was an interesting point and something to be noted; even with the most direct example of division of young people as expressed by Carl discussing postcode wars and English versus Eastern European students within school, the division of us and them is there within his understanding but the word groups is utilised. Could this change of word from 'gangs' to 'friends' be something more than an alteration of a word? For example, have we as researchers somewhat racialised the term and thus reiterated this racialisation of 'gangs' by studying urban youth in city centres, where the demographics are more ethnically diverse and pronounced? Such explanations can be traced back to the formation of gangs in Los Angeles, which identify the factors that racialised gang formation and the underlying socioeconomic deficiencies that were inherent within (Alonso 2013).

Such 'underlying' deficiencies are occurring within the two locales of the study, yet, occur more severely within the rural area than the urban purely because it is more pronounced and visible due to the location. Or, could it simply be argued that research in rural areas on young people, have little use for the term 'gangs' and therefore as a result is utilised less. The brief discussion via two participants within the Northwest discussed the impact of 'gangs' within their own towns and although they suggest it is non-existent, they instead refer to such troublesome groups as 'groups of friends' or incidents which have occurred in 'not the nicest of areas'. Their dialogue

suggests a potent combination of coolness, fearlessness and violence justification. They seem to simultaneously be repulsed by the thought of gangs being within their area, but also speak with confidence and almost pride that they know what goes on where and with whom (Parkes 2007) whether they decide to term them 'gangs' or not.

Space, places and practices.

The findings thus far reflect the experiences and perceptions young people have towards violence, and how these form through 'peers', 'friends' or 'groups' within their communities. Although the terminology used is interesting in differentiating the acceptability or justification of violence, the likelihood that young people become influenced by friends and peers is an expected outcome. Particularly during the adolescence phase, peer relationships take on increasing importance. They play a central role in individuals' social lives, and as a result, young people have been found to be spending an increasing amount of time socialising than any other non-school activity, (i.e. studying, working or extra-curricular activities) (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson 1984; Brown et al 2001). In large part, the discussion surrounding this topic mirrors the demographics and structure of this rural area, the young people discuss how it is *'friends'* rather than *'gangs'* that operate in rural areas and subsequently may use violent behaviour. As suggested by Jack (participant), rivalries happen more frequently between friends or school peers rather than postcode or neighbourhood rivalries that tend to reflect observations made within urban research and youth violence. Language, violence and space all have links within these discussions. The spaces young people use have multiple forms of social organisation, this seems to change depending on which space is being used and by whom.

> *"Like peer pressured like 'do this crime or you can't be in our little group' sorta' thing...So like break this window or go into this private property and we'll consider you being our friend. I think it depends what type of group they want to be in. so if it's in a bigger area like [city area 1] or [city area 2] or something like that. But if it's [rural area 1]and [rural area 2] then it would be steal this."* (Interview with Louise, F, 16, NW).

> *"Everyone chills at Maccy's [MacDonald's] the amount of time that place has had to kick everyone out."* (Interview with Freya, F, 17, NW).

" I thinks a lot of violence is born out of boredom, there is not a lot for young people to do around here, especially like, cuz' were kinda' in the countryside and the youth service and everythin's been cut." (Interview with Harlow, F, 20, NW).

The participants in the rural cohort tend to compare their own circumstances and their spatial mobility with that of the city.

"Well in the car it's 40 minutes, but it's only 5 minutes on the train" (Interview with Freya, F, 17, NW).

"Everything goes on in cities don't it...most things happen [violence related] when people are pissed (drunk) to be honest" (Interview with Freya, F, 17, NW).

"I'd say yes [answering a question about if violence occurs in her neighbourhood], because I don't live a moderately rough area but, it is rough, and you do see people having people having fist fights...its typically more older people watching younger kids egging them on, and it's like a community thing". (Interview with Tilley, F, 17, NW).

The discussions of peers and distinctions of terminology between friends and gangs was something that the young people contended with throughout their discussions.

"if you got a gang, like a group of friends, and you got like the person that comes up with I dunno' something to do with violence and then that person tells another one, and of course they're friends so they're gonna' stick together. And then ye, they're just being obedient to the person." (Interview with Sophia, F,16, EM).

"I think because it is a rural based community, there's more, there's not the big influence of gangs and stuff like in [City 1], *and everything is kind of big and upscale rather above higher powers than just street kids. But around here if you live on the street you can own it. It's very territorial, not going up into the businesses, so disputes between people like that, that happens quite a lot."* [interview with Tilley, 16, F, NW].

Participants such as Louis discuss how space may be used differently in rural areas, the social organisation of such spaces not only seems to shape their practices but has the power to shape their principles whilst in it (Donnermyer et al 2013). Here space is used to their benefit as part of an initiation sequence to a group. To look at this further we can draw on the previous discussion

of strains and anomie we can highlight how the strains young people may feel in rural areas will affect how they interact as peer groups and how they navigate criminal/violent situations. It seems as though the deviant subcultures developed in rural areas will develop differently from city youth gangs or groups, due to the different strains they face geographically. Albert Cohen (1955) discusses how 'gangs' developed in response to strain are characterised by group loyalty, and as the above excerpt highlights, this is the case; commit a criminal or delinquent act to be in our 'group'. However, we can look at this further by suggesting what Matza (1964) describes as 'subterranean values' these values pursue excitement and represent toughness and masculinity, much of what was discussed in chapter six but also, excitement has a resounding place here for rural youth. They describe that there is not much to do and therefore it is plausible that some 'groups' may form delinquent subcultures and adopt these subterranean values for pure excitement.

What this thesis has been able to do thus far is establish that and rural communities differ in many ways, there is the stereotypical characterisation of rural life, which encompasses both encouraging and negative features. Studies have found that rurality is usually characterised by positive images. For example, pastoral care within the community, honesty, individualism and religiosity (Garland and Chakraborti 2006). There is also the tendency to romanticise rural society to this effect. However, the largest negative that is portrayed and discussed is disadvantage, especially that of socioeconomic and geographic disadvantage (Tickamyer and Duncan 1990). This constant hindrance has affected the young people within their rural area of this study, they were particularly open about the lack of adequate recreational opportunities, as a result for the rural youth participants they talked about how MacDonald's is their popular hangout, yet they often get kicked out. Such instances ultimately can place young people at greater risk of becoming involved in unhealthy behaviours. As within urban areas, the street contrary to media imagery continues to provide an important social venue (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001). Young people living within rural area can see problems that are associated with rurality in their daily lives, with space being a major one. There are barriers to their social life, thus taking the debate back to 'boredom' as a reason behind violence a common discussion had by all participants, and one that (participants) Harlow and Freya both highlight as a real issue.

Indeed, Harlow is describing boredom as a trigger for young people to use violence she is also making sense of current political, economic and societal changes, for example, the social austerity measures, and cuts to youth services, which have affected this rural area and other parts of

Britain. The consequences of these changes for anyone living in the countryside, especially those who do not have the resources available to afford transport are immediately obvious (Pavis et al 2001). Boredom, a phrase which has had a deep- rooted emphasis since the eighteenth century, is multiplied heavily through the twentieth century, implicitly within the common understanding of modernism, understood in this context as an '*isolated subject, existing in a secularized, fragmented world marked by lost or precarious traditions: a paradigmatic situation for boredom*' (Meyer-Sacks 1995:219). The debate of boredom as discussed previously within the literature review is located in history, when the country's economics are doing well, boredom remains, and exacerbated when it is doing badly. Drawing on situationist critique and repeating the tone which was focussed throughout Paris '68, Raul Vaneigem (2001) wrote in 'The Revolution of Everyday Life':

> *'No more Guernicas, no more Auschwitzs, no more Hiroshimas.... Hooray! But what about the impossibility of living, what about this stifling mediocrity and this absence of passion...? Let nobody say these are minor details or secondary points'* (Vaneigem, 2001: 35).

Participants within this study had a keen sense of why violence occurs and the reason behind such behaviour. Quite insightfully, participants (within the rural cohort especially), recognised this pattern emerging. This was most likely due to the layout of the area and being isolated from assets like cinemas and shopping centres or transport. Things which are arguably essential for youth culture (i.e. the nearest town or city half hour away as Freya mentions that it can take up to 40-minutes in the car), thus boredom is exacerbated. Pavis et al (2001) discuss the impact of these measures, suggesting that if you are young, poor and rural, then your choices are limited. The reality for young people within this area of rural England is that the gentrification of 'middle-class' dwellers who seek to fulfil this rural idyll is a possibility for those living within 'millionaire mile', as they use their cars to gain access to urban services and amenities (Pavis et al 2001), but is a far cry for some of the other young people within this area.

These structural inequalities are highlighted in different contexts and intensified within this rural town. Nearly sixty years ago C. Wright Mills (1959) identified a fundamental relationship between macro-level change and how these impacts upon people at the micro-level. Mills referred to this as the link between public issues (macro) and personal troubles (micro). Mills suggest that in order to understand personal issues, and in this case 'youth violence' we need to know what is

happening at the macro level (Donnermeyer et al 2006: 201). Therefore, for a number of young people, the street remains important part of their everyday lives. As cuts to services and safe places for recreational activity diminish, boredom becomes heightened and ultimately can move young people towards using behaviour they normally would not use if those services were in place. Participants in the rural cohort reiterate how everything goes on cities, and most violent occurrences happen because young people are angry. It is important to not dismiss boredom as a relevant explanation and understanding for why crime and violence occur amongst young people. Arguably it is a political discourse that has roots in activism and has a basis for critique.

Boredom in this context has broader social and cultural conditions alongside the well-known consequences, some of which the young people in this study have pointed out such as breaking into abandoned building causing trouble in high streets. As Ferrell (2011:2) suggests, maybe there is a 'politics of boredom', if boredom is causing issues (as young people in this study have pointed out, or as how they understand it), it has the scope to tell us a great deal about social change and social justice alongside telling us a good deal about crime, violence and criminology.

Following on from this, community forms the basis of knowledge rearing and how norms and values are internalised throughout the community participants. In discussing violence and breaking down the many facets which are involved within it, the participants begin to discuss their own community context. The importance of neighbourhood in shaping involvement in crime has been acknowledged for decades (Shaw and McKay 1942; Anderson 1994; Sampson et al 1997), and although there is empirical evidence that support the claim that neighbourhood constructs or influences delinquency it is important to listen to the young voices within communities to see how they interpret 'community' and if this in fact does have impact on their understanding of violence. Participants discussed how in their community it was common for elders to 'egg on' their fights, insights from rural youth that was informative and pertained to what they called the 'rough areas' also known as the estates in this area. Interestingly the sense of community here echoes what rural communities are characterised by; extended families and supervision (Osgood and Chamber 2002), ultimately seen as protective factors in a young person's life. However rural areas emit an identity which promote strong social capital, yet, this amorphous premise has been used to explain a variety of outcomes including educational achievement (Coleman 1988), status attainment (Forse 1997; Dyk and Wilson 2007), decrease in crime, amongst other areas (Kawachi, Kennedy, and Wilkinson 1999).

The perspectives provided by Tilley highlights a particular form of social capital which seems present within this rural community, which is, bridging social capital. *Bridging social capital* refers to respectful relationships and mutuality between those who are not alike in some aspect of their socio-demographics (e.g., age, ethnic group, socioeconomic status) (Szreter and Woolcock 2004). The example provided highlights how different groups can share and exchange information. Although this form of capital can lead to inclusion into groups, this form of inclusion such as 'egging on' as Tilley discusses is somewhat detrimental to the young person, and can ultimately normalise a violent act or behaviour, because of the context it is in. It is important to acknowledge that social capital can take on different forms as findings suggest that although young people who live in these towns have protective factors such as the extended family, underlying these are traditional and somewhat normative risk factors (egging on youth fights) which have permeated this particular society's culture. Putnam (2000: 22) discusses how bonding social capital tends to reinforce identities and is more inward looking, therefore, findings suggest that although urban and rural youth have similarities in their discussion and inclinations about violence, violence is ultimately influenced at the most rudimentary level by interaction with space (Osgood and Chambers 2002). Alongside the interaction with space are the discussions of power as a way both cohorts understand violence. Power is seen by young people in both urban and rural cohorts as an impetus for violent behaviour, prompted as a defence against fear and viewed as a sense of security (Robinson and Ryder 2014). Robinson and Ryder (2014) further discuss how power is a form of influence, this type of influence is placed upon individuals (as Sophia mentions) willingly or otherwise. This power is premised upon conflicts of interest that produce relational dynamics, so whether they want a new person to join a group or 'look hard' in front of friends, one individual may coerce another to do something which they may not ordinarily do (2014: 557).

