

UK YOUTH & MOBILITY

An investigation by Ruby Pseudo Consulting in to the problems and polemics facing British youth in terms of 'travel' and 'territory', with reference to solutions and considerations for an 'urban renaissance' and reclamation of the streets in the UK

Overview:

In October of 2008, an extensive anthropological study¹ for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation was carried out concentrating on the rise of gang culture and the notion of territories within that culture. From this research, the extent of the implications this territorial behaviour is having upon British youth became noticeably apparent. This key insight – of British youth and mobility, and of everyday problems and polemics within that - instructs the basis of this study.

Methodology and respondents:

While Kintrea et al focussed their research upon respondents involved in gang culture, [admitting the study had a 'significant concentration on deprivation']; this research focussed upon the lives of 'everyday' young people, those who – as the report explains – are often dissuaded from 'travelling beyond their own areas'. 26 young people between the ages of eleven and seventeen years old were interviewed directly ['key respondents' hereafter] by Ruby Pseudo Consulting [RPC hereafter], and a further 44 teenagers [altogether cited as 'the total' hereafter] filled out an extensive online survey. Each key respondent filled out the same survey and wrote a summation 'testimonial', whereby they reiterated the interviews in their own words. The age range indicates a cross section that covers those that still display a fair amount of deference to their parent's wishes and fears, some now entering the nascent stages of adulthood and those with a limited yet significant amount of autonomy over their leisure time and mobility. The average age of our key respondents and further online sample was 15.3 years, with a cap on respondents over the age of 17 [since driving is then a possibility]. Together, the respondents represent a range of life-stages, backgrounds and diversity.

¹ Keith Kintrea, Jon Bannister, Jon Pickering, Maggie Reid, Naofumi Suzuki, 'Young People and territory in British cities', October 2008

Wider impact and implications in the ascendant:

As the Rowntree research shows, the rise of gang culture and territories within the UK has naturally impacted upon the lives of others, meaning that kids are now having to navigate their way around their area more than ever before. A recent broadcast about London buses, for instance, spoke about how kids have to know which bus stops they can and can't use safely across the capital,² yet as this new research shows, this only scratches the surface of what kids are genuinely having to consider before, during and after transit.

The need for an 'urban renaissance':

As the Rowntree report further explains, there appears a necessity for an '*urban renaissance*' of sorts, a reclamation of the streets, whereby kids can safely travel across their towns and cities without fear. We live in a world where kids are making important decisions based upon postcodes, assumptions, paranoia and myths. As the Rowntree report also qualifies – constrained mobility has meant that children face problems 'accessing amenities relating to their location' and are even forgoing university places and employment opportunities in favour of areas they feel safer within and can cope with on a better level. The limits gang related territorial behaviour places upon young peoples lives and how to tackle these problems form the basis of this subsequent research and work.

Research direction:

Within our work, emphasis was not only placed upon the complications this market faces, but also around their ideas for solutions to these problems. Examining a problem from an adult point of view is all well and good, but trying to fix these problems without consulting those directly impacted upon, makes little to no sense.

As Kintrea et al show:

'A key object of area based regeneration is to create a greater sense of place and a greater sense of ownership and control by local residents'

By examining how the youth can play a part in the above, this research helps inform what they believe can truly be done to make a difference and how they will approach creating a lasting change, beyond ownership.

² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Buses_route_29].

Assumptions:

There are assumptions one can safely make around mobility and the young teen; 'time of day is a factor in terms of safety', 'boys have more difficulty than girls', 'schools can be catalysts for rivalry' etc., and indeed – this research examines all of the above. Yet the more interesting insights, the ones this study unravels and regards in added detail, are the smaller nuances, the pertinent points we – as adults – should never presume, nor pretend to know. In essence, these nuances inevitably seem hidden to us too, often because they themselves involve an essence of 'hiding' or 'invisibility' at their core. Whether it's the averting of a gaze, the change of route or simply 'blending in' and at times creating an artificial sense of belonging; all of these elements of personal safety involve a concentrate of 'concealment'. This research shows that – increasingly - British teens have had to find and fathom new ways to navigate their cities as safely as possible. These are often maverick and highly post-modern ways, involving arguments we rarely, if ever, had to face in our own childhood. This notion of invisibility, and indeed – the naturalness and resignation with which our youth carry out this invisibility is observed in full in the chapter 'Coping Mechanisms: Exercises in Youth Culture'.

Yet how genuine and widespread are the problems we will be reviewing here? Are these assumptions and cultural complaints the product of media hype and paranoid adults, or have we legitimately found ourselves at a point where, as a country, something needs to be done to arrest any repercussions on tomorrow and the safety of young people today?

'Its like, why should we feel that we have to walk on the other side of the road or somewhere else just to avoid a bunch of kids who don't know any better... why should everyone be locked in their own area because they're scared?' **Amber, 15, Birmingham**

'Lots of people have been jumped, raped and robbed there and it generally isn't a safe place, also, there are many gangs which hang around this area and drug dealers which can be very intimidating and I feel vulnerable, especially if I am alone' **Lucinda, 15, Bagshot**

'Out of all the generations that get persecuted the most in London, the youth are the most harmed'
Matt, 15, West London, [W14]

All of our 26 key respondents all of whom, without exception, had anecdotes and stories to tell around their own lives and those of their friends, from Dan, telling us:

'...Some of my friends couldn't even go to a supermarket to help their mum carry the weekly shopping back home, because they would have to pass through a rival gang [area]' **Dan, 17, Croydon [the only ex-gang member of the research, now reformed]**.

To Ella quoting the story about:

'A boy who went to a school near me, was known for being a loudmouthed, 'larey' boy, and to cut a long story short, one day mouthed off to the wrong boy who turned around and stabbed [him] in the neck quite a few times and he died...' **Ella, 16, Ilford**

It happens that the youth really are dealing with these types of concerns on a regular basis. Whilst mythologies contribute significantly to their self-confessed 'paranoia' [which is examined next in 'Gender differences'], there is also the reality that what we read about in the media does indeed 'touch', affect and infect them and their friends' lives.

Gender differences; the young male:

'I think girls face different dangers to boys. They're not gonna get beaten up by other boys and I think are less likely to get beaten up if they do get mugged, whereas I think a boy will get beaten up for 'the fun of it' I dunno' **Marcus, 17 yrs old, West Yorkshire**

Historically we are accustomed to rivalry between male groups, from the Teddy Boys and Greasers of the Fifties, to the Skins and 'Seudeheads' of the 70s. All have been canonised in culture and examined from a removed, retrospective and often highly self referential and romantic viewpoint. But this paper resolutely looks beyond gang culture, and indeed, teenage subcultures of any kind, focussing instead upon the 'everyday kid', only to find the problem still exists.

As research from the British Crime Statistics report³ [2008/2009] proves, men (4.4%) were twice as likely as women (2.1%) to have experienced violence in the year prior to interview. The risk for men aged 16 to 24 was highest at 13.2 per cent. It is not a presumption providing these remarks, but cold hard facts. Males genuinely are in a more precarious position, females far less so.

'Boys aren't as scared as girls... but they're more likely to be hurt by other groups of boys... and boys, boys just seem more vulnerable' **Jenni, 15, Birmingham, [street interview]**

³ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/bcs1.html>

Perhaps scientifically, we can try to understand the teenage drive behind aggressive and machismo behaviour from a young males chemical make up. The imbalance and levelling of teenage male hormones all purport to a complex, testosterone fuelled disposition at certain stages during adolescence.

