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Exploring the professional perception of multi agency approaches to assist young people involved in violent and offending behavior in Glasgow
Abstract
This thesis explores eight professionals’ views on the use of the multi-agency approach to assist young people involved in violent and offending behaviour. Parallel to this overall purpose, this thesis also examines the professionals’ views on possible risk factors for the involvement in such behaviour, and their perception of possible improvements to this particular approach. As a result of the policy changes during the 90’s, multi agency approaches became a popular way to deal with crime. In recent years, new frameworks and programs for multi-agency approaches have been introduced. Focus on a more streamlined multi-agency approach, as a way of targeting young people involved in violent and offending behavior, has been implemented by sharing information and working together across agencies for the benefit of children and young people. The method of this thesis applied semi-structured interviews, all of them with 13 prepared questions, to obtain the data necessary, and used snowball sampling to expand the network of informants. The results showed that most agencies saw benefits with the multi-agency approach primarily because of the way in which one can better obtain the needs of the child/youth and accommodate these on different levels thanks to the close interaction of the agencies. Moreover, the informants displayed a unified understanding of the underlying risk factors that might contribute to the involvement in violent or offending behaviour. Primarily, the informants addressed five risk factor themes: family, drugs and alcohol, gang culture and peer pressure, deprivation, and education. As for improvements, the informants saw the biggest need for such in the area of communication, not only between agencies, but also on a societal and political level where social issues must be addressed in policy making and resource funding.

Keywords:
Scotland, Glasgow, Multi-agency work/approaches, Youth crime, Violent and offending behaviour, Risk factors, Social work.
“Less visible, but even more widespread, is the legacy of day-to-day individual suffering. It is the pain of children who are abused by people who should protect them, women injured or humiliated by violent partners, elderly persons maltreated by their caregivers, youth who are bullied by other youths, and people of all ages who inflict violence on themselves”…. “Many who live with violence day in day out assume that it is an intrinsic part of the human condition. But this is not so. Violence can be prevented. Violent cultures can be turned around. In my own country and around the world, we have shining examples of how violence has been countered. Governments, communities and individuals can make a difference.”


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1 This text was quoted on the wall at the Violence Reduction Unit, one of the agencies that were visited while carrying out the research and it was thought that these words mediated the hope for change and that I as a future social worker can make a difference.
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1. Introduction

The Scottish juvenile justice system has for the last couples of decades gone through a lot of changes. The period between 1968 and 1995 was characterized by a welfare approach due to the Social Work Act that was implemented in 1968 which established a new institutional framework for juvenile justice: the Children’s Hearings system (McAra & McVie, p. 69, 2010). Thereafter came a period when youth crime became increasingly politicized and the policymakers restyled the system and the core elements of the Kilbrandon philosophy (see section 3.3), sprung from one of the most influential political statements on juvenile justice, were abandoned for a more punitive and actuarial way of dealing with youth justice (ibid., p. 71). Nowadays, Scotland seems to be moving into a new phase where renewed emphasis on prevention and early interventions based on a risk factor paradigm are distinguishable (ibid., p. 73).

As a result of the policy changes during the 90’s, multi agency approaches became a popular way to deal with crime. However, with the multi agency approach, Blagg et al. (1988, in Munice, p.266, 2009) argue that “the welfarist values of social policy agencies were in danger of being merged with those of crime control”. Also, McAra and McVie (2010a) challenge the social policies and the evidence-base which policy-makers have drawn on to justify the evolving models of youth justice across the UK and concludes that due to the founding commitment to decriminalization and destigmatisation the Scottish system should be better placed than most other western systems to deliver justice for children. However, “as currently implemented, it appears to be failing many young people” (ibid., p. 211).

In recent years, new frameworks and programs such as Getting it right for every child and Whole System Approach have been introduced (Getting it right; Whole system: scotland.gov.uk). Focusing on a more streamlined, multi-agency approach as a way of targeting young people involved in offending behavior by e.g. sharing information and working together for the benefit of children and young people. As Robert Marshall, Deputy Director of Care and Justice says it in the introduction to the Whole System approach (ibid.):

The care and support of children and young people has long required a multi-agency, multi-discipline approach. Success will, therefore, depend on all of us communicating and working together to improve outcomes for children, young people, and our communities, which remains a high priority, even with the current financial uncertainty.

1.1 Research issue(s)

Youth crime is a complex problem indeed and McAra and McVie (2010a) argues that the best way to deliver justice is with a welfarist approach and that systems require to address four key facts about youth crime: (1) serious offending is linked to a broad range of vulnerabilities and
social adversity; (2) early identification of at-risk children is not an exact science and runs the risk of labeling and stigmatizing; (3) pathways out of offending are facilitated or impeded by critical moments in the early teenage years, in particular school exclusion; and (4) diversionary strategies facilitate the desistance process.

With this as a background one would think that multi-agency work would be a successful way of addressing youth crime and much of the Scottish policies have put its emphasis on that. However, the policies have also had a more punitive agenda and this is something that both social work and the Scottish Police sometimes think can be underestimating the welfare-based initiatives in Scotland via the Children’s Hearing system (Nellis et al. 2010 in Deuchar, p.261, 2010) From this perspective it is believed to be important to look beneath the well phrased policies and hear the professionals’ views on the multi-agency work with young people involved in offending and violent behavior.

2. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the professional perception of multi agency approaches to assist young people involved in violent or offending behavior. It aims at describing how professionals within the Police, the social services, the Children’s Hearing, and a voluntary organization observe their work in a holistic system approach dealing with a young person involved in violent and offending behavior.

Moreover, since previous research (see section 5.1 and 5.2) on multi agency approaches and young offenders has shown that there can be a conflict of consensus within a multi agency approach and that the young people involved in violent and offending behaviour often are the most vulnerable and victimized in society, it was thought to be of interest to also get the professionals thoughts on risk factors when it comes these young persons, so as to see if they have a unified understanding of the underlying risk factors for young people involved in violent and offending behaviour.

With this as a background the thesis finally seek to explore what the professionals think can be improved when it comes to multi-agency work with young people involved in violent and offending behaviour, both from an organizational perspective as well as a societal and political perspective.

Apart from this, the thesis also seeks to describe the Scottish approach towards multi agency approaches and youth crime. This is done in the section 3 and will provide a broader understanding of how the Scottish youth justice system functions.
2.1 Research questions

1) How do professionals within a multi agency approach perceive their work when it comes to assist a young person involved in violent and offending behavior?