Neighbourhood: If you live on the street you can own it.

Discussions so far have considered rurality and how this can influence understanding of violence, furthermore, space and place were explored via the participants. As there were two sites in this research study it became apparent as the research progressed that there were similarities and differences between the two in terms of what the young people were saying or how they understood the term violence. This study, however, is not comparative and did not set out to

compare perspectives between the two cohorts but understand their perspectives as separate areas. Yet, this does not take away from the fact that such similarities and stark differences are apparent. Whether a young person is to grow up within a rural or urban environment will ultimately have an impact on their transition to adulthood, as they will incur (as all young people do) different experiences relatable to their environment.

The below focus group excerpt showcases how neighbourhoods can have a big impact on how you behave towards others and how it can influence your understandings of the other.

> *"Within your neighbourhoods you have your own area... young people tend to come together and visit different neighbourhoods looking for trouble... it comes down to "Status, Space... and power. It's to do with power and your property. You think of your area as your little safe card"* [Focus group excerpt with Malcolm, M, 16 EM].

> *"You know mostly everyone in your area, 'or you've seen them all'.* [Lucy]

> *"Cuz' you grew up around them or you walk around there every single day, so you get the gist around it."* [Malcolm]

> (Focus group excerpt with Lucy, F, 16 and Malcolm, M, 16, EM).

Here the impact of location is further discussed with examples from what the young people have experienced, witnessed or know about within their local areas.

> *'Let's say people from city location A went to city location B and caused trouble in that area, location A people will use violence to protect their property, and what not, because at the end of the day that's their area, and their family.* [Malcolm, 16, M, EM].

> *'Ye if they know you're from let's say city location A and you go to city location B or C and you cause trouble in their areas then you may use violence to protect yourself.* (Interview with Alicia, F, 16, EM).

Arnett (2015) argues that 'emerging adulthood' better describes how young people move into the adulthood world as many are not reaching what they consider to be adult till later on in their twenties or early thirties. This period has been prolonged by economic and social conditions for

example education, which has now been extended to the age of eighteen for formal schooling. Such structural changes have shaped particular expectations for young people (Cóté and Bynner 2008); however, when this is coupled with the global economy this transition is not always uniform, it is a process not an event which at times will ultimately cause frustration and anxiety amongst youth (Howard League 2017). As an aspect that is out of their control and frequently publicised. As mentioned previously, the structure and agency debates have scope here to inform understanding, Beck (1992) discusses 'individualisation' as the increasing role of personal agency among young people. However, this increase has not led to the decrease of traditional forms of socialisation in the family, school, and workplace, but however, has introduced more risk and uncertainly into the pathways leading from them (Beck 1992; see also Baethge 1989).

Therefore, the structures young people discuss within this study especially via their neighbourhoods, which are primarily mediated by family and local opportunity structures will continue to have a commanding place in shaping these transitions (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Roberts and Parsell 1989; Ashton and Lowe 1991 Roberts et al1994). Therefore, those young people from family backgrounds at the bottom end of the socio-economic scale are likely to leave education and enter the labour market earliest. For example, in the UK in 2001, 80% of young people whose fathers were in unskilled occupations left education at the minimum age of 16 years, compared with 10% of those whose fathers were in professional occupations (Ferri et al 2003).

Considering Beck's (1992) structure and agency debate within the confines of youth violence; neighbourhood, social capital and power relations are important aspects which the participants discussed within chapter six and their first instances of considering what violence meant to them. Within a time of rapid social change, the concepts we use to make sense of the ways in which young people understand and interact with the world are very much under the microscope, as Roberts (2012) suggest, we need to reinvigorate our conceptual repertoire. Thus arguably, the insecurities discussed above prompt and expand the use of traditional references which derive from parent, peers, neighbourhood and media. Although, this has some grounding and is discussed further in this chapter, it is not the whole picture. Young people in this study, also refer to their neighbourhoods as a safe haven. Now they are comfortable around one another and more relaxed with the topic they unknowingly begin to pick out the micro-level explanations of violence as understood by them.

As Malcolm mentions their own area is their 'safe card' he continues to discuss how it is about space, power and status. It is this local knowledge of their (city) area and the surrounding areas and their rivalries between them that they are drawing on to understand their perspectives better. Here, one can assume that structural factors that are mediated by community and family and continue to have a commanding place in the shaping of a young person transitioning to adulthood (Cote and Bynner 2008). Nevertheless, the discussion of space and how they refer to their neighbourhood can be seen as proactive approach to 'defending; their 'safe card'. Furthermore, it could be argued here that informal social control is maintained here via the absence of 'traditional' thick ties which you may normally find between neighbours, but, in fact, the ties which are established are between friends and social support networks (Fischer 1982) as such, referring to their neighbourhood as 'safe card' they can distinctly tell when someone especially a young person is not from there (Sampson et al 1999).

The way young people discuss and talk about space engages with a variety of theoretical traditions one of which is social constructionism, some may see this an alternative to other theoretical frameworks, but I see it as important addition. To deny a theoretical framework is to limit our understanding of a topic, thus, the researcher engages with this topic in a discursive context. As Jerome Bruner observed:

> *"When we enter human life, it is as if we walk on stage into a play whose enactment is already in progress- a play whose somewhat open plot determines what part we may play and towards what denouncements we may be heading. Others on stage already have a sense of what the play is about, enough of a sense to make negotiations with a newcomer possible."* (Bruner 1990:34).

The way Bruner discusses life as a stage links back to the focus group with Lucy and Malcolm and how they discuss they know who is in their own areas. Bruner's quote above, takes this a little further by discussing the ones who are there before have opportunity to make deals because they know who the newcomers are, again harking back to power and status. The way Bruner emphasises the embeddedness within social relationships has some parallels to what was discussed in previously concerning Bourdieu's habitus and relations with the 'stage'. As such, young people's stage is their neighbourhood or school and they act or perform in a way to keep up the image the neighbourhood portrays.

Pierre Bourdieu therefore observes:

"These systems of perceptions, appreciation and action enable them [young people] to perform acts of practical knowledge, based on the identification and recognition of conditional, conventional stimuli to which they are predisposed to react; and without any explicit definition of ends or rational calculation of means, to generate appropriate and endlessly renewed strategies, but within the limits of the structural constraints of which they are a product, and which define them." (Bourdieu 2000:138).

The discussion of neighbourhood and location amongst the young people has touched on a sense of pride and territoriality. Although the young people within the urban location discussed how there is this sense of community on their own streets, they also discuss how violence may be seen as an acceptable and justifiable within that community. Malcolm and Lucy discuss two particular locations within the city, known for being 'hot spots' and rivalry areas for youth violence. They discuss the how the use of violence may be used if trouble is caused in the areas you or others are not from. It is interesting to see how this data unfolds, the differences and similarities between the two cohorts they at times mirror and complement one another. The above is discussing space and geography in the context of postcode and interestingly, this use of space and representative boundaries via postcode have an effect on how young people use space and how they act when an unknown member is within it.

The young people within this study have discussed their locale as a reason to justify using violence, they have utilised social scripts which have been reproduced and passed down from generations, broadly where it has been performed before. Such understandings of violence and the context of space can be discussed following Prop (1968) who suggests that these narratives place actors and events into plots and storylines, they have allocated themselves a moral responsibility here which in turn is fed through causality and agency, and ultimately provides models for action (Smith, 2005:14). These depictions and perceptions of violence that has been explored here give 'stories to categories' which has then guided behaviours and beliefs (Sandberg et al 2015: 1170).

Chapter summary

Understanding violence through the lens of young people is a contentious topic that can be tackled from many angles. Through discussing structure and the locations in which these young people live, expanding on the previous discussion of individualisation, Hayward (2004) proposes that such transgressive behaviours become a seduction for individuals. The seduction of excitement and experiences by adopting certain behaviours offers a way of seizing control of one's destiny (Hayward 2004:152) whether that be through status as previously discussed in chapter six or through understanding your neighbourhood and how you can navigate these spaces.

Subsequently, the young people within this study understand violence within their own areas through basic tangible elements and through a cultural community lens. Interestingly, young people have navigated their own fields, as they discussed how gaining power or capital using violent means can be important to some young people as this would aid in their goal to earn status, (Bourdieu and Waquant 1992). Leonard, (2006) has elaborated this point further and suggests that young people nowadays are part of a time that we do not fully understand, cultures have formed, and a set of traditions or line of action inherited from the past must be collectively interpreted anew in each generation. As such, young people within this study and within the societies they live must be understood as 'competent' social actors in their own right (Leonard 2006:228).

This chapter has focused the reader on the cohorts understanding of their location, paying particular attention to the rural cohorts understanding of violence within their neighbourhood. Furthermore, it has broken down what is understood by the 'rural idyll' and reiterated the importance of understanding young people's perspectives in relation violence and meaning making within the places which they reside. Importantly here, community, social capital and the extensions of this, such as 'bonded social capital' have aided the understanding of how community can in instances have a detrimental effect on young people within rural neighbourhoods, especially those who are living towards the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum.

As a contribution to rural theory and rural crime, this chapter has tackled the idea of the rural panopticon and discussed the instances of 'big brother' and the importance of interconnections, observations, visibility and surveillance within rural towns and how this impacts on the young people within them as a hinderance or impetus to become involved with violent behaviour. The

following chapter will provide a deeper discussion from these findings and set out how this research contributes to knowledge.

Chapter 7: The discussion

Introduction

This chapter reviews the findings from the previous chapters in the context of the literature review and sets out how this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge in criminology and social sciences more widely. This study offers three areas of focus and contribution. **(1)** How the methodological approach and subsequent findings illuminate the importance of young people's voices on topics that heavily involve them as the potential problem or phenomena. **(2)** How geographical location and the significance of context play a role in how young people situate and further understand violence. **(3)** Extending theoretical perspectives and dominant discourses, with the researcher's development of POT (Prospect of Opportunity Theory).

Dividing this chapter into the above three sections will help to reiterate some of the main concepts introduced in the previous chapters, presenting data from mind maps, focus groups and interviews. It will not introduce new data but (re)present data that has already been presented. Overall, this thesis has aimed to understand and situate participants subjective perceptions on violence in the context of broader social, cultural and spatial dynamics. It has analysed the complex and somewhat contentious ways violence among young people is understood, explored and influenced.

This study was conducted in a rural Northwest town and an East Midlands city area, both appreciably different in terms of what the locations have to offer young people residing in modern day Britain. The qualitative approach sought to build on and develop the work of David Farrugia (2016) and Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) in analysing perceptions of violence from young people themselves. This approach locates the enactment of youth identities at the level of the individual, whilst recognising the structural and cultural backdrop of such performances, perceptions and behaviours. In doing so, the research aimed to contribute to our understanding of young people and violence by drawing on perspectives of the everyday, real world experiences and how these are in turn interpreted and articulated, by combining traditional theory with contemporary perspectives.

Throughout, this thesis has challenged what it is to be a 'youth' and explored how the social sciences have perhaps (unintentionally) racialised youth violence, and how this is perpetuated and commercialised through the media. Drawing on the nuanced accounts of how violence is perceived and how violent identities are informed and produced, it demonstrates the role of social development and youth transitions in rural and urban settings. The rural idyll was deconstructed by the participants to reveal more similarities with what is known to be the behaviour and social constructs more commonly thought appropriate to urban inner-city areas. The following three sections of this chapters will further consider the importance and significance of the findings and will discuss each of the above contributions to knowledge in their respective order, by firstly exploring '*significance of young people's voice'*.

1- Significance of young people's voices.