‘It’s like at 16 and 17 you’re trying to work out who’s better than you, how you’re growing up, how your hormones are reacting, what kind of person you’re going to be, [boys are] trying to work out their reputation, making themselves bigger and better than other people, I think it’s a hormonal, macho thing...’ **Jake, 15, Gloucester/Cheltenham**

Marcus, in the opening quote, sees aggressive behaviour as something young males do ‘for the fun of it’, whilst Jake’s thoughts centre around the validation that in reality, aggressive and threatening behaviour is part of growing up and a way of constructing your adult sense of self.

A rather flippant but loaded explanation from Muj explains the gender differences from his point of view:

‘It is mostly men who are starting the fighting and sometimes women do as well. But for the women it is mostly just hair pulling and slapping across the face, but for the men it is all the weapons and killings and stuff like that’ **Muj, 13, Forest Hill**

Matt, 15, from West London agrees ‘For girls, violence is less of an issue because it’s more “bitchy” and “nasty”. Girls, interestingly, are fully aware that their male friends are far more at risk than themselves:

‘I think it’s a lot easier for girls because there is less pressure for us to be involved in crime and more for us to do girls can go shopping, or just stay at each others houses, whereas boys are more hyperactive and don’t have as many places to go, so they cause trouble’ **Tara, 14, Chingford**

From Chloe, a fourteen year old in Aberdeen, we heard: ‘I think boys are normally the ones that get picked on as an easy target’, seeing - as many others do - sexual harassment as a far larger problem for girls, something this document moves to examine later.

Across the research, while ‘packs’ of people tend to pacify and protect the female, there is the nuance that bigger ‘packs’ of boys can sometimes seem to only aggravate the situation. Groups of boys can pose themselves as a provocation of sorts; a call to action for the modern male, reminiscent of the yob culture⁴ chant of

⁴ ‘Frances Gilbert, ‘Yob Culture; The Truth About Britain’s Yob Culture’, Portrait, 2006

'come and 'ave a go if you think you're hard enough'. There seems to be a balancing act between having enough people around you to feel safe and having so many as to, perhaps unwittingly, draw attention to yourself.

'A group of boys is probably a perfect target for a bit of fun for these groups of people [that start fights] but a boy on his own is less likely to get in trouble' **Kate, 16, Midhurst**

However, Seb a 16 year old living in West London, opens his testimonial with the insight: 'Generally I find that I feel far more safe when I am travelling alone' yet many of the respondents consistently aimed to cloak themselves in the comfort of others:

'... We seem more confident walking down the streets and we go in bigger groups so we seem less vulnerable, although I might still get trouble every now and then when I'm on my own...' **Adrian, 15, Newham**

In 1971, evolutionary biologist W.D Hamilton wrote 'Geometry for the Selfish Herd'⁵, within which he asserts that 'each individual group member reduces the danger to itself', and later, in 1991, social psychologist Carol Tavris wrote upon the idea that 'in groups, we shrink from loner's heroics'⁶. From 15-year-old Jake, neither an evolutionary biologist nor a social psychologist, we hear the extended view:

'I don't usually [take a longer route] because I'm with friends or in groups of more than two or three, but what we try and do is keep in groups because it's self security, if you have more people near you you're more likely not to get bothered, if there's two of you, you'll get abused, but if there's more than four of you, you're okay, I don't think girls are as affected as boys, I think it's an argument of the man, the argument of the younger man, girls have reached maturity a bit more, but the chavs have got... at 16 and 17... they think they're bigger and better than everyone else, but the girls, I hang around with some girls as well, I've never heard of them getting abuse around the area, they try and tend to stay out of trouble.' **Jake, 15, Gloucester/Cheltenham**

There appears to be, to some extent, an occupational hazard in being a young male. On one hand you wish to protect yourself and those around you, and on the other – by being part of a group – you place yourself in wider danger. This essence of 'space' and danger is also observed further in later chapters.

Gender differences; the young female:

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._D._Hamilton

⁶ http://articles.latimes.com/1991-03-22/local/me-433_1

'Although most people would associate boys with physical violence, I believe that some girls are equally as bad, if not worse when it comes to this. I think boys are normally the ones who get picked on as an easy target but girls get into more danger when it comes to sexual harassment.' **Chloe, 14, Aberdeen**

Whilst Muj may lead us to believe that women have little to alarm themselves with save for 'slapping' and 'hair pulling', our studies revealed a far different scenario, where men – and boys – sit at the core of their concern, as Chloe suggests above.

The term 'physical violence' for our female key respondents, is often reduced to denote 'sexual harassment', including factors such as 'rape' 'paedophilia' and more. Just as girls understand the problems facing boys, so too do the boys understand [for the most part] the troubles facing girls:

'I think there are still plenty of dangers for girls, although they are less likely to get beaten up or stabbed, they are just as likely to get mugged, by other girls on occasions, or even men and boys. There is also the obvious unwanted sexual attention from older men that most girls would find quite scary, as they might feel quite helpless' **Jack, 15, Newham**

Mike, 17 from Epsom, agrees:

'I agree that there are differences in the safety of boys and girls when going out, especially at night, as girls may present more of a target to older men looking to confront them, whether this is because of the clothes they choose to wear or jewellery or any other factors' **Mike, 17, Epsom**

In their own words, girls talk about 'peeping toms', 'pervy men', and 'disgusting men' language smacking of parental advice, urban myths and the classroom.

Threats tend to come in various guises, the drunken older man, the slow moving car, the group of boys their own age. All are perceived as predators and all are concerns:

'It isn't uncommon for larger groups of younger boys to hang around together and often they can shout "boyish" or sleazy remarks' **Maisy, 17, Huddersfield**

'...Men are everywhere and you can't go outside without getting a bib [sic] of a horn or something, even if you're in SCHOOL UNIFORM!!! **Ella, 16, Ilford**

For Ella, a naturally very pretty, young Asian female, the problems are heightened. She regularly has people following her, asking for her name and calling out to her when she walks past. Whilst she claims this is just 'an annoyance', it's interesting to note that she does actually take great pains to avoid these areas, albeit playing it down within the conversation:

'A lot of them are fake and pretend to be "hard" when really all they do is heckle a bit when you walk past, ask for your number, get turned down and then go and cry to their mums. This type of intimidation is more "annoying" than "scary", because you know the area, you probably know a lot of people that live there etc, because of this annoyance I tend to not cut through Clayhall Park, to save those boy's the embarrassment and me the irritation' **Ella, 16, Ilford**

Ella's brazen attitude veils a larger problem here. She formally has to take steps to avoid having these situations in her life. Walking through 'certain bus stops, parks or stations' is something else Ella avoids, because of the boys she refers to as 'little g's' [gangsters] who hang out there. She continues:

'When I'm making a journey I've done loads of times, I know to miss out those places like Broadmead Estate. On the corner, next to the newsagents [where] there's always a good helping of these idiots to pick on an under-aged girl and hope she's over 16. This can be a nuisance because it makes the journey longer and is on your mind constantly as a girl. However, it's worth it' **Ella, 16, Ilford**

Towards the end of her interview, she sums up the young females predicament well; 'Being a sixteen year old girl, you have to be alert'.