2) What are the professionals’ views of underlying risk factors for young people involved in violent or offending behavior?

3) What else could be done in the area of multi agency work when it comes to assisting young people involved in violent or offending behavior?

3. Glasgow – a background

In the following section, a background to Glasgow’s demography will be presented. Also, an introduction to the ‘Scottish approach’ to the Youth Justice System with an explanation of the Children’s Hearing and some information about youth crime in Scotland will be provided. Finally, examples of agencies and specific initiatives to respond to violent and offending behavior will be given.

3.1 Glasgow and the socioeconomic picture; demographics

Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland and has, within the Glasgow City council area, a population of roughly 580 000. Most of its population is living under deprived circumstances and over a third of Glaswegians live in some of the most deprived areas in Scotland (Statistics: understandingglasgow.com).

Glasgow has a relatively high proportion of young adults in its population; this is something that is reflected in statistics over households in Glasgow where there is a greater proportion of single adult households in comparison to Scotland as whole. Glasgow also has a higher proportion of single parent households (10%) in comparison to Scotland as whole. The children that live in a single parent household make up approximately 75% out of all of the children considered to live in poverty (ibid.). In relation to child poverty, a third of Glaswegian children live in households with complete unemployment (33%), a figure well above the Scottish average (19%), and around two-thirds of Glaswegian children live in low income families (ibid.).

The unemployment rate in Glasgow is about 10.3% (2009). That is a number that has increased with over 3% in a year, much due to the global economic crisis. Apart from unemployment a third of Glaswegian adults are economically inactive due to long-term
sickness. Also, up to a third are students (ibid.). The links between health and socioeconomic circumstances are well recognised and health effects of unemployment are linked to both psychological consequences and financial problems, especially debt (The Solid Facts, s. 20, 2003).

A good education has long been recognised as one of the important foundations in life and apart from providing access to a fulfilling adult life it can potentially have a much broader beneficial impact on health and well-being in terms of developing values, emotional intelligence, self esteem and social functioning skills (Statistics: understandingglasgow.com).

In Glasgow City, school attainment levels have been rising steadily over the last ten years. Still, Glasgow pupils on average still have lower attainment levels than pupils in other local authorities. There has also been an increase in school leavers entering higher education and further education. However, approximately 10% of the teenagers aged 16-19 years are not in employment, education, or training. Among the city’s working age population they are above average both when it comes to adults with a degree or professional qualification and adults without any qualifications (ibid).

Regarding ethnical minority groups, Glasgow’s diverse ethnic population was 12.8% in 2010 and the majority of the population was made up by people with 'Other White', Pakistani or Indian background (ibid).

3.2 Youth crime

McAra and McVie (2010, p.76-77) mean that there is a limited national data available on youth crime in Scotland, but the one that is available show a consistent picture that youth crime in Scotland has remained stable or decreased during the last 20 years. The only major fluctuations in the figures appear to coincide with the punitive phase of the youth justice system mentioned in the introduction.

However, due to youth crimes’ high political profile and negative media coverage the problem is often believed to be bigger than it actually is. In a Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 69% of the Scottish population believed that youth crime was higher in 2004 than it had been in 1994, which was not the case (Anderson et al. in McAra & McVie, p. 78, 2010).

3.2.1 Gangs

Adolescents are routinely demonised by politicians and the media, and this applies especially well when it comes to gang culture (Deuchar, 2009; Muncie, p.9, 2009). For this reason, gangs will not be the main focus for this thesis. Rather a more general focus towards young people will be applied. However, it is inevitable not to acknowledge gang culture when it
comes to dealing with the issue of young people involved in violent or offending behavior since Glasgow for a long time has been known for its gang culture and its part of the problem (Mooney et al., p. 27-28 2010).

In Glasgow there is currently thought to be 170 active youth gangs (GCSS, 2009) and gangs are often linked to territories and sectarianism (see Deuchar 2010a; Mooney et al., p. 28-29, 2010). According to the head of Glasgow’s violence reduction unit the worst offenders are poorly educated men aged 15-25 and brought up in council housing (Times, 19 July 2005 in Mooney et al., p. 28).

3.3 The ‘Scottish Approach’

When talking about criminal justice in the UK, Scotland is often left out and it is usually the English system that is referred to as an example of general points. However, the fact is that Scotland differs in jurisdiction and has for a long time been characterized by a distinctive welfarism approach. Scotland also has its own legal system and it has, in many senses, been unaffected by the existence of the Union (Croall, Mooney & Munro, p.6-9, 2010).

The Scottish approach towards treatment of juvenile delinquents, juveniles in need of care or protection, and juveniles beyond parental control has its roots in the Kilbrandon report (Kilbrandon committee 1964) and even though it is now over thirty years ago since it was first published, it still one of the most influential political statements on how society should deal with these children (McAra & McVie 2010). The philosophy of Kilbrandon was that juvenile offending and other troublesome behaviours should be regarded as manifestations of deeper social and psychological malaise and/or other failures in the normal upbringing process (Kilbrandon committee 1964). It was from this philosophy that the Children’s Hearing then sprung into action.

However, as mentioned in the introduction, the Scottish system has gone towards a more punitive agenda and in 2004 the Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act was released which for e.g. led to the extension of curfews and electronic monitoring for under-18s (Scottish Executive, 2003 in Deuchar, p. 260-26, 2010). Nevertheless, the Social work (Scotland) Act 1968 is an act that wants to “(...) make further provision for promoting social welfare in Scotland” and also “to restrict the prosecution of children for offences; to establish children’s panels to provide children’s hearings in the case of children requiring compulsory measures of care”. Much of the Scottish approach puts it emphasis on the Children’s Hearing (Social Work Act: legislation.gov.uk; McAra & McVie, p. 86, 2010). Also, Youth Justice is traditionally seen as an area for social work, the police and the Children’s Hearings system.
However, these are just some of the key players in Glasgow’s multi-agency Youth Justice Strategy Group, who also incorporates attendees from all agencies who have an interest in improving lives for children and young people, such as: Health, Procurator fiscal, Glasgow Life, Education, Children’s Panel, Voluntary sector, Glasgow Addictions service, Glasgow Community and Safety Service and Community Justice Authority. The Youth Justice Strategy aims for a reduction in the volume of offending, a reduction in the seriousness of offending, a reduction in risks (assessed by a structured risk assessment) and increase involvement in education, employment or training (Youth Justice: glasgow.gov.uk)

3.4 Children’s Hearings

As mentioned in the previous section, the Children’s hearing genesis is found in the philosophy of the Kilbrandon report and the system is unique to Scotland (Norrie, p.1, 2005). The Children’s Hearing could be explained as a court for children in an attempt to divert them from the Criminal Justice System and to reduce the risk of labeling and stigmatizing (Croall et al., p. 9, 2009).