Introduction

Within this section of the chapter, the contribution to knowledge here is the *'significance of young people's voice.'* This section highlights the importance of bringing forward the youth voice on an issue relevant to them. More importantly, this section highlights 'voice' as a methodological contribution to knowledge. This will be showcased by reflecting back on the findings and literature review chapters. By doing so, this chapter will reiterate debates around defining violence and the beneficial nature of the methodology used to capture young people's opinions before moving onto looking at other key themes that highlight the significance of voice and elaborate on young people's world, such as social media and gender.

Chapter four, outlined the deeply embedded connection of the methods chosen for this study and the importance of participant voice. One of the main aims of this research was to let young people express themselves freely about violence without having pre-defined meaning. By utilising Lundy's (2007) four elements of space, voice, audience and influence, which is seen as important in advancing the participation of children in research, this thesis argues that a unique insight into children and young people's thinking allows us to understand the process of their meaning making during their dialogue. By doing so, it not only provides the young person space to define, but also space to reflect and think about why they have defined it in that way. More specifically, it reveals their conceptual explorations as they analyse and unpick their reasons for different and often contrasting interpretations of key concepts (Cassidy et al 2019; Lundy 2007).

As Barron states:

> *"...listening to the voices of youths...makes young people feel they are valued and contributing members of society...However...the approach is not without complication. To overcome adult-centred interpretations and covert relations of power, it is essential to employ a methodology that allows youth to speak from and be appreciated for their own perspective."* (Barron 2000: 44-5).

The challenges of crime, violence and the criminal justice system as a whole are those that affect all communities and all connections between them. In meeting one of these challenges, a perspective that has been largely absent has been that of children and young people (Clark and Laing 2014). In considering that potential criminal careers often have origins in people's early years, which can in some places be bound with victimisation of violence and crime as a child (Ray 2018; Case 2018), this omission is unhelpful in meeting challenges and tackling issues such as violence. Involving children's and young people's voices in research not only acknowledges their agency, but also reiterates that they can make a productive contribution towards increasing understanding (Cassidy et al 2019; Hanson 2014). Part two of the thesis, emphasised the realities of life for young people, by providing them with the opportunity to discuss 'violence'. The ensuing themes that emerged reminds us as adults (researchers) *"What it is like to be a child"* within specific contexts or circumstances, rather than framing childhood issues as an adult concern with an adult agenda. When adult voices dominate the debate, the complexity of young people's lives is disguised and therefore often misrepresented (Visser et al 2015; Wood 2009; France 2008). In turn, this can fuel the potential misdiagnosis of a social policy problem (Wood 2010).

Previous research, although contributing to our knowledge and understanding of violence among young people, has tended to consider the issue from a specific perspective such as quantitative data, interpersonal or domestic violence (McAra and McVie 2016). What this research aimed to do was put youth at the fore of the research and let them (to an extent) lead on what *they think* violence is, setting out concepts, justifications, definitions and anything else they thought would help them articulate how they understood this phenomenon. This left it open to a variety of concepts to be discussed rather than taking a siloed approach of one topic. They identified areas they felt fuelled the 'problem' or, as it is now commonly termed, the 'disease' (Stubley 2018). Issues that are twofold and significant within late modern society: (1) the introduction of and growing importance and commodification of social media: - and (2) the interplay and understanding of gender and violence, and how this impact on youth understandings of violence (chapter six). Combined with the more specific problems around perceived deficits children and young people face in modern Britain (chapters two and three), this has led to a particular analysis of the lives of young people and this phenomenon. When further analysed there is evidence that young people do not only reject violence (to an extent) but also have trouble articulating what it is for themselves. This was evident from the very first question posed to them '*Have you ever been asked what your opinion and understanding of violence is?"* In answer to this question, the majority

of participants in both cohorts said *'No'*. In the discussion that explored 'defining violence' the researcher saw young people struggling to understand what *they* thought violence was. They discussed the difficulty of defining violence, as they found it hard to articulate or explain to someone else. Accordingly, they also discussed it as: "*is a mix of everythin"* as "*everyone seems to have their own definition"* (refer to page 108).

Once they had acknowledged the contentious nature of defining violence, it was important for the young people to explore further their understandings surrounding violent behaviour. It was important to not only go back to the foundations of their discussions, but also get them to unpick what they thought fuelled the impetus of such behaviour. Chapter five explores the two main areas that the young people discussed: 1) social media and 2) gender.

In discussing violence in some depth within the context of gender and social media, it not only stressed the significance of young people's voice. It was also central in shaping the thematic process and methodological value of the study design and subsequent findings. This methodological framework came from the open and non-definitive nature of how this topic was discussed. Resultantly, the design of this study involved three separate phases where one method informed the next. The young people in this context, had the freedom to initially express their opinions via mind maps and this ultimately set the parameters for the focus groups and interviews. Such an approach may be applicable to other research and concepts where young people are viewed as part of the 'problem', by utilising what they know and their knowledge, so we can make them part of a solution.

Therefore, the following question after the mind maps was '*what influences your understanding of violence?*' This was broken down into a variety of categories such as race, social media, and gender to name a few. Participants discussed how violence was sometimes discussed within school assemblies. They further discussed how they can at times struggle to understand the content being provided and, other time did not agree with the arguments being put forward. As a result, many of the participants briefly discussed how violence and bullying were discussed as two separate issues, (refer to page 135). Hence, it became evident that young people have accepted that understandings of violence is something, which is just simply taught, without having those deeper discussions to explore why it is understood that way. For example, bullying was

one of those areas, that was briefly discussed and perceived by participants as a separate issue and use of force. Mainly due to how it is discussed in schools as separate from 'violence' more broadly.

At first, the participants were unable to articulate what they thought violence to be beyond the common physical elements, such as fighting, punching and kicking. However, through the process and methods used to gain data, the young people had chance to reflect and think about what informed their understanding or why violence among young people happened in the first place. Young people firstly understood violence with a focus on the individual self, this then shifted to understanding violence on a wider level of other young people and locality and the impact this had on the understandings and perceptions of violence (see chapter six). Throughout this shift, the relevance and contextual understanding the participants explored had a strong bearing on how one reacts to or understands 'violence.'

Social media and significance of voice

Throughout these discussions, two debates that impacted on their understanding, acceptability and normativity of violence concerned social media and gender. These two concepts showcase how utilising young people's voice and providing them with the opportunity to choose what to discuss, highlights what is significant to them, rather than what researchers find noteworthy. Johnathan (page 134) discussed fashion in relation media and suggests that violence among young people has become worse- and suggests that this is due to social media. The majority of participants agreed that since social media platforms have gained prominence the use and prevalence of violence has become worse. Furthermore, what participants were very aware of was the potential opportunities violence can bring.

By partaking in meaningful discussion with peers of similar ages, together they were able to unpack and demystify what violence means to them. The challenge social media poses to young people lies between structure and agency and highlights the opportunities available to them, or to a greater extent, less available to them. The increasing popularity of smartphones and personal computers has greatly facilitated the virtual reality and how this in turn informs young people's understanding of violence (Ray 2018; Pinkney 2018). As discussed in the literature review, we

can observe a discrepancy between the aspirations of young people and opportunities available to them, in particular those who may be on the socio-economic margins of society. This discrepancy is highlighted even more so via social media, Malcolm (a participant) voices his opinion on the topic suggesting that the debate around violence has been exacerbated by social media: *"you know you have to work hard for it* [success monetary or otherwise], *either through selling drugs, violence or being smart."* (Refer to page 134).

Young people within this study reiterated how social media had an impact on their understanding and perception of violence, the way they use it, understand it and react to it. The above discussions and excerpts used highlight the importance and significance that the media can have on justifications and understandings of violence. As a result, by utilising these subjective opinions and perspectives we can better understand this topic. As described in chapter two, both structure and agency are bounded physically and symbolically, this drew on the work of Ulric Beck (1992). This discussed social structures in a contemporary world and the relationship of subjectivity and individuality with these structures. Beck (1992) argues that de-traditionalisations and structural fragmentation are two of the most significant defining characteristics of modern societies. Resultantly, this growth and modernisation brings with its new risks and thus more insecurity. The precarity, and deterioration of society is therefore exacerbated due to social medias, accessibility and coverage of it (Pilney and Tewksbury 217; Sunstein 2001).

Beck's theory has usefully helped to further understand young people's lives within the pervasive structural inequalities that they experience. Yet, these youth (participant) discussions must continue to be at the foreground of research providing them (young people) and us (researchers) with reflexivity in order to further understand how young people live and understand violence, as society continues to change. By ignoring youth, it impoverishes our understandings of modern youth (in)equality and obscures the structural conditions, they face (Farrugia 2013). Thus, regarding what Malcolm was discussing (above) structural, institutional and subjective processes operate in relation to one another (Beck 1992; Farrugia 2011), highlighting its consequence.

Gender and significance of voice

One of the reoccurring themes that came out within the findings of the research was that of gender. Although this was not necessarily discussed from an interrelationship perspective, as previous research has (discussed in chapter two). The participants freely spoke about how they understood violence, and within these discussions the topic of gender and in particular the maleness of violence was a prominent lens of focus. Previous chapters of this thesis (chapters two and six) utilised literature that explored young people's perceptions, and these were discussed on a continuum of acceptability.

Sundaram (2014; 2016) proposes that gender is salient in shaping our understandings of violence and some forms are more or less acceptable and thus justified. The findings of this thesis support that proposition. Interestingly however, the inclusion of both male and female genders within this study still revealed a majority perspective that upheld masculine perspectives on violence (Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Gramsci 1971; Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey 2008). This ideal of manhood that was discussed within the literature review has been reproduced and re-framed by the young people themselves in this study. Furthermore, social media and the media more generally, illustrate what Connell identifies as hegemonic masculinity depicted on television shows such as '*Top Boy'*. As most of the young people who discussed this topic were between the ages of 12-16 it can also be debated whether such conversations are part of a socialising process. Connell discusses this as the secondary socialisation process (Connell 1995), where boys in particular display aggressive and violent behaviour. Malcolm (refer to page 120 and 123) illustrates this point by suggesting that young people will be violent to become 'something', and young people may use violence to become well known in the school. Alternatively, as the popular TV show would suggest becoming the *'Top Boy.'*

Following this and as discussed within the literature review, research has shown that there is common link between violence and masculinity, an area of discussion that was highlighted within the discussions amongst young people. This is arguably an unquestioned assumption about violence, an aspect that is portrayed time and again through various media platforms (Stanko 2002). Kelly's (1988) concept of a continuum of violent behaviour links some of the discussion had within the finding's chapters and earlier within the literature review around social norms, gender roles and expectations of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Structural powers (if referring to this study the school or youth club), can in some instances dictate gendered norms associated

with the concept of young males as active, violent, controlling, and young females as more passive and vulnerable (Connell 1987; Teleri-Davies 2019).

The young people of this study were aware and willing to discuss the influences and impact of violence on their lives, with social media and gender being just a snapshot which highlights the significance of youth voice. Masculinity and social media in some respects go hand in hand by reproducing what they have seen online in the school courtyard or for *'likes'* on Instagram. This is compounded and fuelled by websites such as *'Worldstar'* whose main focus is that of fighting and fighting back. Accordingly, the emphasis of fighting back is evident among some participants both male and female who feel the need to fight back when presented with confrontation as they do not want to come across as *'a little child. '*They want to defend their honour and status and even go as far to argue that if they do not fight back for them '*that's not a man'* (refer to page 117). Previously considered within chapter two, were scholars that suggest such behaviours of masculinity or femininity that are practiced in early childhood can form normative behaviours. For males this is has arguably fallen in line with violence and aggression which can be sued to express various emotions. Or as the findings chapters have demonstrated in various places males asserting power over another particularly when masculinity is threatened (Pellegrini and Bartini 2001: Feder, Levant and Dean 2010).