Arguably, 'paedophilia' isn't necessarily a subject young girls were always so aware of, close media attention upon this subject, however, and recent national stories around incidents involving paedophilia have meant that great importance is [rightly] placed around the problem. Tara talks about rape and paedophilia 'mainly being caused by older men' and cites the song 'Dance with the Devil' as a "true" story about a boy raping a girl to better his image within a gang. Much of what the girls discuss – whilst true as precautionary tales and common sense indicators – are also somewhat mythologised, steeped in stereotypes and parental linguistics. The threat of rape is also fairly perceived, which is not to negate or trivialise the seriousness of the matter, nor to say that there is nothing for young females to worry about; but more to highlight that the conversations they are having - which are supposed to inspire their judgement and common sense - are failing to talk to them in real terms. As this report examined earlier, their language includes that of 'peeping toms', 'monsters' and 'hairy old men', slightly childish words for such grave matters and ones that appear out-dated and fairy-tale like. When it comes to rape and paedophilia, there is no enchantment. Underestimating the gravity of the threat is dangerous, and one that appears to need linguistic re-examination.

'I'm not naturally street wise- I have no common sense whatsoever' **Tara, 14, Chingford**

Remarkable too, is the 'brushing aside' of threats other than paedophilia and rape. As we have seen, often the female is under the impression she is less likely to be stabbed or killed; with their main understanding of violence being intrinsically linked with deviant sexual behaviour:

'The fact that I am a girl is a contributing factor as to why I do not get approached by the sort of people who you would expect to cause hassle [sic]' **Freya, 16, Putney**

Indeed, out of all the female respondents, Martine, 15, Birmingham is one of the few to admit she is more scared of girls: 'with girls they could start saying stuff to you and start fights'.

Lucinda, whilst using words like 'peeping tom' etc., is also one of the females with the most anecdotes and experiences to tell. She attends, by her own admission, 'the stab school' [Collingwood College] in Surrey:

'In year 7, a month of being there, a girl got stabbed! And we were like oh my God we're going to die! Our school was on the news – she got stabbed with a pair of scissors! A few years before when my sister was there a 12 year old murdered a 17 year old! So schools have a prejudice against us "the stab school". **Lucinda, 15, Bagshot**

She also talks about a girl that went to her school, who was 'kicked out' after one day and came to find Lucinda and her mates soon after:

'Suddenly we heard them shouting "Oy fatty, tree trunks, curly haired cunt!" ... We were with this bunch of really nice guys. They came over and started slapped [sic] my guy mates for no reason.

They're nice guys, they didn't want to retaliate or anything. One of them got a vodka bottle and smashed him round the face... and did it again, skimmed him face, cut his eyebrow open and knocked my girlfriend's glasses off! 10 minutes later we got a call from this girl that had done it saying "Oh so sorry, I didn't mean to" like crying down the phone'. **Lucinda, 15, Bagshot**

Interestingly, this quote – whilst building our sympathies with Lucinda and her friend, also stokes the insight around the confusion British young people are facing – and dealing with – on an everyday basis. As well - in reality - Lucinda has experienced some incredibly dire circumstances, yet coupled within all of this, is still the belief:

'I reckon there are two completely different fear factors between guys and girls when they're going out. For girls, you're worried you're going to get jumped or someone's going to rape you. For a guy it's more that you might get beaten up for something valuable you've got on you' **Lucinda, 15, Bagshot**

Ella too, nods towards violence outside of rape, but insists it's the larger problem at hand:

'Violence, stabbings, drunken are all worries but are general subjects that aren't as common if you don't draw attention to yourself and keep street-wise' **Ella, 16, Ilford**

As Ella alludes, the girls are more than aware of the part they could naively play in putting themselves in dangerous situations. The 'display' of the female self in terms of what they choose to wear, is something they have to be careful of and consider, as she continues:

'Sometimes you think you wanna dress nicely. You have got to make that sacrifice as a girl and you've got to be wise with what you wear. What makes me sad is when you see girls that are drunk and they're lying across [the floor] and they've got to get home from London. So what has that done? That's opened all of the doors! Absolutely all the doors' **Ella, 16, Ilford**

Whilst we may presume Lucinda's precautions come from her own experiences, her common sense is still relatively informed by her mother:

'My mum is aware of what I wear when I go out cause I've got 3 older sisters. They've all come back with their awful stories. So mum's always like "Lucinda, you're not wearing that, you're showing too much flesh!" Not that I dress like a slut or anything! I guess I'm thankful for it' **Lucinda, 15, Bagshot**

Tara places the blame firmly at the door of any female who 'asks for trouble' through that which she decides to wear:

'I know every girl gets heckled, but if you're wearing something like really revealing... then don't be surprised if someone tried to touch you up. You're asking for it' **Tara, 14, Chingford**

And conduct, along with 'costume', gets the same reception from Ella:-

'As a young girl it's about being wise and not expecting there to be no danger when you go to a pimps and hoes party in Walthamstow, get smashed and go stumbling into the streets screaming, because you are making yourself vulnerable, which is what you don't want to do' **Ella, 16, Ilford**

In a world where the high street has given females every opportunity to look older than their years - for a pocket-money price – it is more urgent than ever to modernise their thinking around safety.

Consistencies and discrepancies; school rivalry:

'One time this other school, King James', had a day off, but we were at school – this was when I was in year 10, or 11. I forget – anyway. Everyone was like 'oh King James' lot are coming down at lunch and they're gonna beat up some kid.' and everyone just ignored them cos we were all like "yeah, sure.

You're an idiot." Etc., etc., but then they did come down at lunchtime' **Marcus, 17 yrs old, West**

Yorkshire

'Some of the not so good people in my school can pick fights with people from rival schools or gangs and have been in a lot of trouble for doing so...I think they do it just to act cool' **Chloe, 14, Aberdeen**

Whilst there seems to be a sense of disparity across the gender divide, there were inevitably themes that reoccurred regardless of sex and location. Of course, within the parameters of these themes we found - at times distinct - at other times low level variations, in the intensity and severity of young peoples concerns governed by the type of urban setting in which they live. As an example, we can take school rivalry. Rivalries between schools were consistently flagged as a cause for young people to worry when trying to get around their area and indeed, impacted upon the simple necessity of getting home. From an aesthetic view, this is perhaps unsurprising; we have clothed our children in such a way that they are naturally differentiating themselves, and indeed – ones own – from each other. What we, as adults, may see as a badge of honour and allegiance to a scholastic establishment can be – at a street level – a rather conspicuous display of difference.

'The problems are normally about territory, and occasionally race. A lot of high schools have a sort of rivalry for no particular reason; it's just about being the best, really.' **Tara, 14, Chingford**

However, whilst in rural and provincial settings the nature of the threat almost universally took on the shape of 'taunts' and at worst the potential of mild violence; in many inner city regions the violence was far starker.

'There are also all of the rivals with the different postcodes and schools, which also lead to killings.'
Muj, 13, Forest Hill

In their interview, Kylisha and Muj both saw school rivalry as a very real problem when trying to get around, particularly when in uniform. From Kylisha we heard about kids from a rival school who were '...outside our school trying to kill us with like knives". One anecdote, later confirmed by a local youth worker, involved an altercation around a mobile phone, whereby a boy at their school was stabbed [by a boy from a rival school] for not handing the phone over. At a time of year when the broadsheets are revelling in the country's league tables and the like, it seems somewhat fitting to remember what is genuinely happening outside of the school gates and what kind of problems these comparisons can propagate and push.