The central feature in a hearing is to have a discussion with the child and since The Kilbrandon Committee did not find that the court of law was a particular encouraging environment for a child to take active part in back in the 60’s. Hence, the Children’s Hearing was introduced (ibid., p 3). The hearing is conducted by three panel members, always both men and women whose only qualification beyond their training is their interest in, or knowledge of, children’s needs. It is the panel members who decide whether compulsory measures of supervision are needed for the child and, if so, what they should be. (ibid., p.12; Children’s Hearing: chscotland.gov.uk).

3.4.1 Children’s Hearing reporter

The Children’s Hearing Reporter can be seen as the legal gatekeeper to the Children’s Hearing. It is through the reporter that cases get referred to a children’s hearing and a child cannot be referred to the hearing except at the instance of the reporter (Norrie, p. 12, 2005). The reporter gets most of the referrals from the police. However, the majority of referrals does not result in further action by the reporter or are diverted away from the Children’s Hearing for more informal measures of support (McAra & McVie, p. 74-75, 2010).

It is tempting to regard the reporter as a kind of prosecutor, but this is not the case. At a hearing the reporter is ‘the one removed’, meaning that it is up to the panel members to make the decisions regarding the child. The reporter’s duty during the hearing is to keep a report of
the proceedings of the hearing and function as a legal expert if needed (ibid.; chscotland.gov.uk).

3.5 Multi agency initiatives

As mentioned in the introduction, multi-agency approaches have become a popular way of addressing youth crime. Here is a short introduction to three initiatives/programs/projects in Glasgow/Scotland with focus on a multi-agency approach.

3.5.1 The Violence Reduction Unit

The Violence Reduction Unit is a police initiative by the Strathclyde Police in Glasgow that was established in January 2005. It aimed to target all forms of violent behaviour, in particular knife crime and weapon carrying among young men in and around Glasgow. In April 2006 the initiative was extended nationwide by the then Scottish Executive, creating a national centre of expertise on tackling violence (VRU: actiononviolence.co.uk).

The initiative has adopted a public health approach, described in the WHO's World Report on Violence and Health (2002). The unit has simple aims:

To reduce violent crime and behaviour by working with partner agencies to achieve long-term societal and attitudinal change, and, by focusing on enforcement, to contain and manage individuals who carry weapons or who are involved in violent behaviour. The unit also aims to explore best practices and develop sustainable, innovative solutions to this deep rooted problem (ibid.).

One initiative by the VRU is the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence, which is a multi-agency initiative designed to reduce gang violence across Glasgow. It was set up in 2008 to tackle gang violence in Glasgow's East End and ran over a two year period and was extended to the north of the city 2009.

It brought together partners from the justice system, government, community safety services, housing, careers, education, social work, health and the community and encouraged them to better target existing resources towards high-risk street gang members who traditionally does not engage effectively with services. CIRV's second year report, published in July 2011, showed that violent offending behaviour amongst those gang members who had signed up to CIRV had dropped by almost 50% (CIRV: actiononviolence.co.uk).

3.5.2 Intensive Support and Monitoring Service

The Intensive Support and Monitoring Service (ISMS) was introduced by the Anti-social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004, as an alternative to secure accommodation. ISMS is a multi-agency intervention involving social work, Includem, youth addictions, education, FCAMHS
(Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service), voluntary Agencies and others (Youth Justice Service: Glasgow.gov.uk). ISMS involves a 24 hour wrap-around support package (intensive support), which includes up to 30 hours per week of education, and a movement restriction condition, which can also be monitored by an electronic tag. The movement restriction can be for any period, on any day which the Children’s Hearing decides, provided that the restriction period does not exceed more than 12 hours in any one day (ISMS: Scotland.gov.uk).

When an implementation of the Intensive Support and Monitoring service is conducted, it should be delivered in a multi-agency work practice. It is the responsibility of the local authority to provide the intensive support package. This is often done by contracting with a voluntary organisation (ibid.).

3.5.3 One Glasgow
One Glasgow is an initiative that aims to improve operational efficiency by taking a “whole area” approach to public services in order to deliver services at less cost and improve levels of outcomes by working more efficiently together. The main focus is to explore links between these services and identify where public money can be spent more effectively, most commonly through service design around the citizen (One Glasgow: socialcareideasfactory.com).

4. Methodology
From a phenomenological perspective, this qualitative study seeks to explore the professional perception of multi agency approaches to assist young people who are involved in violent and offending behavior in Glasgow. Phenomenology in a qualitative study does generally seek to point out the interest in understanding a social phenomenon from the perspective of the participant(s) and describe the world as it is perceived, as it is assumed that relevant reality is something that people perceive as it is (Kvale & Brinkman, p. 42, 2009).

4.1 Research design
A qualitative interview tries to understand the world from the perspectives of the informants (Kvale & Brinkmann, p. 17). The research design used to collect data for this thesis was semi-structured interviews since it allows the interviewer to be flexible in relation to the questionnaire and ad questions if wanted to get a better understanding of something that the
informant has said (Bryman, p. 300-301, 2002). When conducting the interviews the questions were not always asked in the same order.

4.2 Selection of informants
The selection of informants was made by using *snowball sampling*, which is a non-random sampling technique in which the researcher begins with one informant and then, based on the information about the inter-relationships with that informant, identifies other informants and repeats the process again until the process is stopped or because that the network is larger than what is at the limit of what can be studied (Neuman, p. 269, 2011). Snowball sampling is a reliable method to use when you need to get in contact with informants that you cannot put within a sampling frame (Bryman, p. 313, 2002). In this case, it was a question of a restricted framework of time in combination with a somewhat limited network that made the snowball sampling technique beneficial.