The findings represent his clear emphasis on 'respect' and status', masculine hegemonies discussed between both cohorts, male and female, in shaping and responding to social constructions of space and place. Chapters two and three considered masculinity and violence in some depth and the complex links between violence and crime. In some instances, violence becomes commodified, humourized and justified. Furthermore, social media lends itself and the people using it a sense of power and control, the power of the digital self, this space can be both discursive and interpretive for both user and viewer. Social media challenges what violence is and how it is interpreted. Violence and how it is justified, accepted or rejected in within these spaces is thus flexible. Participants such as Andy (refer to page 113) justified violence by asserting his masculinity and argues that *'if a man gets hit he hits whoever hits him'* emphasising, not only standing up for yourself, but essentially standing up for your manhood. It is with understanding youth voice and further exploring this through arenas such as the media and formats like blogs and social media platforms that provides a clearer view of this 'processes of self-shaping by holding in place the everyday, minute details that contribute to an ever-changing form' (Campbell 2015:18, cited in Kelly et al 2019). Important to also recognise here is the feminist work conducted

in this area and how it resonates with some of the discussions had within this research. As discussed previously (see chapter two) previous work has emphasised the way in which people (both older and younger) construct themselves and others when discussing violence. These constructions have been known to constitute various gender differences (Enloe 2007). As such, this research has highlighted such differences amongst participants when they have discussed violence. The female participants of this research in places have upheld and justified the normative behaviour of females: *"Yeah, because of the media, err... and the way we've* [girls] *been taught how to act as well."* The arguably 'typical' stereotypes for males and females had been upheld from both genders discussing how females should be soft, and males are used to and almost expected to be more aggressive. Yet. in instances females in the cohorts, did push back and asserted their 'power' in terms of when they felt using violence was justified and this usually was when they were defending themselves or felt personally attacked (refer to page 113). Chesney-Lind (1995) suggests that with regards to girls becoming involved in violence, this has much more to do with a form of criminogenic coping rather than increasing social status which has notably been prominent throughout the findings for male participants. Furthermore, it could be argued that females who use violence or justify the use of it is not necessarily because they want to behave like boys but are simply acting like youth who have grown up in societies where violence is common (Jones 2010). Some of these debates have been discussed within the findings chapters and is highlighted through the use of participant voice.

In unpacking 'voice' and its significance for this thesis, it is interesting to consider how the findings and subsequent analysis of 'violence' challenges and justifies the status of children and young people. Providing them with that agency implies that they have the capacity to articulate views which require us (adults) to listen (Cassidy et al 2019). The participants within this study come from two very different locations comprising of different demographics. The two main themes presented within the first findings chapter are re-presented. But interestingly, the concepts of gender, framed within the discussion of masculinity and the theme of social media were relevant to both groups. Having said that, the way the discussions were underpinned by the sociostructural facets of how such agentic behaviour plays out in varying structural landscapes. There were instances of symbolic nuances which due to the structural landscape shaped their understanding and use of violence. This acceptability and allowable use of violence was what differentiated a young person in the East Midlands city area from the rural North-West town. These movements, symbolic nuances and structural locations shape identities and thus opportunities available for young people.

Summary

The core of this section focuses on 'Voice'. Letting youth have a voice within contexts that affect them; this is where opportunities for positive youth development emerge (Perkins and Borden 2006) and methodological adaptation begins. By providing the participants with that freedom to freely express themselves without definitions or topics demonstrates to them that their youth voice is respected for their ideas and opinions and feel free to state them within an organisation, programme or, in this case, research (Serido, Borden and Perkins 2011). Accordingly, having a voice may be particularly important for (vulnerable) youth who are often marginalised by society, thus, engaging young people from varying locations has the potential to further highlight and elaborate on what is seemed to be already known on a topic (Iwasaki 2016). In continuing to highlight youth and their knowledge, this chapter will now turn its attention to the significance of place and context, as the second contribution to knowledge.

2- Significance of place and context

"*If we are politically marginalised and denied educational and occupational opportunity and we believe that the laws, rules and practices which are applied to us merely compound our deprivation then we can live silently with the pain and frustration or break the rules. Our beliefs will then become manifest in our action .*" (Pitts, 1988: 182-3).

Introduction

Drawing on the findings discussed in chapter seven, this section will focus on the significance of place and context of the participants in this study. Thus, this section will draw on the findings explored in chapter six, further considering the invisibility of rural youth in criminological research. This thesis has been able to highlight how rural youth perceive violence within their surrounding structures and counteract debars about the 'rural idyll'. In doing so, it is able to somewhat address the gap and critiques of the enduring metro centric nature of contemporary studies on youth, crime and deviance.

This thesis has extended the boundaries of what is known about violence from the perspectives of young people and situates both major traditions of youth crime and violence within a wider geographical framework. The aim is to move towards a more spatialised and youth informed criminology.

"*In our increasingly urbanised society, urban-based lives have come to be taken for granted as standard. When researchers want to gain an understanding of*

contemporary youth, they turn to metropolitan lives where, in the relationship between the biographies of individuals and the forces of social change, new approaches to life are forged…Urban settings are seen as ubiquitous, globalised and undifferentiated, and so place often disappears from the analysis of young people's lives in general."

(Cuervo and Wyn 2010:1)

Studies that have explored violence among young people tend to be confined to social spaces such as the street or home (Barter and Berridge 2011; Young and Hallsworth 2011). In doing so practices of violence are focused on and bound by the physical elements of spaces and times such as the streets at night. This thesis has aimed to shift the focus and analyse how violence is addressed from in a range of different social spaces and how these inform each other in intricate patterns of flux and flow (Henriksen and Miller 2012; Søndergaard 2013). Perceptions of violence is thus considered to be somewhat an interchangeable process between the rural and the urban. Thus, this interchangeable process is informed within these contexts from an urban to rural exchange, rather than the other way around. Making understandings of and about violence by rural youth informed by their knowledge or limited understanding of the city. It was almost used as a measuring rod to the violence that they discussed; *''it would be like steal this- not going up into big businesses [like in the city]'* (refer to page 155). Henriksen and Bengtsson (2018:102) suggest that this *"enables us to move away from criminological explorations of violence as linear, mono-causal, and unitary and towards exploring the complex and entangled social processes of violence."*

Bourdieu (1990) argues that individual and collective actions are not necessarily developed in a cultural vacuum but are reproduced by themselves and in context of social structures. As a result, youth within these social structures (urban and rural) are subjected to a variety of structural constraints and opportunities for experiencing and understanding violence. The findings suggest that different forms of violence as articulated by participants whether seen or experienced personally can amplify and minimise understanding over time. Understandings of violence within these two distinct contexts shape interactions between and among young people on the street, at school or in their communities. By considering this further, space and place demonstrate that violence is not only normalised in some instances, but is also accepted, justified and rejected by the participants. Thus, the structural theoretical framework for which this thesis has adopted is relevant for a wider examination of youth violence.

Each cohort in each location had developed their own cultural flow and engagement with practices and space where what 'youth' is, and what it means to be a young person can be challenged within the confines of the geographical location. Accordingly, young people's lives as always are shaped by economic and capital and cultural symbols created and re-created by young people themselves. However, rural youth remain marginal to the development of theory within the social sciences (Farrguia 2014). By focusing more prominently on the rural cohort in chapter six we can highlight the differences in structure and space and how this in turn further shapes their understanding of violence. Common structural disadvantages for rural youth are the lack of quality education and job opportunities which are usually concentrated heavily in urban areas (Rugg and Jones 1999). These structural disadvantages were routine topic of conversation in response to the question '*why do you think young people behave violently?*' They noted that '*they are bored*' or *'there is nowhere to go.'* However, this study did not set out to compare relative disadvantage from one cohort against another, as this can risk constructing a determinist argument around the structural processes of youth. Yet, in recognising the differences, opportunity and structure have a part to play in further explaining how young people view and understand violence.

Furthermore, it is important to not over-play the homogeneity of young people living in urban 'inner city' or run-down 'rural' areas. Although the two cohorts may be subject to similar influences and challenges to an extent, structurally the challenges they face are not comparable. Not all young people who face these hurdles are members of a gang or go out and utilise violence and violent behaviour. What is important here is understanding the fluidity of youth and how the interaction of space and structures can impact on perceptions of violence. In chapter six the focus shifted from individual to geographical and in particular on what was identified as the criminologically ignored rural youth. In this context, there seemed to be an adapted street code which had shaped and influenced violent behaviour perceptions. Violence was apparent on these seemingly, picturesque and quite rural streets. The participants often spoke of fighting amongst different groups, a word they used often and insisted it was different from that of a gang. Accordingly, interpretations of place and space, can constrain the way violence is perceived and therefore used. Furthermore, violence among young people was multi-faceted, and included both perceptions and anxieties of risk and threat, that were usually discussed within a pre-emptive dialogue. Conversation surrounding space and place were of specific significance, as postcode and time of day were common themes across both cohorts of study. As such, participants commented on the nature of

youth and the potential of violence particularly within rural area where, they described the town turning to *'its dark side'* (refer to page 147) once the Police

Community Support Officers (PCSO's) had finished their last shifts.

Being in a certain part of town or knowing that there are less 'eyes' on you during the night (dependent upon area) can have a dramatic effect on the risk of violence. Violence and understanding at that time were conceived of as both a response to the presence of 'street life' within their social ecology and the prospect of opportunity. It is at this point where we can begin to contrast the exclusive world to the exclusionary social order (Young 1999). It has often been suggested that a 'golden age' where facets of society, such as 'stable marriage' and 'job security' abounded and are contrasted negatively with the world today. A context of fragmented modern society, where good jobs are in ever decreasing decline and levels of violence are rising. Yet, what needs to be understood is that these 'historical moments' can often be perceived as nostalgic constructs. Nostalgia is a predominantly a positive emotion, albeit not without bittersweet elements (Sedikides et al 2004; 2006; Etzioni 1955).

However, we should not deny that there are issues of concern regarding our sometimes-faulty grasp of history and this 'golden age', where respect for elders is cast in nostalgia, yet in reality what this 'memory' has done has increasingly characterised youth to be feared and suspect (Wills 2009). The fragmentation, inequality and division of what is known now, has much to do with historical factors. The industrial revolution had a massive impact on agrarian Britain, people's lifestyles and shifts in employment came with the advancements in technology. As a result, people who could began the move to neighbouring towns or if possible to the city where the work was. A quote from French writer Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) illustrates the changes:

> *"From this foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilise the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish, here civilisation works its miracles and civilised man is turned almost into a savage."* (Cited in Mayer 1976: page?).

It epitomised the poor conditions and lack of infrastructure for the people. Yet, today over 180 years on, the city is still the heartland of modernism, but the rural has been forgotten with the

people in it, resultantly, these towns and villages have been left with only sentimental memories of the so called 'golden age'. As these changes have occurred historically and society becomes fragmented, we can argue that it has, or is happening again, but within a different context (Hopkins-Burke 2016). Geoff Pearson (1983) in his seminal work 'Hooligan' discusses the 'twenty year rule' whereupon, each generation looks back on a golden age of twenty years previous of respectful and well behaved children, compared to the 'kids of today', with their lack of respect and use of bad behaviour. Pearson was able to trace this back to at least the Victorian era, showing that this process continues to repeat itself. Young (1999) argues that although the golden age granted social embeddedness and social narrative (although this may be more a romanticised than relating to urban landscapes), there was this desire to assimilate the deviant as the stranger, and this othering process was evident in the data.

For the rural cohort, their day to day lives would be with young people of the same demographic, whereas in the urban cohort this would be very mixed. Subsequently, the discussions surrounding ethnicity were open, honest and critical. It was from a researcher's perspective that they may have felt more comfortable to do so due to the topic of race (in its variety of contexts) being a hot topic on the 'Brexit campaign'- this was subsequently around the time I was talking to these young people. Yet, the young people were open about their views suggesting that in fact due to the '*colour separation thing'* (discussed previously) that they (BAME young people) play up to common stereotypes depicted within the media. They were also critical and observant of how the media can use ethnicity to 'twist' news stories (refer to page 129).

This is where stark differences in the geographical and demographic context is illuminated. Diversity is perceived as an urban phenomenon in England and Wales as traditionally migrant communities have settled in urban areas where there are more employment opportunities (Dhalech 2012). Although race had a significant impact on how some rural youth identified themselves and others this was largely due to the fact that ethnic diversity was linked to the city. The city for them was up to an hour away, thus encountering a diverse range of people is in some instances out of reach for some rural youth. The discussion of race then shifted towards considering space. An issue which is more profound for the young people living in the rural areas. Yet both cohorts thought of their individual areas no matter how big or small as their safe place, a place of familiarity and understanding.