Consistencies and discrepancies: postcode wars

"Gangs of teenagers should stop disturbing the streets and should stop starting trouble because of the school you come from and the postcode like se1 versus se24 and where you live in and what you

look like or is you are smart or not and what colour you are and what religion you are from and what area you hang around in' **Kylisha, 13, SE1**

In recent years the UK media has focussed much of its attention on the spectre of "postcode wars". Each tragic tale is consistently punctuated with postcodes and gang talk, also revealed within the Rowntree report. Yet whilst gang members may choose to 'articulate' themselves through this insignia, or "being representative of your borough" as Dan puts it, more and more it is something the average British youth has to comprehend, avoid and often hide, everyday:

'Many feel they cant go to certain areas because of where they live. And that's all to do with stupid postcodes. They think that there's is better or harder or what ever which means all the others are against each other' **Amber, 15, Birmingham**

From this comes the necessity to 'veil' the area you're from, whilst Jack from Newham admits it's a problem, he tends to cope by concealment, coupling his anonymity with common sense:

'Postcodes may be a big issue for some, for example whenever I have been confronted by another group they have always asked where I was from what area and postcode, and it is wise to tell them you are from the local area, because strangely it annoys them if you are a visitor to wherever it is they like to hang around' **Jack, 15, Newham**

For others, like Matt and Seb from West London [W14 and W10], it's simpler to just avoid the areas:

"The worst "battle" to be involved in is the postcode wars, which essentially come down to which side or part of London you come from. So, as a precautionary act, if you know you are going somewhere where you know you're at risk of being in danger because of where you live, it is best to just take essentials and try and find a way around the dangerous bits' **Matt, 15, W14**

'I don't see why I should get beaten up because my parents bought a house somewhere...it's like a new game to them' **Seb, 16, W10**

Whilst area pride and rivalry has existed for many decades, this more nefarious variation of it seems to have taken root in the last five to ten years, as the interview with Muj and Kylisha confirmed:

"It's never ever gonna stop. It's got over the top now in the last couple of years people are dying more'... **Kylisha, 13, SE1**

Young people in East, South and West London all spoke of feeling most at risk when they weren't in their immediate "ends" but in bordering and surrounding

neighbourhoods. This is a fear that doesn't occur when they are in a completely different part of London; it is more of a "periphery of danger" problem and a very real consideration when young people are planning and executing journey routes in London. As Southwark based youth worker Jenny Hinds explained, some young people she worked with would point blank refuse to travel through or visit certain areas of their borough purely as a result of where they live. A visit she planned [to go to a local cinema] was simply not local enough; 'no one signed up'.

Avoiding areas is also very common away from the larger cities but they are mainly isolated estates and not the large swathes of areas and districts that were affectively taken off the map in the eyes of local young people, which this paper examines next.

Area elimination: taking places off the map:

Compounded by postcode problems and school rivalry, there are other dynamics creating consternation with British youth. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the very presence of litter caused our respondents to avoid certain areas; to them it suggests to import that the area was 'unkempt' or 'uncared for', or indeed, simply unvisited by the type of people that would care about it's presence and in turn, it's removal.

'The bus stop at Waddon... they've damaged the area, they've littered a lot, it has serious litter problems, some of the places have, criminal damage where they've smashed windows and broken phone boxes, sometimes when you walk through there's glass on the floor where people have just thrown glass bottles on the floor' **Jake, 15, Gloucester/Cheltenham**

More worryingly, whole civic areas – often ones that local councils purport to be 'community areas' were written off:

'There are certain parks I which I tend to avoid as I know that drug dealers and kids in large gangs hang out there' **Lucinda, 15, Bagshot**

Public parks, even duck ponds, were all cited across the findings. We hear of Clayhall Park, Greenhead Park, Huddersfield parks, Surrey parks and Burgess Park. Other civic areas include 'the back of Supermarkets' [Chloe, Aberdeen], Tesco's [Kate, Midhurst]; and places of natural beauty like an old quarry [Melissa, Huddersfield] and often – of estates [various]. Homeless people, as well as groups of kids, or older kids 'doing drugs' were all part of the problem 'tramps come out at night and make all the loud noise' [Muj]. Pubs too, were seen as places to avoid as certain times; with both of the latter examples, it was because the people were seen as 'argumentative and unpredictable' that caused the most concern.

Bus stops and train stations too, were all considered with caution. Jack, for instance, would prefer not to go to Canning Town station, Ella is more vague, 'there are certain bus stops, parks or stations I avoid', including 'outside the newsagent' as somewhere she has to be particularly careful.

The British youth across the country are literally 'removing' areas from their lives, often whole, cultural chunks:

'I always feel a bit nervy in some parts of East London, for instance, Walthamstow, because I've heard lots of stories about people getting mugged and raped there... I always avoid Hackney, Peckham,

Brixton and really anywhere with a bad reputation' **Tara, 14, Chingford**

Of course, there appears an element of folklore in existence here, creating exile of many parts of the UK and – for Tara – much of East and South London – which stopped her going to a Lily Allen gig at the Brixton Academy. The fall of the British park, however, seems of grave importance, since it has moved to intimate drugs, homeless people and dangerous gangs, negating it's original purpose. As 'Dedicated Officer' of West London's Normand Park, Sarah Johnson, explains, her role was to 'make sure Normand Park was used by as many people as possible in the community'⁷. Presence of others, as this report will further show, is of vital importance.

Locality Nuances:

'Hmm. I feel that in our area it is relatively safe to get around, but not easy. I think it's this way for everyone, isn't it? I feel safer in areas I know with good street lighting and on the main road, much like everyone else. I don't feel safe in woods. I was thinking about this today as I walked through a wood.

If I was attacked, I don't know how I would describe where I was. Like, if someone stabbed something, or me I don't know how I'd get help. If they just took my stuff, it would only be a 20 min walk to my house, but if I was bleeding, there aren't any houses. I would probs die' **Marcus, 17 yrs**

old, West Yorkshire

Throughout the research there was an almost universal sense of relative safety by young people when located in and moving around their immediate area. Regardless of city, provincial or rural setting, virtually all made reference to factors such as community, familiarity and a sense of belonging. Transversally all, to a greater or lesser extent, confirmed a certain recalcitrance or unease about their personal safety when moving in or around of civic land beyond their immediate community.

⁷ NDC [free publication], August –October 2009, Pg. 4

As much of this paper has inferred, what we would perceive as 'local areas' are often far more fractured in terms of safety, than we might suppose. In cities and big towns, for instance, the local area [outside of their immediate area] is seen as 'dangerous' whereas in rural England, this area remains 'safe'. Conversely, The further away from their own immediate area that youth travel in larger urbanised areas, the safer they feel [say, shopping in centralized areas of the city, or going to football matches], whereas this is where the danger tends to peak for the rural kid. As figure 1.1 illustrates, breaking our areas down into safety is never as simple as it would seem.