A total of eight interviews have been conducted: two were social workers from a youth justice team at a social work office in the east end of Glasgow, two were from One Glasgow (one social worker and one Police inspector), one was a reporter at the Children’s Hearing, one was a worker at Includem¹, and finally there were two social workers from ISMS. All of the informants have, to the very least, a social work diploma or an equivalent degree (with the exception of the Police inspector who did not have any formal education beyond the conventional schooling). However, the Police inspector had 29 years of experience within the Police service and three years of experience working in a partnership with questions regarding youth offense and gang violence.

On a side note, it would have been interesting to get the perspective of professionals within education and health. However, as mentioned above, there was a restricted framework of time and taking into consideration that this only is a BA thesis, there are also limitations to how comprehensive this study can be. Therefore, they were left out in this study.

4.3 Implementation
During the autumn of 2012, the author attended a shorter exchange period of five and a half weeks at the Glasgow Caledonian University. That enabled the author to acquire some degree of familiarity with the Scottish youth justice system. The overall impression of that exchange period built a good foundation of understanding prior to the second visit, which took place

¹ Includem is a volunteer sector organization that works with young people involved in violent and offending behavior and their families. See more info at: [http://www.includem.org/](http://www.includem.org/)
during three weeks of April in 2013, when the interviews that make up the empirical measures in this thesis were carried out.

Prior to conducting the interviews, a visit to the Violence Reduction Unit was carried out in order to acquire a better understanding of multi agency work. Subsequently, a questionnaire was compiled with two different themes. The first theme was focused how they perceived reasons for why young people get involved in violent or offending behavior and the underlying risk factors for youth crime. The second theme was focused on determining how they perceive the successfulness of agencies working together.

In total, eight interviews were conducted and the time frames for those interviews were in the range of 20 to 50 minutes. Four of the interviews took place at the Social work office in the east end of Glasgow; two of them were with social workers form the youth justice team working in the building, and the remaining two were with one worker from ISMS and one worker form Includem. Two of these interviews experienced interruptions as somebody entered the room. Also, at one time the interview had to be conducted in another room because of a booking inquiry.

The interview with the Children’s Hearing reporter was conducted at the Children’s Hearing building. The interview was conducted in a break room which caused audible disturbance, not excessive in any way though, from contiguous rooms and hallways. Moreover, at one point, somebody interrupted the interview to put forth a question for the reporter.

The interview with the other ISMS worker was conducted at the Sheriff Court in Glasgow and their department of social work. Although the interview was conducted in a solitary room, some audible disturbances, though not excessive, could be heard from the hallways.

Both interviews with the Police inspector and the social worker at One Glasgow were conducted at their office in the East end of Glasgow but at two different occasions. The interview with the social worker was carried out by a table in an open-plan office. However, it was very quiet in the office and the interview could be conducted in solitude. The interview with the Police inspector was conducted at the Police office at One Glasgow. During the interview a colleague of the inspector was working by his desk in the same room. Those circumstances could be argued to affect the answers of the Police inspector. However, the questions in the questionnaire are not of what could be considered to be the sensitive kind that displays a need for discretion.

To conclude this section, four of the interviews were transcribed. The first was one of those conducted with one of the social workers form the youth justice team, the second was
the one conducted with the Children’s Hearing reporter, the third one was the one conducted with the Police inspector, and finally, the fourth and last one was the one conducted with the worker from Includem. Several themes were then extracted from the transcribed interviews. The remaining interviews were listened through and then either paired with or differentiated from, through quotes, the themes extracted from the transcription.

4.4 Validity, reliability, and generalization

In qualitative studies, more often than not the interest lies in achieving authenticity rather than realizing a single version of the truth (Neuman, p.214, 2011). In a broader perspective validity questions to what extent our observations really reflect the phenomena that we are interested in (Kvale & Brinkman, p. 264, 2009).

Two threats to validity that often are raised in relation to qualitative studies are researcher bias and the effect that the researcher on the individuals that are being interviewed. This is often called reactivity (Maxwell, p. 108, 2005). With researcher bias there are two important threats to the validity of qualitative conclusions. The first is the selection of data that fit the researcher’s existing theory or preconceptions. The second threat is the selection of data that stands out to the researcher (ibid.). It is impossible to deal with these issues by eliminating the researcher’s theories, beliefs and perceptual lens. However, it is important to acknowledge this and try to understand how a particular researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduction and conclusions of the study and attempt at avoiding the negative consequences (ibid.). A critical thinking has been applied throughout this thesis in order to respond to these threats as a way of trying to create awareness of possible biases.

Regarding reactivity, it is impossible to eliminate the influence of the researcher on the individuals studied. However, the objective of a qualitative study is not to eliminate the influence, but rather to understand it and use it productively (ibid.). When carrying out an interview there is also something called reflexivity. That is, the fact that the researcher is a part of the world that is studied is a powerful and inescapable influence and what the informant says is always influenced by the interviewer and the interview situation (ibid. p. 109). Even though it is impossible to eliminate the influence of researcher, measures to minimize these effects have been taken by, e.g., avoiding leading questions in the questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

Measurement reliability means that the numerical results that an indicator produces do not vary because of characteristics of the measurement process or the measurement instrument itself (Neuman, p. 102, 2011). It is about whether another researcher can replicate the study a
later time and still get the same answers. As this thesis is explores professionals’ perceptions of multi-agency work as it is today, the answers may be different in the future (Kvale & Brinkmann, p. 263, 2009). However it is to be believed that if the same questions were to be asked again in a near future, the answers would probably be the same.

Critics mean that it is difficult to generalize qualitative research results beyond the situation that it was conducted in (Bryman, p. 270, 2002). This study is, in terms of generalization, conducted in the context of Glasgow (in terms of demography and social paradigms) and cannot be applied in another context than this since multi agency work may vary in both Scotland and in the United Kingdom as a whole. However, one could argue that an analytic generalization would make it possible to apply the results to other agencies in the Glasgow area since the themes drawn from the interviews will be analyzed in a theoretical approach, which makes it possible to generalize the result beyond the informants. (Kvale & Brinkman, p. 282, 2009; Bryman, p. 271, 2002). Other than that, it is more of a naturalistic generalization that can be applied to the study since the aim of the study is to get the informants subjective views, based on their experiences within the field, on these questions (ibid., p. 281).

Transparency has been applied to the study to the greatest possible extent as a way of clarifying how the study has been conducted.