Therefore, their space as all young people described was their 'safe card' their home (refer to page 161). Furthermore, they discuss how things work differently there due to their location and being away from the city. Yet, one participant in the rural cohort suggested that *'if you live on the street you can own it!'* words that might have more relevance to city landscapes. These were suggested as normal activities compared to what happens within urban locations (refer to page 156). These activities, the use of language, the othering process or 'owning the streets' involve the use of spatial practices and everyday activities of fighting, seeing fights or hearing about violence a few streets up in the 'bad part of town'. They all involve the use of an established spatial economy, where characteristics of each social formation (place) demonstrates the way in which bodies (young people) interact with that space (Lefebvre 1991). McCann (1999:72) argues that such everyday practices establish continuity and 'secrete their own social space.' The way in which rural youth describe their space and understandings of violence are normative and community based. For example, Tilley (refer to page 156) describes how the elders *'egging on'* the younger people to fight one another. Furthermore, space played a part in how one was viewed thus, class was raised, only briefly but it was located within the context of '*The rough part of town'* or as one participant (refer to page 120) describes- *'their parents are different.'* Edward Soja (1996: 66) explains that spatial practice is the process of producing the material form of social spatiality and is both the medium and outcome of human activity, behaviour and experience. Understanding the rural youth's space in this way provides a deeper understanding of how space and context can influence one's perception, interaction and understanding of violence, as practices that both produce and reproduce specific places and social formation (Shields 1999).

Summary

This section of the chapter has focused on the distinctions made between the urban and the rural, and this is fundamental to the way that modern societies have been and continue to be understood (Matthews et al 2000). The deconstruction of this dichotomy from initial understandings through to how participants perceive this in their context has been essential in comprehending violence, from a young person's perspective. The earliest sociological thinkers who had focused on social change such as Durkheim and Marx discussed and created theoretical distinctions between the urban and the rural. Furthermore, theories of social change have a significant impact on how we theorise youth (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). Yet classical and contemporary perspectives have

constructed this theoretical dichotomy between these two places of urban and rural spaces and usually have positioned the former to be more important and thus more sociologically and criminologically significant than the latter. In an equivalent process, research in criminology has attempted to theorise youth, and resultantly ended up with various theoretical frameworks which are based on urban inner-city experiences (Farrugia 2014 a) that neither capture the lives or cultures of rural youth nor the spatial dimensions which they navigate.

For that reason, this thesis has aimed to not only bring young people's voices to fore but also their spatial and structural contexts, thus illuminating the debate and bringing a contemporary understanding to the issue. What the rural can teach us about violence and how we can understand this is that it takes place in context of other (sometimes discriminatory) norms, particularly in relation to class amongst rural peers and in some instances race (or what they thought about it). The young people's differential experiences to violence are (like their urban counterpart) linked to notions of masculinity and femininity and context of location 'good end of town versus the bad end of town' (Pells and Morrow 2018; Morrow and Singh 2014). This approach in criminology and social sciences has the potential to bring subaltern social spaces to the centre of how we understand and theorise youth crime and deviance more widely without homogenising youth. By studying and discussing the varying youth formations in and across different localities this thesis has produced a bio-spatial dimension of youth as such that it is both sensitive to the differences and structural process that occur in urban and rural settings. The final section of this chapter will consider the theoretical framework presented within the literature review (chapter three) and present a hybrid model which encapsulates the structural and spatial framework, this is the final contribution to knowledge.

3- Extending theoretical perspectives/dominant discourses

"For research to extend knowledge, sometimes we need to return to our forgotten theoretical heritage to find ideas with which to conceptualise the contemporary impasse." (Pitts 1988: 192).

Introduction

Chapter three examined some of the major criminological theories relating to subcultures and violence. The above quote by John Pitts, provides this final section of this chapter with a foundation to carry the concluding argument forward. Therefore, what is argued here is that although youth violence in all of its contemporary nature and social media influence, has some impact on how we as academics may unpick the phenomenon; traditional structural theory still provides a good explanation or at least provides some foundational insight into how we can understand this phenomenon in contemporary society. This section will provide the theoretical argument and the final original contribution to knowledge by extending this traditional theory and presenting a combination of theoretical concepts for better utility and understanding of the phenomenon.

Therefore, the aim of this final section is to re-consider structural theories and argue their continued relevance within contemporary Britain alongside the exploration of mobility theory which has also been discussed throughout the thesis. In the final part of this chapter, the 'Prospects of Opportunity Theory' will be presented as a hybrid combination of structural processes and individual agency, designed by the researcher.

The previous sections and indeed the findings chapters, have focused this research to better understand and represent how young people across two locations in Britain perceive the topic of violence. Youth violence in contemporary Britain is regarded in some places as an epidemic, a disease which needs a cure, but as the findings highlight, it is also seen as normal and acceptable,

if you are in the right place at the right time. This thesis did not set out to find a 'cure' but rather to further investigate with young people *themselves* how *they* understand violence. This thesis is sought to obtain subjective interpretations of violence through the voices of young people. It is the importance of subjectivity which is vital in understanding violence and young people.

Whilst academics and policy makers may argue that offending behaviour has an 'internal logic' (Maruna 1999:15) this is arguably shaped through a thin and narrow lens which is bounded, rather than viewed objectively in the reality which is here and now. Therefore, it is important to continuously embrace varying understandings of situations as a one size fits all approach may not work, particularly with a phenomenon that involves young people. Reading through the finding's chapters, one might feel that reacting to an incident of taking one's chair or hitting people for giving a dirty look may seem disproportionate, but it can be shown to be rational if viewed from the perspective of the violent individual or in this case, young person. As Maruna states:

> *"Only by understanding the way this man understood himself, his actions, and the 'common sense' of the streets, can one begin to understand why he attempted murder."* (Maruna 1999:16).

Accordingly, this section aims to demonstrate how the findings of this thesis and subsequent analysis challenges dominant theory within the criminological field. The participants within this study were not known to be persistent offenders nor were they completely naive about crime and violence. The truth is, the young people who took part in this study share many similarities, despite the many 'obvious' differences between them. It is by forming associations with other theoretical debates that we can begin to widen our gaze and deepen our understanding of young people and violence. The literature review (chapters two and three) provided an in-depth overview of the theoretical insights and concepts which have underpinned the analysis of this thesis. This, alongside considering historical elements which have generated both economic and ontological insecurity has resulted in discontinuity of the personal and social narrative and an exclusionary tendency toward the deviant. The separation of the deviant as 'other' is still palpable today (Williams and Clarke 2018) and Young (2003:390) describes this as a '*hydraulic process where the tides of inclusion had risen leaving behind the destitute and the feckless without any reference to the dynamics of social antagonism and conflict'.* Therefore, it is within these spaces and utilising these voices of young people that we can dissolve understandings, recognise structures, opportunities and space all together, that is considered alongside the mobility framework. The

focus throughout this thesis has been on looking beyond initial explanations of what they thought violence was by delving deeper and considering space and place and the links this has with (opportunity) structures. This research not only considers young people's voices as a priority on the topic of violence, but alongside this encapsulates the important contextual geographical element which seeks to expand theoretical ideas. Hence, the next segment of this final section is exploring the structural theoretical underpinning of this research and illuminating its continued relevance in modern society, to then considering aspects of mobility theory as a necessary partner in understanding young people and violence. This will be done by using findings from chapters two and three to further highlight the arguments made.

Structural

Appropriately, this thesis started by considering the theoretical concepts and developments of subcultural theory in chapter three and was developed further within the empirical chapters (five and six). These concepts emerged as important during the analysis of the empirical research, and it was suggested that structures and opportunity vary across urban and rural landscapes. Structures and opportunities within this context are not indicative of violence and crime by young people but rather as a variable of flexibility (or lack of). Young people within the study indicate opportunities to do violence or crime within their areas, and they suggest that depending on your area it may heighten your engagement in crime and violence. It was argued in chapter three that societal structures can play a part in comprehending the use and understanding of violence by young people. The literature considered five key theorists within this tradition. The first was Merton (1938) and his concept of anomie where it was proposed that some people may turn to illegitimate means to gain what was unobtainable assets (economically) the legitimate way. Merton observes that most individuals tend to conform but it is important to acknowledge that this tendency to conformity may change with economic decline and subsequently larger inequality. The discussion then proceeded to the exploration of Sutherland's (1947) 'differential association theory' which argues that a person was more likely to offend if they had frequent and intense contacts with others involved in such activities. Cohen (1955) noted that offending by most young people was rarely motivated by striving for financial success as was originally proposed by Merton. In contrast, he argued that for them, the fun and possibility of gaining status and respect was the end goal. This was an attribute and descriptor recognised throughout this thesis by participants principally

in chapter five; "*some people use violence to get to the top or be well known in the school.*" (Refer to Page 120*).

Thus, the suggestion here is that opportunities and the structures are one and the same. The opportunity to gain status among these young people is due to the structures where one can display this 'toughness', whether this be at school or the streets. Yet, importantly here, the way violence and status were discussed among the participants seemed to be easier and much more attainable for young people in the city. The rural youth discussed the lack of influence from the city so everything that happened in their locality would be on a much smaller scale. A major and highly relevant development in the deviant subculture tradition as discussed in chapter three was Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) delinquency and opportunity structure. Their argument combined the use of two theories to further explore offending. This provided impetus and theoretical insight for this study to utilise more than one theory to explore the concept of violence and their understandings of it among young people. The originality of their theory lies in their push-pull concept which they developed with a combination of anomie theory (Merton) to explain the 'push'- why young people offend, and differential association theory (Sutherland) to explain the 'pull' – explaining the endurance of this behaviour. Accordingly, as previously (see chapter three) to get a robust account of opportunity structure, and in particular across two different locations the 'anomie gap' which Spergel (1964) discusses rejects the proposition made by Cloward and Ohlin as he argues that: "*It is to do with the idiosyncratic features of that particular district and not as Merton or Cloward and Ohlin imply on national characteristics*" (Hopkins-Burke 2016: 150).

This is an important critique to consider as it is indeed the idiosyncrasies of spaces and places that structure and aid us in our understanding of violence.   These early US subcultural theories have been criticised for failing to provide an adequate explanation of youth offending, yet this study nevertheless still finds value in the structural elements of these theories which are applicable to explaining how young people understand violence. There are three main criticisms. Firstly, there is the deterministic features of subcultural traditions which propose that there is a typical offender and non-offender, with some driven to commit crime and violence because of their social and economic circumstances. Simply, this proposition fails to explain why those in a similar situation do not offend. This study did not ask its participants about violent activities, yet participants made the researcher aware that violence and crime was happening within these locations (refer to page 145) some of whom referred to as '*rough areas*'.

Secondly, the deviant subculture explanations refer predominately to gangs, and although the gangs used in the original studies were stable for that time period, the 'gang' was not featured strongly within this study, and the concept of gang continues to be contested more widely beyond this study as something that is racially structured, observed and understood (Williams and Clarke 2019). Both cohorts knew of 'gangs', but the rural cohort insisted that this was a culture that was reserved for the city areas. Violence for rural youth was thus inevitably constrained by structural restraints, thus their understanding and application of violence was defined through the use of solitary activities or something that happens between a few friends rather than labelling it as a 'gang' per se; *"It's more between friends, like it would be more fun to pick on that person."* (refer to Page 152*)* they made it clear that due to there being less people, 'gangs' like in the city do not form here. Thus, the ensuing status one can get from being part of gang is also unattainable. This crucial point demonstrates the structural disadvantage that young people in rural areas face, a lack of illegitimate as well as legitimate opportunities.