Figure 1.1 Urban Periphery of Danger⁸

Route changing; pre-emptive versus reactive:

Across the research, whilst pre-emptive route planning was common, it failed to represent the norm. It is interesting to note that this form of planning manifested itself most in two quite different groups of young people. A younger, more rural, bracket showed an increased level of subservience to parental wishes and fears. Older kids in areas with higher rates and severity of violence expressed anecdotal fears about personal safety. Increased levels of parental or personal paranoia seem to feed this significant minority's behaviour. Of the total respondents a far more usual means of negotiating a journey was reacting to a perceived danger, say the sight of a large group in a park, and improvising an alternative route.

'My area is quite rough, and so this means that I will always take the long route around to make sure I get home as safely as possible. This route that I end up taking adds roughly another 5 minutes onto

my journey, however, the area I avoid is notorious for violent muggings. Although the long route around is "safer", I still find myself on edge quite a lot, due to the dimly lit streets and the surrounding estates' **Seb, 15, West London**

"[Someone I know was] mugged twice near where we live, now his sister who's my friend, is really affected by it and won't go down certain alleys" **Louise, 17, Norwich**

'Getting around can be a problem because I have lots of areas bordering Mitcham in Croydon, Purley...if there's an alternative I take the alternative.'
Dan, 17, Croydon

In terms of getting mugged versus inconvenience, Tara echoes the view of the majority when stating: 'I value my safety a lot more than my possessions'. Changing route, staying reactive and planning where necessary is so common within the British youth it elicited little to no annoyance across the research, although failure to be able to enjoy their own areas, on the other hand, did. For instance, being told to "fuck off my pitch" when playing football or having to leave a grassy area when other people come along "because its not worth the hassle" [Muj] were cited as far grander annoyances. In short, complications in transit pale into insignificance when compared to the compromising of personal space and interference upon leisure activities.

Levels of violence with relation to location:

According to the research, those living in larger cities seemed to fear violence - both in terms of its probability and severity - to a much greater extent than those in smaller provincial and rural towns. Whilst most living in smaller areas did express worries over violence, further probing seemed to show that it invariably took-on quite an ad-hoc and spurious form. Groups or individuals, for instance, may take umbrage with another's appearance or the way someone might look at them; but their encounters for the most part seem opportunistic and often derived out of boredom, i.e., not bred of some deep-rooted antipathy. If violence does occur it is rarely serious, with a few punches thrown and a good deal of posturing. They also seemed very localised to either a park or area that they frequent or in the [perpetrator's] immediate locality. Young people in these areas also noted that grudges are normally transient and short lived with tensions dissipating reasonably quickly.

'I've never really heard of grudges being held over people' **Louise**

'Some people try and avoid people for a [short] while' **Nate**

'When it happens it's like "oh my God" then dies down fairly quickly' **Louise**

Nate, 14 and Louise, 17, Norwich

If we contrast this with more urbanised areas, then the difference is at times stark. The bordering areas of where violence regularly occurs are often of very similar socio-economic means. Class-driven prejudice, it appears, is rarely the cause of localised disputes, as is often the case with more rural or provincial areas (where it was frequently claimed that “chavs” pick on differences in appearance, accent and how others conduct themselves). The violence in larger urban sprawls is invariably to do with what area, “ends” or postcode you’re from “as we have discussed” and issues with ownership of, and power over, ones “manor”. This means the violence is often more targeted or even ‘sought out’. There is also a far higher proliferation of “tools” such as knives, poles, large dogs and even guns used in street violence than the smaller areas canvassed. Grudges can hold sway, not only over an individual or group, but a school, the wider community and even youth tribes.

‘Sometimes it can make me feel sick with some of the robbery’s going on and with knife crimes and gun crimes’ **Muj, 13, Forest Hill SE23**

“...You can set out not to be involved in the rivalry but you always are...I’ve heard of it [postcode grudges] and I have to admit there have been times when I’ve been in south London and shitting it,, you just have to pray you’re not going to witness it” **Matt, 15, West London, W14**

It was also clear that the will to use extreme violence was far higher in areas of population density. This could stem from the degrees of risk of getting caught. In a more provincial setting violence, or the threat of violence, is often localised to a defined piece of land or hangout; therefore the perpetrators of the violence could be identified and charged far more easily than in bigger cities. It is perhaps this seeming anonymity of the perpetrator that means they feel able to inflict a higher degree of violence upon others and the lack of anonymity that means that others can’t. Perhaps a more plausible reason for this schism in the degrees of violence used could owe more to the kind of blurring of moral codes that poverty and social regression have brought to some areas. Transversally, in more scenic settings, there seems to be an acceptance of what’s going too far with regards to the “appropriate” level of violence; a recognition that seems to be lacking in more deprived urban locale. Although it admittedly seems slightly perverse to say the punishment is more fitting of the crime in less populated areas, the type of violence vetted out seems to be that of the sort that young people have dealt with since the first bona-fide British youth cultures took route in the 1950s. Major crimes are also more likely to be reported in these smaller areas as there is a higher chance of the offenders

being apprehended. In the more “dangerous” areas there often seems to be an ingrained habit of not reporting serious violence because of the fear of reprisals. This kind of thinking manifested itself when Dan told of how a neighbour had a knife dropped in their front garden, which in turn led to a conflicted mindset about what to do; hand it in to the police, take it inside or perhaps leave it in the garden in the hope they may come back for it. Kylisha adds to this by telling of the multiple occasions on which she has tried to walk her dog and has turned back up the stairwell at the bottom of her block because of people from another postcode who were ‘just waiting for someone to come out so that they can beat that person up’.

Stereotyping and prejudice:

Virtually all the key respondents made a big play for the fact that they rejected wholesale the intolerance and pigeonholing of others. They believed that this small-minded prejudice fuelled conflict, violence and unease when in transit. This, as already mentioned, was particularly felt by those living in rural and provincial areas where young people divide themselves more along the lines of youth cultures [defined by music, leisure pursuits and sartorial code;] as opposed to postcode and “ends”. However, nearly all displayed at one time or another, some breath-taking examples of prejudice and intolerance.

“[We have a friend who] gets shit all the time...He’s got a big Mohawk so he’s kinda asking for it”,

Louise, 17, Norwich

‘[My area is] safe. Yeah, no chavs, pretty middle class you know’ **Freya 16, Putney**

‘Generally I feel my area of Highburton is very safe as it has no rough housing estate like the likes of Newsome with Lowerhouses council estate known for most residents having ASBO’s.’ **Melissa, 17,**

Huddersfield

Clearly this has its roots within being cautious, not wanting to risk any trouble and a fair amount of anecdotal evidence about “them” doing this or that to their friend or “someone I know”. However, it does serve as an illustration of how deep-rooted class prejudice, in particular, is and to what extent this informs their judgement as to where and when it’s safe to travel.

Coping mechanisms; exercises in youth culture:

‘When I go to London with friends, I make sure that I don’t take valuables and that I keep my money close and on my person. I also feel that my clothing choice reflects on whether I am a target or not as I have quite a smart dress sense, some people assume that I have a lot of money and valuables on

me and this could encourage people to approach me in order to steal my valuables. Subsequently, I do make a conscious effort to not openly advertise that I have my phone on me and tend to stay in a large group as not to appear as if I am alone and an easy target' **Mike, 17 Epsom**

At the beginning of this paper, we referenced 'maverick and highly post-modern ways' with which today's youth are protecting themselves and their possessions. In this next section, we look at these aspects in more detail, from how they avoid the gaze of gangs, to how they position themselves upon buses. Even the possessions they so astringently hide are often their most valued devices with which to feel safer.