4.5 Ethical aspects

This study has applied the four main principals of research ethics that the Swedish Central Ethical Review Board has set up. Those four are: the demand for information, the demand for consent, the demand for confidentiality and the demand for usage (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

The demand for information and the demand for consent have been achieved by applying the consent form (see Appendix 2) that was presented to the informant before the interview was conducted. That held the information about the study and what rights the informant has when partaking in this aspect of scientific research. Before conducting the interview the informants had to sign the consent form in order to assure that they had read the consent form, understood the information and that they had given their approval to participate in the study.

Regarding the demand for confidentiality the data that has been collected has been kept on a computer hard drive which is password protected. The transcribed interviews have been coded anonymously and no names appear in the transcribed texts. In the results section, the real names will be feigned as a way to protect their actual identities. When the study is completed and has been approved, the data will be destroyed.
The demand for usage has been achieved since the data that has been collected will not be used in a non-scientific or commercial purpose. It is used solely for the purpose of this thesis.

5. Previous research

In this section, previous research regarding multi-agency work, youth crime and risk factors will be presented. On the subject of previous research on multi-agency work, it was rather difficult to find any recent studies. Nevertheless, the ones presented do have interesting perspectives. As for youth crime, a rather recent study on in the context of Scotland, also mentioned in the introduction, by McAra and McVie (2010a), highlights some of the key facts about youth crime that needs to be addressed by the systems and challenges the evidence base which policy makers have drawn to justify the evolving models of youth justice across the UK.

Finally, research on some of the risk factors that are linked to Glasgow’s demographical background are presented. Also, something in reference to gang culture will be presented.

5.1 Multi-agency work

In a study by Samson et al. (1988), two contrasting forms of conventional understanding of the multi-agency approach were examined: the benevolent perspective and the conspiratorial perspective. The benevolent perspective can be explained as when the police co-opt other agencies, and even the entire community, to pursue police-defined goals, rather than engaging in inter-agency work in the spirit of mutual consultation and shared agreement of goals and objectives. The conspiratorial perspective invariably rests upon an analysis of the state and its agencies as monolithic entities, both of these were found inadequate. Building on the evidence of research fieldwork, the authors mean that it is important to understand the complexities of locality-based crime prevention initiatives and the power differentials running between different state agencies, as well as to the competing sectional interests within existing communities. The authors’ argue that Multi-agency strategies undoubtedly can have an impact on the lives of people within a locality, but that it is not always the outcomes that are intended.

In a study by Crawford and Jones (1995), they highlight a tendency within multi-agency arrangements where conflict appears to be avoided, thereby leaving deep structural conflicts and power relations unaddressed. The problem is therefore “not only the existence and
recognition of conflict, but the manner in which conflict is subsequently managed and regulated” (ibid., p. 31).

The authors mean that there needs to be room for constructive debate concerning the competing contributions, priorities, and aims of the agencies involved in a multi-agency approach, and that “mutual recognition of difference represents a more preferable premise for inter-agency relations than either an assumed consensus or an ends-oriented 'quest for unity’” (ibid.).

The authors’ mean that depending on in which manner conflicts are managed in a multi-agency forum they can easily resemble of neo-corporatist arrangements for the administration of crime control, in which invisible and unaccountable discretion is the order of the day. This can lead to a context where power differentials remain largely unregulated between agencies which can impact upon local policy definitions of 'locality' and 'community' as well as crime 'problems' and their 'appropriate' social intervention.

The authors’ suggests that as a result of this problem, there could be a prioritization of certain kinds of crime and forms of intervention at the expense of others which remain silenced and that to avoid this it is important that conflicts are negotiated in an open and accountable manner which recognizes and appropriately compensates for power differentials. This process needs to be structured and addressed both by local democratic demands and adherence to notions of social justice which protect the rights of those against whom crime prevention initiatives are directed to.

5.2 Key messages from the Edinburg study of youth transition and crime

Drawing data from over ten years of fieldwork, McAra and McVie (2010a) highlights four key facts about youth crime which any system of youth justice ought to fit. That is: persistent serious offending is associated with victimization and social adversity, early identification of at-risk children is not a water-tight process and may be iatrogenic, critical moments in the early teenage years are keys to pathways out of offending and diversionary strategies facilitate the desistence process.

Based on these facts they argue that the key challenge facing policy makers and practitioners is to develop a youth justice policy which is holistic in orientation with intervention proportionate to need, but at the same time maximizing diversion from criminal justice as to avoid stigmatizing and criminalization. Policies that are strongly supportive of a model of juvenile justice based on the core Kilbrandon principles have, within Scotland, been
watered down over the past decade as a result of the politicization of youth crime from above and the working practice of key agencies within juvenile justice from below.

In the political debate today, attention is readily focused on what is perceived as an irreconcilable tension between tackling the broader needs of young offenders and delivering justice for communities and victims of crime. The authors mean that justice for communities and victims cannot be delivered unless the broader needs of young people are addressed, since their findings indicate that young people involved in serious offending are amongst the most victimized and vulnerable group in the society.

5.3 Socioeconomic inequalities
Even though recorded crime in Scotland has decreased, the imprisonment rate is at record high levels together with England and Wales, deviant so, in comparison to most other European jurisdictions and there is a gross over-representation of men and women from disadvantaged background in the criminal justice system (Croall et al., p. 4, 2010). It is therefore interesting that there is growing evidence supporting views where societies are more unequal also have more social problems and rising rates where, e.g., youth property crime has been associated with a widening gap between the most and least affluent (Box 1987; Hale 2009 in Croall et al. 2010).

Mooney et al. (2010, p. 23) mean that social inequalities and social divisions must be central to any comprehensive understanding of crime and that there also is growing evidence that points to the extent of persistent class inequalities in Scottish society (Hanlon et al. 2006; Kenway et al. 2008; et al. in Mooney et al., p.23, 2010).

5.4 Family
In a meta-analysis by Hoeve et al. (2009) they confirm that parenting is related to delinquency and although they found significant links between all parenting dimensions and delinquency, the strongest links were found for psychological control, parental monitoring and negative aspects of support such as rejection, neglect and hostility. The weakest links were found in authoritative and authoritarian control.