Lastly, it is argued that none of the subcultural explanations provided within the literature review consider the role of authority figures such as parents or the police. Thus, this study has addressed this gap by considering the authoritarian and more so the various forms of surveillance that differ and operate in rural and urban areas. Thus, as discussed within the literature review, there is no such thing as deviant or violence per se, rather this is created by the way other people define it (Slattery 2003). Consequently, this creation and normalisation of deviancy and violence was evident in varying ways in both cohorts, but particularly so within the rural. The discussion in the context of neighbourhoods aided participants understanding of violence. They deliberated their structural understandings of it and highlighted how culturally informed they were in accepting or rejecting violence from their family and community. Upbringings reinforce influences of neighbourhood groups in a manner where young people do not tend to challenge this heritage in any way (Hopkins-Burke 2016). They also mentioned the combative relationships some had with police. The young people from both rural and urban cohort discussed how you tend to be hindered from committing any wrong doing when police are present (although this tends to be more of a visible form of authority for the urban group), but they are aware how to avoid this on a variety of levels from avoiding the police, special constables or CCTV to times of day (refer to Page 150*).*

It is important to recognise that these structural and subcultural explanations are not fully deterministic, violence and how we aim to understand it, is simply not that clear cut. Deviance as suggested by the participants may be encouraged and condoned in some instances, but it is not automatic (Hopkins-Burke 2016). The very structures of the two cohorts illuminate the arguments that Cloward and Ohlin were suggesting. For these two groups, opportunity for varying forms of deviance is structured very differently. For the urban cohort, crime and violence is easy enough to become involved in and thus subsequently gain status from, particularly if you are black or

Asian, as there seems to be this internalised 'fear', which they argued has been propelled further by various media outlets (refer to Page 128) *'it's not racist, you think of fighting….and you think of dark people'*. The rural cohort too discussed race and this 'othering' process. The way it was discussed almost justified that it was fine for young black people, to act that way because the media portray them to be that way. It was interesting to see young people from such a different background discuss such complex topics, almost in a way which suggest that children from BAME backgrounds may accept and take pride in the label that has been attributed to them. The way labelling theory has been utilised here to explain this othering process from a rural young person's perspective who may not engage with a diverse range of people often, is the pride and respect that comes with accepting and performing this label.

However, in terms of opportunity for rural youth and violence or indeed legal ventures to gain status or be successful, however that may be interpreted is particularly difficult (although this may be due to change with the increasing relevance of county lines). Thus, it is here, where Cloward and Ohlin's observation of structured opportunities present themselves and are still relevant. The rural versus the urban in both arenas of legitimate and illegitimate opportunity structures favours the city youth. Thus, in considering what the participants discuss and the contexts in which they discuss it, this study has found not only relevancy in what is considered traditional or 'old' theory. But, has actually aided actually in uncovering how young people who are initially considered to be disadvantaged due to residing in the busy 'inner city', actually are in many ways better off than their rural counterparts who live in this contentious nature of what is known to be the 'rural idyll'.

Throughout this thesis, the researcher has touched on the notion of fluidity and flexibility to highlight the ever-changing nature of youth, crime and violence. Accordingly, so too are the above arguments, as they can be conceived of as social rather than intrinsic. In some contexts, young people's violent or transgressive behaviour is viewed as an attempt to foster control and maintain

social integration (Barry 2006; 2004) during the transitional period from youth to adult life. In order to take some of these variances into account, aspects of mobility theory, discussed in chapter three will be further discussed below in relation to the findings and how this adds to the original contribution of extending theory and the overall theoretical framework of this study.

Mobility Theory

Sociological concepts of youth and mobility have been used throughout the thesis (refer to chapters two, three, five and six) to enhance our understanding of young people and violence perspectives. Farrugia's (2016) mobility imperative discusses how the lives of young people are shaped by the flows of economic capital and cultural symbols. Nevertheless, more importantly how these mobilities are even more poignant for rural youth who are largely ignored in theoretical development. The Mobility imperative describes processes that encourage or mandate mobility, and this includes the increasing valorisation of metropolitan lifestyles in popular culture. It was observed in the literature review (see chapter three) that rural youth, in particular, must often be mobile in order to access the resources they need to navigate biographies (Farrugia 206; Corbett 2007). Farrugia frames his argument within three areas, the structural, the symbolic and the nonrepresentational. For the purposes of this thesis, two of them have been specifically noteworthy: the structural and the symbolic. They describe respectively young people's position within the mobility's of capital that shape the contemporary market, and the symbolic and discursive construction of the 'country' and the 'city' as a dimension of youth cultures (Farrugia 2016: 837). While these two dimensions discussed above are distinct analytically, they arguably each offer ontological dimensions of young people's social worlds that interact with mobility (or lack of). The framework offered by Farrugia is discussed below to further explore the interaction between structures, symbols and young people, with a particular focus on rural youth in this study.

The structural dimension of mobilities.

For the structural element of this framework, the flow of labour and capital are often observed to be within the city, thus from the viewpoint of a rural young person, this could make them structurally disadvantaged. Important to remember here that we are not merely arguing that rural youth are disadvantaged in comparison to their urban peers- as this would risk constructing rural

youth as a 'faulty youth transition' (Cuervo and Wyn 2012). Yet, it is clear that the opportunities both legal and illegal have been placed within the city, thus, rural youth and their mobilities in a structural capacity are embedded within the wider structural processes. This move away from static disadvantage aids the understanding of mobility and contemporary capital and how this can contribute to the production of space, and consequently the understanding of that space and the practices which take place within it. Therefore, young people are not only steering their way around 'structural inequalities', but the structures in which they are currently navigating are established by economic capital which reinforce and produce these urban and rural sites of accumulation and flow (Farrugia 2016; 838).

Not all young people who do live in the country are 'disadvantaged' (nor are those who reside in the city or urban locations). Some grow up in affluent neighbourhoods and they do live the idyllic rural life that is so often depicted. The above constraints thus include structure-in the sense of industry and opportunities and agency-in the context of being able to make yourself mobile in a socio-economic sense, which has a direct link to significant others in the lives of these young people. However, the opportunities and prospects in rural Britain have direct links with historical restructuring. De-industrialisation resulted in high levels of adult and youth unemployment during the 1980s. This had a direct impact on working class areas across the UK and today, farming and agriculture is also in decline and mechanised. Jobs which were attainable and in reach for rural youth have become considerably fewer or even non-existent. Cities themselves should not be considered homogenous landscapes of privilege, as these areas also range greatly in terms of complexity, diversity and inequality (Robinson 2006). Additionally, as these flows of capital and 'industry' move even more towards cities, this re-shaping of economic flow and capital has changed so much that many rural youths are unable to access these resources.

> *"The decline of manufacturing, and the increasing vulnerability of agriculture and primary industries in a globally competitive marketplace have resulted in an absence of economic opportunities for rural youth."* (Farrugia 2016:838)

Thus, although class was not a factor in the sampling strategy it can be argued that young people in this study (with a focus here on the rural), are denied access to social networks as well as cultural goods, services and opportunities afforded not only to their more affluent counterparts, but also their urban counterparts. As young (1999:12) points out:

> *"[Young men] are barred from the race track of the meritocratic society yet remain glued to the television sets and media which alluringly portray the glittering prizes of a wealthy society. Being denied the 'respect' of others, they create a subculture that revolves around masculine powers and respect."*

With this restructuring and increasing structural inequalities the young people who are able to either move towards the city or be mobile between the two places arguably have the best of both worlds. If a young person lacks the resources to do this, they can sometimes be positioned as failures within the definitions of success which is attributed to freedom of movement and proximity to city spheres, accordingly, one of the common discussion points for rural youth in this study was that "There is nothing to do round here". By utilising a second theoretical perspective in understanding structures from a mobility perspective, it is apparent that rural youth are not only marginalised within research but are also side-lined from 'youthfulness' and opportunities, which can have a strong symbolic connection with the nature of what it is to be young.

The symbolic

The symbolic element of this framework suggests that youth is tied up with the complex relationship between 'place' identity and mobility. It is further argued that cultures and subjectivities flow through 'scapes' which shape the movement of symbols and narratives across boundaries between localities and nations. Youth cultures and subjectivities are embedded within cultural flows which both extend across different spaces and places (Massey 1998) even as they are localised within certain places. Giddens (1996; 19) has described this as the 'phantasmagoric' nature of place in a globalised world, and youth cultures and subjectivities reflect this increasingly complex cultural spatiality. Local subcultures creatively articulate the genres, styles and modes of expression made available within these transnational cultural flows (Miles 2000). With these mobilities, subjectivities may no longer be easily located in one single place but may be understood as mobile within this cultural architecture. The cultural practices that rural and urban youth have drawn on in this study to construct how they understand violence also contribute to their understanding of opportunity for violence due to their structural surroundings (see chapter 6) discussing how crime and violence seems to fairly low level from what they understand the city to be like.

Farrugia argues in his 2016 paper that this separation between the urban and the rural is one of the ways in which these flows of symbols and capital have been organised. Thus, the city has been positioned as the modern lifeline. Hence, for rural youth we can argue that these symbolic nuances that such 'youthfulness' is made up from, is arguably from the perspective of the urban, the cities, the structures where everything takes place. Thus, youthfulness and more so 'coolness' has been filtered down through to these (less affluent) rural areas. Structures and symbols thus interlink creating change, flow and youthfulness in a variety of contexts discussed in the findings, a good example of this is territory.

Territory: space, symbolism and youth

In discussing violence young people from the rural cohort described their neighbourhoods, the lack of things to do which caused them a great deal of boredom, but also discussed territory. This was in the context of symbolic power for them. Much of which is how urban youth describe their power- this ownership of postcodes and or areas seems to be affiliated with both cohorts. Yet, research, media and music has continuously depicted that this is cultural practice for young people more applicable to urban areas.

The findings chapters explored this further as both cohorts brought up neighbourhoods as imperative for understanding violence and the associated opportunities to do this. It revealed how Farrugia (2016;2018) discusses space, cultures and symbols being fluid and flexible between areas. For this study, it seemed that a lot of symbolic understandings around violence have been filtered down from the city that is closest to the rural cohort. These discussions around territory also involved debates of gangs and groups of friends with terminology being altered (see chapter seven). The young people in rural life are restricted on multiple accounts, firstly the society in which they live is restricted from 'newness' and investment which is reserved for the 'big city'. Secondly, the opportunities for legal ventures which they would have once sought (i.e. agriculture or industrial work) has been removed or now non-existent and lastly, in order to feel part of the world in which they navigate, they embody and adopt symbolic nuances typically reserved for city landscapes, such as territory and postcode 'wars' (refer to page 152). Young people in urban areas may have been highlighted within the media, music, political debate and research, but in fact the children and young people who are missing out on opportunities for 'success' both

legitimate and otherwise are those in rural parts of the Britain. This research has highlighted important differences in how young people understand violence and how place, space and structures have a significant impact on how this is understood.

This thesis has both accepted and challenged the theoretical propositions put forward within the literature review. I have observed theory working and presenting itself in reality but have also worked towards providing a nuanced account of young people's subjective interpretations of violence. Homogeneity of young people was challenged both within the findings and this chapter. The study was able to highlight and emphasise what it means to be a young person in modern day Britain and I have argued how this fluidity can inform their understanding of violence. The understanding of what may now be considered a traditional theory still has some relevance nearly sixty years on. Delinquent youth, norms and values are highlighted within this thesis as similar in some contexts but also that location exhibits how space has significant impact on the understanding of the nuances which violence brings.

The analysis and subsequent discussions have considered aspects from two theoretical concepts both of which have highlighted one another's significance, illegitimate opportunity structures and mobility theory. It has been the intention to extend theoretical knowledge by forming a hybrid approach to conceptualising youth and understanding violence. By doing so the latter (opportunity structures) builds on the former (mobility). This reason for this is twofold: firstly, by doing so it re-affirms how important and relevant traditional theory is and how it can be adapted and utilised in modern day Britain. Secondly, by considering the fluidity of youth and the geography of space, we can begin to understand how opportunities for crime and violence are few and far between. By understanding this, can we then begin to understand the subjective nature of how young people interpret what that means to them, and what informs that thinking.

The dimensions discussed each refer to ontological dimensions of the social world. Therefore, as young people interact with these spaces, structures and opportunities their perceptions of violence may change with them. It is within these interactions that produce and re-produce the way young people interact and understand violence. This is where Prospect of Opportunity Theory is introduced.