'I feel unsafe/uncomfortable when it is night-time, when I'm alone, and when I do not have something to distract myself with, such as listening to an iPod, or talking on the phone. Those somehow give [me] a false sense of security. But at 11 or 12 at night, I don't really have anyone I'm calling, and there is no way I'm going to do that "pretend to be talking on the phone, but really be talking to no one" stuff. So I usually just listen to my iPod, which I know isn't a great idea because if someone would be sneaking around me, I wouldn't hear them, but I do it anyway,' **Simon, [Street Interview]**

Simon explains a paradox of distraction facing youth on an everyday basis. Seven of the key respondents explained that they either used their phone to convey safety [in appearing to talk to someone] or their iPod to distract them. In each instance, the youth is – as they are aware – putting themselves at risk, but – as Mike's opening quote concedes - it is a trade off they have to consider.

'If I am ever anywhere I feel vulnerable I tend to take out my mobile and phone my friends for A) a distraction to stop me feeling uncomfortable and B) if something was to happen to me they would know' **Melissa, 17, Huddersfield**

On buses, Melissa – like many other kids – 'tends to put [her] bag on the seat [next to her] and listens to her iPod to 'avoid any 'strange old drunkards' or 'chavs' coming to sit next to me...' explaining that listening to her iPod distracts her from her surroundings. In brief, this distraction helps the youth seem somewhat invisible, which we have touched upon before. Their distraction guises come in various shapes and forms, from creating ways in which to appear 'occupied' and less of a mark [Kate] to where they place themselves on the bus [Dan].

'I pretend to text people. A couple of times I'll just call someone to be doing something, so I don't have to make eye contact. I make up an excuse to call someone etc' **Kate, 16, Midhurst**

'There were times when I was younger where if I would see potential trouble makers getting on at a bus stop, I would get up from my seat and move to another one closer to the front. I would do this because I didn't want to draw attention to myself by sitting at the back, I thought the trouble makers

might start asking me questions and I didn't want to engage in conversations with them' **Dan, 17, Croydon**

Seating arrangements on the bus are far more considered and contemplated than one might realise. For instance, Dan naturally sits to the left of the bus:

'I am still always weary as to who will get on the bus and now it is almost a natural reflex for me to sit on the left hand side of a bus, this is so I can see who is getting on at the bus stops' **Dan, 17, Croydon**

This rather calculated example of street sense lends much to the argument; kids have to consider these types of mechanisms for their own safety. Similarly, the time of day affects decisions on where and where not to sit. Whilst Amber, in Birmingham, happily sits upstairs during the day, she explains: 'If I was coming back from town at night, I'd rather sit downstairs'. Martine too, will only sit upstairs in daylight hours, and many kids avoid the buses entirely.

We were on the bus at the top bit at the back – which probably wasn't the best thing to do because it was dark, we should have stayed downstairs. And on school days, the top of the bus is so rowdy! If I go upstairs and there are weird people, there are always weirdos around, like known weirdos from your area, people talking to themselves... you think, I'll go downstairs then. Whatever you've got to do to get yourself out of the situation when you feel uncomfortable, you've got to do it' **Ella, 16, Ilford**

Following our interviews there was a notable lack of any kind of consensus on the time when young people started to feel unsafe. This was the case within and across the various urban settings investigated. Whilst Kylisha feels most wary between 2pm [near the time school finishes] to midnight, Muj talks about 8-10pm at night, whilst Ella sits somewhere in between calling out '9.30 to 10pm' as the time when she is most on guard. For Jake, in the quieter area of Gloucester, 9pm is his benchmark for feeling unsafe; Nate from Norwich says it depends where you are; whilst Mike, in Epsom, Surrey, points out it's dark by 6.30pm in winter. Whilst we could make the presumption that it's always in the evening when they feel most uneasy, it's impossible to ascertain a common ground between all young people as to where this hypothetical, and ultimately self-imposed, curfew time begins. Interestingly, government curfews in so called "areas of dispersion" start at 9pm in London, by which time Muj and Kylisha would both have been wary for a couple of hours at least⁹.

⁹ <http://boom3boom3.net/2009/03/21/london-imposes-defac.html>

This paper has already examined the use of groups to divert danger, and facets around route changing, but on a smaller, more personal level, there is much the British youth are putting in place for protection. Marcus, for instance, thanks Google Maps for their aid. Richard, from Haslemere, 'walks in to a shop' if he feels unsafe, something Ella also recommends. On a perhaps slightly more combative note, Simon tells us:

'If I feel unsafe then I usually put my key in my hand between my fingers in case I have to do anything' **Simon, [Street Interview]**

Samuel, a 15 year old in London, who was recently 'jumped' for his phone, sticks his Oyster card 'down [his] trousers', [street interview], whilst Freya and Maisy are more privileged in being able to get taxis home if necessary.

What they do and don't take out with them is also of great deliberation. Matt, from London, succinctly suggests:

'As well as planning a journey, it's also good to plan what to take with you or contemplate what you actually need rather than what you actually want to bring with you' **Matt, 15, West London, [W14]**

Confirming his common sense with the words: '...it is best to just take essentials'. However, these essentials, as we have stated, are often the very possessions to put the youth in potentially volatile and risky positions. A phone – one of the main assets a teenager is going to get mugged for – is, by all accounts, also imperative to their safety. Without it, they are unable to ring for help, or alert someone to their predicament. It also places barriers between them and their own personal safety. One way around this is to have several phones, something RPC have acknowledged often over the years¹⁰. In Gloucester, Jake tells us:

'I go to camp outs and social gatherings with my friends, find a field that's way from every body but I don't normally take my blackberry or expensive phones, I take a different phone and take that. I had a iPod Nano chromatic and it got stolen whilst I was asleep at a camp out, the phone I take is like a brick, it doesn't have as much sentimental value on it as my normal phone, it's not as expensive, it doesn't have as higher reputation or appeal, people wouldn't bother with the phone, but if they do bother I haven't lost a lot' **Jake, 15, Gloucester/Cheltenham**

Seb told us that he has had his phone taken off him so many times that he now carries an undesirable "brick" [i.e. cumbersome] phone; whilst Jack's phone has

¹⁰ We tend to call this generation 'triple tech teens' both for having multiple phones to play the networks off against each other, and also – because it's simply not safe to take your Blackberry Bold [for instance] along with your everywhere.

depreciated in value at integers of £20 a time to the point where he now “makes do” with his current (‘awful’) phone.