Hove et al (2009) mean that their results should have implications for intervention and prevention policies focusing on delinquency, in particular parent management training programs. Although parent management training programs exist in many variations, it often focuses on improving parental discipline techniques and monitoring, it should instead be focusing on training parents to actively monitor and guide their children in order to enhance
parents’ knowledge on the whereabouts of children. Also the emphasis in parent trainings should lay on improvements in the relationship and trust, given that this enhances disclosure.

Furthermore, the writers point out the importance of practitioners being alert to parents who are neglecting and have hostile and rejecting attitudes towards their children, since combinations of these parenting behaviours are strongly linked to higher levels of delinquent behaviour in youngsters.

A family can also function as a protective factor, Farrington (1996 in Munice 2009, p. 29) contends that the best factors to protect young people from offending is an affectionate relationship with either at least one parent, parents who provide effective and consistent discipline, and parents who maintain a strong interest in their child’s education.

5.5 Gangs
Gang membership has a strong statistical effect on delinquency when holding constant the effects of a range of other factors (Smith & Bradshaw, 2005). Individuals commit more offences during periods when they are gang members than during other periods. This shows that the link between delinquency and gang membership is independent of the characteristics of the individuals who join gangs.

Gang membership is more common in children from less affluent families and in those not living with both parents, and has also been shown to have strikingly higher levels of gang membership in deprived neighborhoods. This shows that the social and ecological context is more important than the characteristics of the individual family (ibid.).

Interventions aimed at reducing gang membership might best be concentrated within specific geographic localities and more socially disadvantaged demographic groups. Strategies involving socioeconomic improvement and increased opportunities for groups of young people might be particularly beneficial (McVie 2010).

6. Theoretical framework
Youth crime is a complex problem and there are many perspectives and theories that can be applied in a way of trying to understand the phenomenon. In this thesis, the theory of social construction will be applied in a way to understand youth crime, how it is constructed by society, and to understand how the professionals construct their reality. Also, a theory for social work will be applied: systems theory, mainly to better understand how multi-agency work with young people involved in violent and offending behaviour function.
6.1 Social construction
Social construction is a comprehensive social theory that explains how man approaches social reality and “a perspective that explores assumptions associated with the labelling of things and emphasizes the importance of social expectation in the analysis of taken-for-granted and apparently natural social processes” (Clark and Cochrane, 1998 in Munice, p.402, 2009).

“Populist assumptions and dominant political discourses tend to treat social problems as phenomena about whose existence and seriousness we can all agree” (Munice, p. 3, 2009). However, Munice (ibid.) means that the critical starting point is to view youth and crime as social construction and will let us understand how the meaning of social phenomena is constructed, produced and reproduced.

6.1.1 Labelling theory
“The labeling perspective is distinctive because it begins from the assumption that no act is intrinsically criminal” (Munice, p. 124, 2009), it has its foundation in the social judgment by others and are established by the formulations of laws, how the law is interpreted and enforced by the police, courts and other controlling institutions (ibid.). These formulations and interpretations are not constant, but depend on historical social variability and cannot be objectively defined since the existence of crime “always depend on a series of negotiated transactions between rule makers/enforcers and rule violators (ibid.).

Labelling explains how deviance first is constructed and then subsequently cemented in future behaviour. Lemert (1967 in Munice, p.125, 2009) distinguished between primary deviance, for example classroom misbehavior, and secondary deviance the construction of a deviant identity as a result of the social reaction to the primary act. Lemert emphasized that deviance is a process and that social control not only is a response to deviant activity, but also plays an active part in its creation and promotion.

6.2 System theory
Systems theory is important for social work since it puts its emphasis on the social work focus and not just a particular client it itself. From a systems theory perspective, social work is focusing on a person’s relationships and networks, social goals and social change as well as interpersonal work (Payne, p. 211, 2008). However, Anderson et al. (1999 in Payne, p. 211 2008) emphasise that systems theory is a combination between atomic and holistic approaches and that the social worker needs to be aware of social, as well as personal, aspects in each situation and at the same time see how these aspects collaborate and integrate as a whole.
Working together is an important aspect of systems theory; it shows how indirect work with other agencies or families and networks can enable an influence over the client. Joint work is an effect of the systems theory model.

Different systems co-operate with each other in very complex ways. Pincus and Minahan (1973 in Payne, p. 215) have identified three different help systems: informal/natural systems e.g. family, friends and colleagues, formal systems e.g. local authorities or labour organization and social/societal systems e.g. school or hospitals.

7. Results

In the following section the professionals’ answers will be presented under three sub-headings based on the research questions. All eight interviews are taken in consideration, however only some quotes are being presented as a way to enhance the professionals statements. This data will then make up the foundation for the analysis in section 8.

7.1 How do professionals within a multi agency approach perceive their work when it comes to assist a young person involved in violent or offending behaviour?

The professionals interviewed thought that working within a multi agency approach was a successful way of addressing young people involved in violent and offending behaviour.

The social worker at One Glasgow for example experienced that she had a positive relationship with the police as she was working very closely with them and thought that multi-agency work was the way forward:

“… it’s not rocket science when you think working in isolation and knowing your bit and trying to do the best there. If you can have all the information together, clearly the outcome is going to be better for that young person, aren’t they?”

The two social workers from the Youth Justice Team perceived their work within a multi agency as a sort of coordinator between the different agencies that are being involved. It is for example the social service that decides whether or not the young person should be referred to Includem. One of the workers puts it like this:

“I would describe my role as the coordinator. I think of myself as a bit of a doctor. When you go to see the doctor, the doctor doesn’t treat you, but the doctor uses different forms of medication to treat the person and that’s kind of what I do. If I’m working with someone I will try and look at all the different aspects of that person’s life and I would try and intervene with each one…”
One of the things that all of the professionals thought were positive with the multi agency approach is that agencies are joining up with each other and share information. The sharing of information between agencies could then help them to better target the young person as you would get a clearer picture of the needs. Working with a multi agency approach also means that different agencies can target different systems in the young person’s life. For example, Includem would work on a one to one basis with the young person trying to get it integrated back into the community. Also, they provide support to the parents of the young person so that parents get the tools to handle and support their child.

7.2 What are the professionals’ views of underlying risk factors for young people involved in violent and offending behavior?

There are a whole range of risk factors regarding a young person involved in or at risk of getting involved in violent and/or offending behavior. Most of the professionals pointed out the fact that you need to see to each individual person when it comes to risk factors. However, based on the interviews there were certain risk factors that were more prominent than others. The risk factors have been divided into five categories; 1. Family 2. Gang culture and peer pressure 3. Drugs and alcohol 4. Deprivation and finally 5. Education.