Prospects of opportunity theory

This section aims to demonstrate some of the fundamental differences between the rural and urban cohort samples in the study. Participants within the study were not 'monsters' or 'hooligans' or 'thugs.' They were knowledgeable about their area and aware of the crime and violence within their neighbourhoods. The truth is, the young people who took part in this study shared many similarities, the biggest disparity was the structure of their area and the opportunities for violence and crime.   The previous sections and findings chapter highlighted the distinctive structural and mobility inequalities that rural youth face. Rural youth knew of violence and how to be involved but were also very aware that it would be extremely unlikely to be on the scale of that in the city, thus making it difficult to profit financially from that type of behaviour.

Regardless of whether young people subscribed to a street code (within their areas) it is clear, that adherence to the structures you are in can provide some sense of integration and collective identity. Failure to adhere to these norms and behaviours (particularly for males) threatened exclusion and possible victimisation- i.e. loss of respect as conceptualised for the urban youth meant loss of integration. Whereas for rural youth, the loss is not so great, because the gain is not so big either. Thus, the 'Prospect of Opportunity Theory' (POT) can be conceived of as a continuum rather than deterministic for contextual understanding for young people. Based on the combination of structural theories, and aspects of mobility theory it provides a robust account of how contemporary context and traditional theory has relevance and how symbolic meaning and resources construct these youthful identities and considerations.

What does POT theory consider?

The POT (Prospect of Opportunity) theory is essentially a combination of two theories, but only parts of each are utilised. From Cloward and Ohlin's theory, the focus here is on the illegitimate and legitimate opportunities that are available to young people, and how this is structured within societies. Whereas their focus was on gangs and the various subcultures that arise from the opportunities, this theory provides a more general approach rather than specific to a subculture.

The main aspect for this particular combination is the structural hierarchies and opportunities within those hierarchies.

The other half of this theory comes from the mobility theory presented previously by Farrugia and discussed within this chapter. The aspects taken from this are the two areas of the symbolic and the structural. By taking these two concepts it considers the cultural aspect of youth, and how this fluid construct is open to change and flux, dependent upon locations (rural and urban). Accordingly, this hybrid approach to understanding youth crime and violence, considers how space and place not only shapes young people's understandings, but their opportunities too. This combination and continuum approach extend traditional theory by being less deterministic in its approach and open to the possibility of change with the fluidity of youth. The hybrid nature of POT can extend understandings of youth violence with a local focus, and be critical of the individual subjective interpretations alongside the context it is being discussed in. It provides a window for research to explore the rural side of crime and violence and have the chance to unpick definitions and their capability to fit in various surroundings.

How can this be used to study crime more generally?

The approach here is pragmatic and adaptable to modern day youth. The traditional concepts provided by the structural theory has relevancy and provides a foundation which can be applied in different contexts, both rural and urban. Furthermore, in considering the legitimate and illegitimate opportunities, this too can be applied and adapted for the context in which it is being studied. Therefore, with the consideration of county lines as an area which is gaining prominence in rural England. This theory would be able to provide an insight into the changing nature of what it means to be a young person in rural Britain and how opportunities either *legitimate* or in the cases of county lines *illegitimate* and how this has a bearing on understanding, mobility and the symbolic nature of youth.

What distinguishes it from reading two separate theories?

POT has essentially combined aspects of two theories. One being traditional and one more contemporary, by doing so it captures the nuances of youth, the fragility of society and the encompassing structures, alongside the fluidity of such contexts. All the while taking account of the symbolic nature of crime, violence and what it means to be a young person. Structures in society will continue to shape how we move, think and navigate our way through life, and with the fluid nature of mobility, capital and youth, the theory takes account of this, and can grow with the continued changes.

Summary

This chapter has considered the implications of the findings for the conceptual framework as it was sketched out in chapter three. By utilising both theories we can see how this thesis has highlighted how rural youth are at a fundamental disadvantage due to the lack of mobility and structural influence for both legitimate and illegitimate opportunities. The positioning of rural life as idyllic has been revealed to not be the case for all young people in these areas, and it has been expressed by those in the study that there is not much to do and not much happens. They are a group of young people who are left on the outskirts of modern youth culture, research and the opportunities both legal and otherwise are restricted. This section of the chapter has considered the comparisons of rural and urban youth in their structural capacities, as well as the adaptions to symbolic distinctions that have been filtered down from city spaces.

The focus here was on the rural, illuminating the ways in which they understand and interpret violence is based on what they think they know about the city, this has ultimately depicted how being on the outskirts and being unheard has not only left rural youth invariably ignored but it has highlighted that the city in its state of newness and modern capacity will continue to be their measuring rod of what it means to be a young person and will inform how they perceive and understand violence.

Chapter summary

This chapter has covered a lot of ground. It has explored the three original contributions this thesis has produced. Firstly, by considering the significance of voice, then the importance of context and finally extending theory.   The objective of this qualitative study was to understand the perceptions and opinions from young people about 'violence,' and how they understand this, from two location in the Britain. Utilising various methods, the thesis attempts to offer a nuanced understanding of how young people understand the often-ambiguous term of 'violence', and what influences that understanding. Life for young people in the rural area was central to the analysis, as it offered somewhat of a contrasting narrative to that of previous literature, by situating the young people's understandings of their neighbourhood and context as less that the 'rural idyll'. This study sought to extend theory- deterministic traditional theory- and challenge the homogeneity of 'youth' towards an understanding of youth violence as a part of the transition of growing up. This is usually argued to be the case for urban youth yet there are similarities between the two cohorts, and it is the lack of research on rural youth that highlight the disadvantage for urban youth and disregard acknowledgement of similar disadvantages for rural youth.

The life that exists for young people involved in crime and violence is often overshadowed by gangs and the preoccupation with offending behaviour (Pitts 2008; Harding 2016). By delving deeply into the young people's understanding and interpretations, this study has attempted to give a voice to those who are routinely stigmatised, ignored or unheard. Thereby gaining greater insight into the community and structural context of what violence is, this better conceptualises local environments. The latter proves crucial in the development of the thesis and theorisation of youth and violence, as young people often neglect to understand why they interpret or perceive something a specific way. By taking account of the wider structures and social milieu, this thesis was able to argue for the fluidity of youth and violence, and essentially argue that violence is normative within most contexts (Bourdieu 1984).

This chapter draws attention to the structures, voice but more importantly, how traditional theoretical concepts still have relevance in modern day Britain. This combined with contemporary mobility theory provides for a fluid and nuanced account of how we can further understand localised crime and violence by young people. How rural youth have been informed by social media and gender norms of their community were structurally underpinned by the 'city.' The

newness and coolness of the city continues to be a place of opportunity for young people in both legal and illegal ways. Rural youth in this sense structurally lack opportunity and prospect for status gaining crime and violence is predominantly located to the city. They aspire to be like these young people who they see on TV and media platforms but in reality, the prospect of opportunity is not there for them, and the violence and status that rural youth enact will continue to be minimal. The study allows for a portrait of the everyday challenges, organisation, social and cultural traditions entailed in growing up in the confines of either the inner city or rural town.

Chapter 8: Conclusion of thesis.

Introduction

This thesis has explored young people's understandings of violence within their cultural contexts. Drawing on mind maps, focus groups and interviews with young people living in two different areas of Britain (one urban location in the East Midlands, and a rural location in the North West). It has situated these understandings within broader contexts of the media, masculinities, structures and opportunities, some of which are themes that emerged as the research developed. By doing so, the thesis has added novel empirical and conceptual contributions to understandings of how young people understand violence.

This chapter will conclude and summarise the thesis. It will distil the key findings and provide a thorough overview of what the participants have said and what is now known from this research.

The conclusion will be broken down into the following sections:

- The first section below will revisit the aims and objectives of the research. It will outline the main findings of the thesis and highlight the contributions to knowledge. Furthermore, this section will summarise what we now know on young people's perspectives on violence.
- The second section describes the main limitations of the research and will consider the implication of these.
- The third and final section will consider some brief reflections of the research process alongside next steps for future research.

Aims and contributions of the thesis.

This thesis had two main objectives:

1. **1) Explore how young people understand violence.**
2. **2) To explore if violence understandings among young people differ within their geographical contexts.**

To achieve these objectives were a host of questions that were to be answered by the research.

Questions under objective 1:

1. Who are the young people that are drawn into the so called 'violent society'?
2. What influences young people's understandings of violence?
3. What goals do young people feel violence (as they understand it) achieve?

Questions under objective 2:

1. Do young people feel youth violence is an issue within their local area?
2. Is violence viewed legitimately or justified in any way by young people?
3. Explore if cultural context has an impact on young people's understanding and if so, in what context?

To achieve these objectives the research involved a total of 32 young people, across 2 locations in Britain. Within this research process, 21 of those young people were involved within the interview process and the focus groups. These objectives were set out as both empirical and conceptual elements to further the theoretical debate. As an example, the thesis adds empirically to understandings of how young people perceive and understand violence, but they do this through unpicking and developing concepts which were related to ideas around masculinity, and the media. Resultantly, the discussion below will address both the theoretical and empirical contributions for each objective. It is important to note however, that although the findings below will be summarised, there will be elaboration on points that will highlight findings that have emerged as the research process has developed compared to findings that were sought after form the outset.

The first objective of this study was: *To explore how young people understand and interpret violence.* This was linked empirically to the perceptions of and understandings about violence in young people's lives. This was explained conceptually with reference to peers' race and media. The findings suggest that young people initially understood violence as a physical harm, punching, kicking and fighting. Most participants were able to discuss violence in relation to what they have seen either in school, their neighbourhoods or on a variety of media platforms. A distinction was made in the research between genders and how it was more of a normalised understanding for males to use violence such as fighting, yet not as common for females to utilise such behaviour. In doing so the first question about 'who becomes involved with violence' began to get answered, and the gender discussion kept returning to the idea of masculine behaviour as normative in such contexts as discussed previously. The distinctions made between the genders were also reiterated in a separate but equally important discussion around race. These discussions surrounding race developed as a result of the debates and contemplations the young people were having previously and such conversations were able to extend across both research objectives. Firstly, how race is used as a discussion point to understand violence, but also how terminology and these understandings have differed based on location. Thus, participants within the rural cohort discussed this as an 'us and them' concept. This process of othering occurred where stereotypical portrayals of young ethnic minorities engaging in violence in their opinion was being performed by black kids in the city. Furthermore, this was further broken down by suggesting that such understandings have been very much influenced by the media and as a result was justified or expected behaviour. Accordingly, the urban cohort had similar discussions about BAME young people and violence, and although their understandings were also underpinned by what they view in the media, it was discussed less as an 'othering' process than that of the rural cohort.

Children and young people's interaction with social media platforms provide them with a wealth of knowledge but also provides them with real social, political and economic dangers. In 2010 President Obama spoke to a graduating class discussing future challenges but also reflected on an ever-changing landscape:

"You're coming of age in a 24/7 media environment that bombards us with all kinds of content and exposes us to all kinds of arguments, some of which don't always rank that high on the truth meter. And with iPods and I Pads, and Xboxes and PlayStation...information becomes a distraction, a diversion, a form of entertainment, rather than a tool of empowerment, rather than the means of emancipation." (President Obama 2010, cited in Davis 2013: 8).

Regarding this ever changing landscape, the media played a big role in how young people understood violence and in doing so aided in their understanding of violence, and discussions around media and various platforms answered both the second and third research questions: '*What influences understandings of violence?* And, *'what goals do young people feel violence (as they understand it) would achieve?'*

The media not only helped the participants unpick how and why they understood violence the way they did, but it also for the majority of participants, the goals that they felt using violence could get you was status. This discussion of status and goals varied between cohorts but broader messages around using violence can make you become well known, and not only gain you status but provide a young person with 'success'. Adherence to violent behaviour, however, was structured and this was dependent upon location, another additional element of the findings that emerged as the research progressed.