Deciding what possessions leave the house with them is difficult, Lucinda’s next quote is fantastically indicative, [notice what she begins the elimination process with]:

‘I definitely think about what I’m taking out with me – I wouldn’t take expensive make up for a start. I’d take my basics – phone, bag, mascara, foundation – that’s all I’d take with me. I take my iPod when I’m going on the bus or train on my own, ‘cause I wouldn’t want to hear things and start looking at someone that looks intimidating and then [for them] start on me! Ahhhh! So I just put my iPod in and stare down, keep to myself. Especially on a train, where are you going to run?! **Lucinda, 15, Bagshot**

Interestingly, Ella also speaks about make-up, but in their defense - as shallow as it may seem - make-up is a particularly expensive commodity to have to replace [especially within the confines of a teenager’s allowance]. In actual fact, Lucinda contradicts herself later on in the interview, saying she doesn’t use her iPod when out, as confused as this may sound, it is this kind of choice chasm that kids are grappling with all the time:

‘People say you should look like you’re on the phone or something like that. But I feel that if I’m pretending, I’ve got my hand on my ear, looking down, I’m not fully aware of what’s around me. The only time I ever get on the phone is when I go up that alleyway and mum wants to know I’m fine – and I run! If you’re looking down or talking, you’re not paying attention to what’s happening. And I’m the kind of person, I like to be in control of a situation’ **Lucinda, 15, Bagshot**

The dichotomy of decisions is apparent throughout all of the findings; we hear of people taking their valuables with them, but of ‘not flashing them’ at the same time [Lucinda, Freya, Ella and Martine]; of taking only the essentials, but having an emphatically full bag at the end of their purging process. We also heard of ‘knowing how to hold yourself’ and ‘looking confident’; but ‘looking’ confident is exceptionally different to being confident. For the youth, being alert and aware is an on-going reflection:

‘[When you don’t feel safe] you’ve got to evaluate the situation. So you think, okay – who are they? Where am I? Where’s my nearest train station? Where’s my nearest this? What’s the train station like, is there going to be people there? You just evaluate all these things – is there people around me? Can I go into a shop if need be? If it gets really bad, can I knock on a door? Is there a house near? You think of all these things and evaluate the situation’ **Ella, 16, Ilford**

The reduction of their own visibility [and their possessions, as we have discussed] is - in summation - one of their main and most often used mechanisms. Dan shrinks from view by sitting at the front, for instance, putting his back to potential aggressors and perpetrators. Maisy tends to 'just walk past' with her head down, as does Lucinda ['we generally just keep our heads down'] maintaining it's safer to 'keep a low profile'. Mixed with route changing, blending in to groups, and hiding belongings about your person, this is a generation growing somewhat adept at hiding and adaption.

'Sometimes I'll ring someone that I know's got time for me, like a friend who will always be there to chat to and like, any family member. Just ring someone... obviously not if you're in an area where you might get mugged. It depends on the situation, if I was going to get mugged, no way would I get my phone out. But if I thought I was being followed, you adapt what you do depending on who you think your attacker might be' **Tara, 14, Chingford**

Solutions from the respondents in the study:

'I don't think there's an easy solution to any of these problems but I think a lot of the issues stem from young people looking for an identity.' **Tara, 14, Chingford**

'Trying is not futile' **Matt, 15, West London [W14]**

The importance of young people's mobility in contemporary society is without precedent. Within the space of just one or two generations the need for light footedness and dexterity within the spheres of education, employment and wider society have grown exponentially. The means by which young people can now move around, and the travel options available to them have, again, never been greater. It would seem then, in light of our research, that there is a paradox at hand. Young people today have never been better connected [especially if one considers the reach of the Internet] and yet they often find themselves increasingly constricted in their movements and isolated from one another in terms of physicality.

Governments, councils, and non-profit organisations have all, of course, tried to create and maintain their own solutions for much of what has been revealed here, yet the problems are – as we have seen and heard – still very much existent. Often, schools have tried to provide solutions in their own, academic isolation. We heard from Kylisha, for instance, about pseudo-zip pockets her school had had designed in to school skirts. Aesthetically, this zip looked like it was to un-do and do-up the skirt, yet in truth was concealing a hidden pocket for mobile phones etc., Yet this is only a

temporary solution; news travels fast and in teenage lives, 'secrets' like this are rarely secret for long.

Given how this is clearly a large societal issue we cannot, nor would we want to, pretend that there is any silver bullet with which to bring about wholesale and long-term cultural change. The kids are more or less resigned to this themselves:

'I don't think there are any solutions to be honest because I don't think the people that young people are intimidated by will change because that's just how teenagers are these days' **Martine, 15, Birmingham**

In juxtaposition to the solutions provided by the aforementioned legislative and community bodies, sit the youths' own remedies and ideas of improvement. These are an eclectic mix of suggestions that deal with ways to improve "coping" with the threat, "dealing" with the causes and crucially how best to mediate ideas towards them and the pitfalls to avoid. Some ideas that fall into the "coping" category seem to only aggravate the issues of divide and avoidance. We can only concur that this is the case, but would add that the currency of these suggestions are given weight because they are from those who deal with the issues and not those that hypothesise about them.

Current 'Fixes':

The UK's increase in its use of CCTV over the last decade has been vast; provoking lively comment and analysis throughout parliament, the media, law enforcement agencies, civil rights campaigners and within academic circles. To some, they are a necessary deterrent in the prevention and useful tool in the solving of crime. Whilst to others, they are an expensive, inefficient, ineffective and crude interference with our civil liberties. They are clearly not bespoke to the issues this paper deals with, yet young peoples attitudes towards them are telling:

'You can put as many cameras as you want you're only gonna catch them after they've done it.'
Amber, 15, Birmingham

'When you see the CCTV footage on the news, it's black and white and fuzzy. And they [kids] all dress the same anyway. A little man that can't see you, see your face or touch you isn't going to make a difference' **Ella, 16, Ilford**

Clearly the bringing to justice of perpetrators of violence is not an affective form of compensation to a young victim of crime. On the contrary it's the fact they'd have to deal with it in the first place that irks them so much; which in turn sheds light onto

young peoples perception of CCTV as a deterrent. Even when cameras are placed on modes of transport, as their behavioural patterns on buses bears testimony to, they don't seem to put young peoples minds at rest, or as Muj puts it:

"Some buses ain't that safe...people get stabbed wherever" **Muj, 13, Forest Hill**

There is perhaps a misconception that there is a deep antipathy towards the police within younger sections of our society, indeed within our own research the subject of the police drew strong opinions that would seem to corroborate it;

'Police don't even make me feel safe' Matt

'[They] focus on the wrong things' Seb

'Yeah they don't give a shit' Matt

'They haven't got their heads on right' Seb

Seb and Matt, 16 and 15, West London [W10 & w14]

However, what the majority of our respondents felt about the police presence in their area was that they have a 'difficult job' and accepted that there 'wasn't much they could actually do' when a congregation of young people are not technically committing any crime; [save perhaps "loitering with intent" which given it's abstract nature is nearly impossible to prove]. Even in London's dispersion zones, where there is sometimes a curfew of 9pm to those under 16, everyday teenagers seem to think that it's hard to enforce, ultimately just moving the problem somewhere else.

Alongside this it is hardly surprising to find that most young people think reporting crime to the police is either a 'waste of their time' or indeed the polices time. There is also the volatile problem of becoming known as a "snitch" if they do indeed decide to go to the police:

"...The more affiliated you are [with the groups or simply living near them] the less likely you are to call the police". **Dan, 17, Croydon**

Suggestions on how they feel this could be remedied will be dealt with next, in what we position as the 'teen commandments' and for considerations for examining solutions across safety.