7.2.1 Family

Family was one of the factors that many of the professionals mentioned as a risk for getting involved in violent and offending behavior and stated learned behaviors and setting boundaries as key factors. The professionals highlighted the importance of the family’s part in a child’s life, to teach it right from wrong but also other skills such as the ability to negotiate and compromise, and how to respect other people.

Though, as many of the professionals mentioned, most of these young people come from dysfunctional families and many times the parents themselves are involved in violent or offending behaviour and no one has ever been able to put any boundaries in place for these young people. Many of them become involved in gangs because they live in a specific area of Glasgow and many of the professionals said that for many of these young people, this is their way of life and members of their family has always been a part of a gang.

However, when possible, the professionals mean it is important to involve the family when it comes to divert a young person from violent and offending behaviour. This is what one of the social workers said: “I think it’s very important to where there is a positive
relationship to involve the family, but often I think parents are struggling because they don’t know what to do…”

The Children’s Hearing reporter mean that family is a key factor to target as it has a big impact in a child’s life: “…I think the risk factors are poor parenting, poor attachment with their parents, parents not able to establish boundaries in an early age”

So as much as a family can be a risk factor for a child getting involved in violent and offending behaviour it also is a protective factor and is an important system to address when working with a multi agency approach.

7.2.2 Gang culture and peer pressure
Gang culture was not supposed to be the main focus of this thesis. However, when talking about young people involved in violent and offending behavior many, if not all, of the professionals mentioned the gang culture in Glasgow as a risk factor. They meant that in Glasgow, specifically in the East End of Glasgow, one of the biggest risk factors for getting involved in violent and offending behaviour is related to gang culture.

The police inspector’s says that historically there has been a significant issue regarding territorial gang violence within the city of Glasgow. The gang violence is linked to where you live, if you live in one area you will fight with a group of boys who comes from a different area. Even if you look back fifty, sixty years you will see that not that much has happened in these areas in Glasgow and that these areas still exist. The Police inspector says that the long history of Gang culture: “…Echo’s down through the ages and people still, young people who never have know how, who now are 15 or 16 say; we always fight with the Croughan* (with reservation for the spelling), that’s what we do.”

The police inspector also says that since these young people often comes from a dysfunctional family; the gang becomes a substitute to their real family. That the people within the gang are the ones that one will talk to and share worries and concerns with since it might not be anyone to talk to present within their own family circumstances and that this reinforces the of bond between the gang members. “The boy that I’m standing next to at this gang fight is the only boy who is going to look after me or look out for me and that kind of builds that bond between them […]”

7.2.3 Drugs and alcohol
Alcohol and drugs were repeatedly mentioned by the professionals as risk factors for getting involved in violent and offending behaviour. The Alcohol culture in Glasgow and the ease of accessing alcohol were themes that were brought up under the interviews.
The professionals meant that the drinking culture is widespread in the Scottish society and especially in the west of Scotland. One of the social workers said that:

“...a lot of young people in Glasgow are drinking. They are drinking these tonic wines, they are drinking all these things; high caffeine, high this, high that and that seem to be the done thing, and that in itself then lead to offending behavior...”

As mentioned, some of the professionals thought that there was a risk factor regarding the ease of accessing alcohol and that it’s very cheap to buy. One of the social workers also put a political dimension to the problem saying that The Scottish government is looking to try to address this problem by putting up minimum pricing on alcohol, but that it is a problematic action since it’s not a popular one among the public.

The Children’s hearing reporter thought that a lot of the problems with youth involved in violent and offending behaviour is drink related and that even if it doesn’t give the whole picture of why they have done it, if having access to alcohol then they are far more likely to be involved in violence and aggressive behavior.

7.2.4 Deprivation

Some of the professionals mentioned deprivation as a risk factor and meant that deprivation can lead to lack of aspiration for young people as there are very few things to do for young people in the deprived areas of Glasgow, which then could lead to young people getting involved in violent and offending behaviour.

The Children’s Hearing reporter says that in an area like the East end of Glasgow a lot of it the problem has to do with lack of opportunities for young people, not in terms of lack of clubs but that future life chances are not great.

The Police inspector meant that just as there could be a lack of personal aspiration, there can be a broad lack aspiration with in a community and that this affect the way young people look at life:

“[...] the lack of aspiration, you know personal aspiration or the broad lack of it within a community is a factor too. It’s always disappointing when you hear people don’t care about anything...if you don’t care there is no, they don’t have any respect for themselves or each other or education or whatever it may be ...if you scratch the surface most of them do have aspirations and their aspirations are credible and valid.”

7.2.5 Education

Education was a frequently brought up by the professionals as a risk factor for getting involved in violent and offending behaviour. They said that try to work together with education when targeting a young person involved in this type of behaviour. Some of the
young people they been working with has fallen through the net and their education can be quite poor. They meant that if you are disengaged from educational services, their reading and writing skills can be really poor which will automatically restrict their opportunities in life and when these opportunities are missing, some young people seek their meaning in less meaningful activities, such as gangfighting.

7.3 What else could be done in the area of multi agency work when it comes to assist young people involved in violent and offending behaviour?

Regarding the professionals’ thoughts on improvements in the area of multi agency work, two different themes could be distinguished. Some of the professionals focused more on the multi-agency work and some more on societal issues that need to be addressed by politicians as a way of reducing risk factors for involvement in violent and offending behaviour.

Regarding the societal issues they highlighted a number of factors that can increase the probability for a young person to get involved in violent and offending behaviour. Things like deprivation and poverty, alcohol, unemployment and the benefit culture, gang culture and peer pressure where common thing that the professionals mentioned.

As Glasgow has been quite effected by the recession, many of the of the professionals mentioned that since the politicians has cut the budget for social work, this has had quite an impact on their work and that things always seem to come down to lack of finances. Meaning that if there would have been more funding available so much more could have been done and instead of fighting reoffending they could fight the pathways into offending behaviour. For example some of the professionals thought that there needed to be more programs and community resources for young people put in place. Many of the professionals also emphasised the fact that more job opportunities for young people are needed and especially for those who doesn’t want to go to school. Some of the professionals also expressed that the they thought there was a need to target young people when they are a lot younger, saying that some of these young people doesn’t know what impact their way of living is going to have on their adult life and that there is a need to break the vicious circle of gang culture.