By doing so, the above discussions and findings led the research to answering its second objective: *To explore if violence understandings differ within geographical context*. The findings challenged the common view that rurality and the rural idyll is what it seems. It is for some young people who have the economic capability to be mobile through and within the city to rural landscapes. Yet for those young people who are unable to navigate between these spheres, are confined to one location, thus reducing their prospects. As a result, the youth who may turn to violence due to frustrations find that they are unable to be successful in a way that is depicted on their smartphones. Violence as the young people in the rural cohort discussed suggested that this was small scale, petty, and continuously providing comparisons between their context and the city. This is where theoretically the research can extend theory. The research questions of justifying violence and cultural context play a part in extending the theoretical debates. Culturally, there are discussion of what 'youth' is and how this can change within different contexts, alternatively, it also considers location as a cultural context and how this impacts particularly on rural youth. By considering that structure and symbols of youth move between one another and that what it means to be young is informed by youth in a city landscape and these symbols are filtered down to the rural youth. Thus, violence is the same, what rural youth understand violence to be is informed by what happens in the city and is reproduced (to a limited extent) in their communities. What differs is that in a rural context, the community play a part in how violence can be justified and produced in amongst the neighbourhood.

The research then has made three principal contributions to knowledge. First, the findings contribute to knowledge within the social contexts of violence and how this is understood through young people's voices- the why and need of violence, and what impels them to understand it the way they do. To do this, the research provided a voice to young people, to speak freely about the topic of violence without having a pre-defined term. Secondly, the findings contribute to understanding the utility of traditional theory alongside extending the use of it by combining aspects from structural and symbolic explanations. The research was able to highlight the structural differences each location had whilst also acknowledging that violence is used and therefore can be understood differently due to these differences. Third, the findings contributed to the development of an adapted theory called POT (Prospects of Opportunity Theory). By doing so it acknowledges that structure is fixed within urban and rural settings and the concept of youth a flexible concept can get a lot of its nature from youth in city spheres.

The findings and overall analysis also add to the literature of youth violence and help to develop important insights into rural youth in Britain and how violence is understood within these contexts. Furthermore, this overall general contribution to the literature can also be broken down further into two areas, firstly generally on how young people may understand violence and the concepts which they attribute with their understanding and secondly, how youth voice is important methodologically and empirically important by further highlighting youth voice on issues pertinent to them. Understanding youth and the complex yet fluid nature it can inherit breaks apart homogeneity of youth and that in order to understand youth and violence, we must look locally at areas, places and locations to provide a robust account of how these issues are not only understood but how it can affect them.

In addition to the empirical and theoretical contributions described above, the thesis has also made some methodological contributions. Using innovative methods on what is a significant and sensitive topic can be used to provide voices to young people who may otherwise be ignored- mind mapping and vignettes.

By doing so, it was not used to generalise or make claims about the entire youth population but rather to listen to those involved within those specific locations. Importantly, the research demonstrates that young people want to talk, and want to be heard on these important topics. Nonetheless, there were some limitations of the research that are considered below after briefly discussing what we now know on youth violence.

So, what do we now know on youth perspectives on violence?

Bearing in mind the above considerations that have been explored and discussed previously within this final chapter, it is good to look back on the research and summarise what is *now* known about young people's perspectives on violence. This final section will reiterate the importance of the research and suggest how this research can be carried forward into future endeavours.

This research began as an exploration into youth violence, given the context in which this research was taking place, with knife crime and youth violence arguably on the rise it was a timely research project. A lot of the time violence among young people was considered by the media, politicians and wider government as a 'disease' that needed to be 'cured', yet this research never intended to find a cure to the problem labelled violence. Rather, it sought to reinstate the importance of youth voice on a prominent issue that many young people routinely experience or witness. Violence is an issue that is discussed by adults, sometimes without the input from young people themselves. What is a 'problem' faced by young people has become an adult concern, rightly so, but to better understand 'violence' and more so youth violence, we need to first know how to understand a young person's perspectives, definitions, clarification and contextualisation of the term. This research has considered such intricacies by letting the young people speak freely about an issue they rarely get asked about, yet have so much to say.

This research, although small in scale, has provided young people in two different locations in Britain the opportunity to articulate their meanings and experiences of violence. As a result, we know that young people:
1. Are willing and capable to break down a complex topic.
2. Can explore why they understand violence in a particular way.
3. Can identify how the media has impacted or in some instances, influenced their understanding of violence regarding race, gender and acceptability.
4. Young people have explored one another's opinion and done so in a way that was mature and perspectives taken on board.

5. This research has highlighted how rural youth view violence, and how it affects them and what influences their understanding of it.

6. Location, space and place has become a prominent theme, that showcases violence needs to be understood (and thus tackled) based on location rather than a one size fits all approach.

7. Finally, structures in society can accelerate a young person to become involved with violence. It would be important to hear these voices going forward in research, policy and practice with particular consideration of how county lines may be changing the landscape of rural youth illegitimate opportunities.

Limitations

The study by its very nature is small scale and limited to two locations. This was mainly due to access and difficulty inherent in recruitment. The first hurdle of the research was getting gatekeepers to be on board with the research. The word 'violence' seemed to worry a lot of the agencies and institutions contacted and therefore my initial pool of potential participants began to diminish. As a result, some key cohorts were noticeably absent from the research, especially young people who were heavily involved in using violence as a way of life. An interesting and further study would attempt to sample much wider, thus drawing on various locations across the United Kingdom therefore being able to build a comparative perspective of youth violence and its understandings as experienced and perceived by a wider range of young people in more diverse contexts.

The researcher was wholly reliant on the gatekeeper to secure access throughout the study. This would have led to the inclusion and exclusion of particular groups and potential participants. The impact of gatekeepers on selection is well documented in chapter four of the thesis but as participants had onus over the conversations, strategies such as this were used to overcome any bias this could potentially cause.

The data was generated purely through qualitative methods garnering youth voice. As the cohorts and methodology adopted in this study could raise concerns about reliability and generalisability.

However, the argument for authenticity was argued for. Although the research findings include the concepts and quotes provided can contribute to wider population, this was not the intention of the study, and no attempt has been made to claim generalisability. Rather the study aimed to provide explanations about violence which was rooted within individual and contextual explanations. As a result, the concepts and theoretical contributions that have come from this study has been able to add to knowledge.

Implications of the findings for policy.

This thesis intended to add to existing knowledge about violence among young people by prefacing the voices of young people. Understanding the relationship between young people's perceptions of violence and the contexts in which they understand this provides insight into both the justifications and possible misunderstandings about what violence is. In highlighting young people's understandings and perceptions against a backdrop of their cultural and structural factors, this thesis argues for an understanding of violence and young people that goes beyond a focus on the most extreme cases to a more nuanced a holistic comprehension of how young people's identities, understandings and proclivities are shaped. In attending to these matters may improve young people's sense of worth and be open to discussing 'sensitive' topics with teachers, family and friends, being open to perspectives can provide depth and change to individuals. The overall argument this thesis wants to make and what would be pushed for in policy has been partly inspired by the words of theologian Robert McAfee Brown (2012: 108) he was a firm believer that you should speak on behalf of those you are unable to stating that:

1) *"Where you stand will determine what you will see;*
2) *Whom you stand with will determine what you hear; and*
3) *What you see and hear will determine what you say and how you act."*

As result, this thesis has several items for consideration which have been highlighted within the findings of the thesis, and these are discussed below.

Items for consideration

A central finding from the thesis is that more work needs to be done to ensure young people understand what violence is in its multitude of forms. In particular, considering the various facets of violence. These various forms are; gender, race, physical, emotional, socio-economic, and to

consider how these are understood by young people. Furthermore, the findings show encouraging promise that young people want to talk and explore issues pertinent to them. Thus, greater societal attention should be given to young people's daily experiences of violence, from the trivial to the significant.

Furthermore, acknowledgement of youth as a transitional phase has been shown within the research and has encouraged a holistic approach to young people. The intergenerational difficulties can exacerbate a problem, rather what is needed is to adapt Thompsons (1997) PCS model and apply the same thought process to understanding the reasons of violence, rather than negatively labelling children and young people, that can arguably take away their innocence. By providing young people with the option to voice their opinions and perspectives on violence they discussed how they view authority and in particular the police. The findings indicate that young people have an inherent lack of trust, and it has highlighted that young people would appreciate having more visible presence and community-based projects, that can integrate young people and police officers.

A further consideration has come from reflections of the institutions and where the study was conducted and concerns the design of the schools. It is important to design schools and colleges as welcoming and an encouraging environment. To ensure that they do not resemble offending institutions but encourage participation in education. Lastly, the initiatives that aim to tackle poverty, lack of activities and marginality amongst the clear inequality that still exists in Britain today need to be much more comprehensive and may need to take a localised approach. The SCYJ (2018) are pushing for a public health approach. The public health approach has been used to tackle a variety of issues. The factors that contribute to violent responses are rooted within social, economic, political and cultural condition, therefore a comprehensive approach should aim to address these (London CF 2018:17).

Some of these considerations will be discussed further below with regards to how this research will be taken forward.

Taking 'understandings of violence' research forward.

The contemporary aspect of youth violence makes this research timely, and; *"More worthwhile to the extent that [the research] relates to matters that are high on the agenda of current concerns"* (Denscombe 2002:47). From the literature and information available about violence among young people it has become clear that definitions of violence need to be presented more widely among

children and young people in schools and colleges across Britain. The study has also highlighted some primary issues that would benefit from further research, that has been highlighted by the above limitations, and these will be addressed by the researcher in future investigations. Most importantly, the issue of how different young people understand and interpret violence and how critical it is to understand this in relation to location. By understanding violence from local perspectives, it would better assist local councils and police to better understand, prevent, educate and thus 'control' any problems.

In addition to the existing qualitative research, the concepts and main findings which have been derived from the data could be tested using a wider sample, and other methodologies. Previously ground-breaking work such as Andersons (1999) street codes had been subjected to quantitative analysis. Therefore, this study could undergo the same expansion. A quantitative study could be developed to accompany a bigger qualitative study. Utilising the same methods as in this study would be able to test existing assumptions qualitatively, whilst a survey questionnaire could be sent to schools from primary through to college, and this could be used to gather larger amounts of data on violence. This may involve analysis of the Crime Survey for England and Wales for example.

Lastly, it would be especially useful to conduct research with professionals, teachers, police, youth workers, and others who work with young people generally. Although the approaches above focus on the main findings of the research and would be able to cover existing cohorts, there is significant scope here to extend this research to explore more specific findings in relation to violence. The gatekeepers whom granted access, took interest in this research and informal conversations about it revealed significant depths of knowledge about violence regarding young people, just through their everyday experiences, which at present is under-utilised.

Indeed, whilst qualitative research is generally well received, it is the large-scale quantitative research that continues to be the benchmark of policy makers and practitioners. However, given the original contributions of the thesis makes to further understanding youth violence in rural and urban areas, it is essential that it reaches a wider audience.

Reflection and Final words

I have had many reflections upon this journey, it is one I will never forget. This project has affected me in a variety of ways, firstly as a researcher, it has taught me that you cannot control everything in your research and more importantly, being consistent and clear with participants will provide you with great responses. As an individual this process has taught me how to listen, understand and empathise with young people from all areas and backgrounds, but more importantly approach others with an openness that makes them feel comfortable. Although it can be said there were some challenges throughout this journey it was overall a very positive and stimulating experience, and important lessons were learnt. Not least among these was that recruiting and engaging with young people can be difficult, but it is not impossible. This project was in many ways an uplifting project to work on. Some of the places that were visited over the course of the research were different from what was expected and accordingly, the young people who took part surprised me with their willingness, enthusiasm and overall support with the research, they were a pleasure to work with.

This thesis at the beginning started off with a quote by C. Wright Mills (1959). It seems appropriate to return to this here. Mills discusses that '*many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles but must be understood in terms of public issues'* I feel as though, in doing this work, this research has taught me a lot about providing a voice to those who otherwise may be ignored, and that young people can express how and why violence happens or how they understand it and are well aware of what informs this understanding.   Mills also states that, the life of the individual and the making of societies occur; and within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time'. These young people not only volunteered to be part of my research, but they have helped change how others view and understand violence, and it helps to shed light on these idiosyncrasies that are very apparent within the locations of the research. More importantly, it has taught me as a researcher, that although youth troubles, crime and violence is predominantly located in the city, not to forget the young people living in rural areas of the UK can experience some similar issues, albeit in different contexts, but that their voices should not be ignored.

The young people who took part in this study, have made this study what it is. For that I thank you.

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