Give them tools to talk:

Facilitating discussion between areas, youth sub-cultures and different socio-economic factions were continually highlighted as a possible way in which the causes of troubles and fear could start to be dealt with. "Facilitating discussion" is an

intentionally vague term as the difference in the severity of problems people from one area face, are often in contrast to those of someone from another area or background. What may be a good idea for one place may be wildly inappropriate for another. They may need looking at and tweaking according to audience, location and media platform. However, it was interesting to find, however oblique in actual detail, an acceptance in young people that dialogue is very important in both pre-empting and resolving conflict. (Better) youth centres, sporting events and quasi-educational events held in collaboration between schools were all raised as possible starting points.

An example of a real enterprise that drew many plaudits within our respondents was that of Orange Rock Corps, whereby a gig was put on and the only way that one could obtain a ticket was through four hours community work. This was work undertaken alongside a wide variety of young people from all over the country and encompassing all creeds, races, religions and [crucially] postcodes. This has communal agency; it breaks down social and educational divide, and is a genuinely desirable event [and, importantly, exclusive to those that partake.] Within the Orange Rock Corps imitating, there exists the notion that the brand are also treating them as adults or – more importantly – people that can make a difference. Sadly not a label they are often given.

The Internet wasn't brought up as a means of addressing mobility worries. Face to face interaction was preferable, as mobility and it's associated threats are by nature physical. The Internet does have unrivalled reach but as a stand alone platform for this particular issue it would perhaps add more (literal) distance between those involved and not reduce it.

Encourage organisations to play a larger role:

As stated before, this is a societal problem and it therefore makes sense for companies, particularly those with a vested interest in their youth market, to add their support and indeed implement their own ideas in trying to make young people feel safe. Phone network brand Orange is perhaps the benchmark in this, but other ideas about how companies could help were also put forward. One idea that was suggested by Adrian, from Newham, was Transport for London helping over the phone or online about safe routes to take. Young people themselves in turn could devise this. Phone apps and websites helping with similar concerns could also be developed in a location-to-location basis giving it real colloquial and cultural insight.

There is a legitimate complaint here that this doesn't solve any of the underlying causes addressed in this paper, but these could help young people cope with the current status-quo in their towns and cities, whilst longer term plans could hopefully bring about a more paradigmatic change in safer mobility.

Make things affordable [read, 'cheap']:

Young people in Britain do not have a great deal of disposable income. Employment laws, whilst commendably protecting young people from exploitation in the workplace, mean that only at fifteen can you be formally employed, and even then it's subject to a work permit and limited working hours. During our research, complaints about the cost of leisure pursuits were very common.

'It does get very boring' **Nate**

'I hang out. We literally just walk around, go to the shops and not buying anything...If stuff was cheaper like cinemas and bowling [it would help... when you're young you don't have much money so you end up spending your weekly money on one thing' **Louise**

Nate, 14 and Louise, 17, Norwich

RPC is by no means advocating wholesale amendments to employment law but in reference to the previous section about companies doing their part, responsible pricing and promotions could indeed help.

Facilitate anonymity:

As discussed earlier, the need for anonymity is crucial in young people being in a position whereby they feel comfortable about reporting crime or a perceived threat. The feeling that the police won't or can't pursue a complaint is also common and so no report is made. One idea that seems to address this is the idea of a police "nudge" service whereby young people in an area can anonymously tell the police of specific places that people have been known to be mugged, where drug dealing is happening, or alleys that girls feel threatened walking down or – indeed - any other forms of social disturbance that impact upon a young persons mobility. As the database grows perhaps those areas continually being flagged up can be addressed either with better lighting or more purposeful police patrols etc.,

Give public spaces 'use value':

The reclamation of parks and public spaces is seen as very important. Getting the parks used by as many people as possible, regardless of age, was very popular.

However, strategy to make this happen was quite thin on the ground. We heard how a couple of parks in the borough of Southwark in south London had security and this meant that those who may cause trouble, were kept out. The fact that there was trouble immediately after the security had ended their shifts merely underlines the importance of young people needing to feel safe in these places on a continual basis.

It is also of paramount importance that when an initiative is set up, it is also maintained. Too often basketball courts and the like are provided only to go to waste as public area funding is either cut or vandalism and wear and tear go unfixed. As we have heard, young people then associate the physical state of such areas as indicators of its safety.

'There is not much that can be done to improve the local area in my opinion, because its just the people in the area that make it a bad place. There are plenty of parks and football areas etc for people to use and they neglect them.' **Jack, 15, Newham**

Involve kids in the process:

Youth centres were - at the same time - both desirable and an object of derision within our research. Whilst the potential value of such places wasn't questioned, the current 'crop' of them seemed to be woefully inadequate and out of step with that which young people would genuinely enjoy, want, need or ultimately use. Table tennis consistently cropped up as symbolic of the 'old school' activities that still dominate many 'modern' youth centres. They clearly have an image problem as shown by Tara's comment:

'Table tennis! It's so like put in as the typical youth-club thing. Who's going to come in and go "Ooooh table tennis! Sign me up"? **Tara, 14, Chingford**

It is therefore important that any proposal for trying to improve situations like the ones this report has uncovered is done alongside and not in spite of young people. Again what young people want may vary greatly depending on area, so localised consultation would need to be important.

'...it really means something to young people when you get to know them, when you give them a voice, when you listen to them' **Ella, 16, Ilford**

Giving young people the opportunity, and ultimately the funds, to initiate their own ideas and activities were also suggested. Things like under-age raves and parties by young people for young people got a warm reception. Perhaps this could be done in

collaboration between people from various areas so as to avoid cliques and an insular list of attendees?

Don't appropriate their culture:

The appropriation of a young person's culture rarely, if ever, connects with its target audience. Even when the message is knowing and perhaps rich in intended irony, it usually just embarrasses the young audience. It is also important to note that when a campaign is targeted at a certain youth tribe, young people who are not associated with that style of language, clothing and music will more often than not have a far greater knowledge of the nuances and idiosyncratic details of the sub-culture than any adult. An "indie" kid from Guernsey, for example, can spot an adult appropriating hip-hop culture just as fast as a young rapper from Bow. In short it fools no one. Since time immemorial, young people have asked to be treated like adults, so treating them like adults usually elicits a far more captive audience. Just because many spell things differently when texting each other doesn't mean they can't read or write. Don't patronise them.

Give them someone they can relate to:

Given the wide demographic of young people we interviewed it would be impossible to suggest an example of someone that would reflect the interests and excite the respect of all people under 18 in the country. However, as a guide, it is generally excellence in a given field coupled with a good work ethic or valour that young people respect. Celebrity doesn't hurt but it isn't necessarily needed. More to the point it is about employing people who are both interesting and interested in these teenagers' lives. Employing agencies that see the youth market as "broken" and problematic will be only too apparent, and – understandably – sub-sequentially ignored.

Young people are bored:

Finally, it gets regurgitated with such frequency that it has really started to lose its meaning, but young people are undeniably bored. This in turn can lead to drinking, recreational drug use and exacerbate anti-social behaviour. The tales were countless of "doing it just for fun" and "there's nothing better to". Ella and Tara said of how two boys they know will sit on a bus in Essex and travel for its whole route to drink and systematically "see whom they can start on". Involvement of these people in searching for solutions seems pre-requisite to any long-term strategies, without their

attendance and ear we can only assume these matters will worsen. We hope the reader will simply agree that we cannot let this happen.

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