One of the social worker from ISMS puts it like this: “I would reinvest, allow young people plenty of opportunity to employment, leisure, recreation facility, social facilities, those who then don’t want to take part, we can then target.”

When it comes to improvements regarding the Multi agency work, one thing that was brought up by all of the professionals were related to the sharing of information. Saying that if it would be possible to have all the information under the same system that would be much
more efficient since you wouldn’t have to phone to all the different services to get all the information needed of the person you are working with. However, the Social workers at ISMS was rather satisfied with the multi-agency work and pointed out that working within an intensive service like ISMS makes them very fortunate since they do not have the same barriers that an area team would have to get health information for example, but that there is always room for improvement.

Even though all of the professionals though that it was positive with multi-agency work and one of the positive outcomes are the sharing of information, some of the professionals raised the fact that there still was room for improvements within this field. For example one of the social workers said that it is becoming easier to share information but that due to the fact that each individual agency has their own child protection it can still be difficult gathering information:

“…but now with the multi agency, because there are all these teams now that we all work together with one another, you’ll find that it is a lot better. […] For colleague information and for meetings and things really good, but gathering information can be difficult sometimes but it is getting better.”

Another improvement for multi agency work raised by the Children’s Hearing reporters. Her experience was that when a young person has committed several serious offences, agencies have a tendency to give up on these young people, but emphasized on the fact that it is their last chance to work with a young person before they go on to the adult criminal justice system.

“I suppose the thing I sometime find a bit depressing is that for young people that offend a lot, say a series of serious offences, once they get to 16 or 17 agencies are quite keen to say or quite quick to say; we can’t do any more, this young person won’t work with us.”

To conclude the professionals thought regarding improvements concerning multi-agency work there were both work related issues and societal issues. The work related issues they highlighted was communication, saying there is a need for a more unified view on the young person’s problems and needs, and remaining with a young person for as long as possible. Regarding the more societal issues, it comes down to politics. To break the vicious circle of violent and offending behavior, the politicians need to address the underlying problems such as poverty, social inequalities, unemployment, and the alcohol culture. Also they need to push more funding towards the preventative work such as youth clubs etc.
8. Analysis

The analysis is based on the theoretical framework in order to better understand the professionals’ view of multi-agency work with youth involved in violent and offending behaviour and how they view the risk factors that might account for involvement in that kind of behaviour. Two systems can be indentified from the perspectives of the systems theory: the system of multi-agency work and the system of the young person.

Moreover, the theory of social construction can help the understanding of the risk factors and how young criminals are being viewed and also how the youth justice system is constructed. From the perspective of social constructivism, the social phenomena of youth crime is based on the premises that social issues, such as crime, anti-social behaviour and delinquency, are not self-evident, but rather identified as being worthy of primary media and political concern. This is dependent on individuals and organizations making claims of the truth about the phenomena of youth crime and bringing their claims into public awareness (Munice, p. 3, 2009). This can lead to a bias, since the truth may not always be the same as the reality, which e.g. was showed in the self-survey mentioned in section 3.2.

8.1 Multi-agency approach

The professionals’ view on the multi-agency approach was overall a positive one. They felt that it was beneficial to work together in order to address the problem with young people involved in violent and offending behaviour. This was, e.g., expressed by both the police and the social worker at One Glasgow saying that one gets an improved perspective when understanding each others’ work.

Another thing that was expressed was that the sharing of information between agencies made it easier to get an improved overall picture of the young person’s situation, which in turn had positive long-term effects for the young person. Working with a multi-agency approach is beneficial in distinguishing and helping to address the different systems in the young person’s life, such as family and school systems.

Payne (2005, p. 230) suggests that the forming of a trend, when it comes to networking, is to create a tool which can help link the interpersonal work to develop peoples’ relationships with community based social work. There certainly seems to be a focus on working with the young people in the community as a way to divert them from the criminal justice system. However, when talking about this with one of the youth justice social workers, the worker said that, sadly, the local community often was not that involved in the process and that, as
mentioned earlier, social work often link itself with voluntary sectors in order to do that community based work with young people.

Nevertheless, all of the professionals thought that there was room for improvement within the area of multi-agency work. Some focused more on societal issues (linked to risk factors) that they thought needed to be addressed, and some more on work related issues. Their answers could be related to how the question was asked by the interviewer or how it was interpreted by the interviewee.

One of the issues that were raised with regards to multi-agency work was that there are sometimes poor communications between different agencies and that they sometimes have different views on a problem and its solution. This is one of the social workers thought on communication between agencies:

“Usually pretty good, sometimes we don’t always see eye to eye with health […] Sometimes when we work with health, the health professional will focus on matters relating to health and quite right because that’s their thing, […] whereas in social work we try and look at everything, we try to take every factor into account and put it all together and see how it all impacts upon that person.”

In the section with previous research, two studies on multi-agency work/inter-agency work were described. Those articles must be considered to be quite old in the context of this study. However, they do highlight some interesting problems when it comes to multi-agency work. The most recent study by Crawford and Jones (1995) highlights a tendency within multi-agency arrangements where conflict appears to be avoided, but leaves deep structural conflicts and power relations unaddressed. There needs to be room for constructive debate concerning the competing contributions, priorities, and aims of the agencies involved in a multi-agency approach. Since the date of publication, one can assume that a lot has happened in the area of multi-agency work and one of the functions that One Glasgow has is making multi-agency work run more smoothly and setting up a clear focus of the work for all of the agencies involved in the multi-agency approach. However, that does not mean that it is perfect today and again, as many of the professionals pointed out, they believe that they have come a long way but that there still is a long way to go.

Another issue that was raised, regarding the more work related improvements, were that the system, as it is today, seems to sometimes give up on some of these young people and that the 16-18 years old often are dealt with in the Sheriff Court instead of the Children’s Hearing. That is something that corresponds quite poorly with the Getting it Right for Every Childs framework to reduce offensive behaviour which is to prevent, divert, manage and support behavioral change (GIRFEC: Scotland.gov.uk, p. 4). If considering the fact that, according to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, you are a child until you are 18
(Child: unicef.se), this certainly needs to be considered as a failure in the system. Especially when ‘giving up’ on these young people can lead to a stigmatized label as a criminal, something that the Scottish youth justice system has tried to avoid to the greatest extent.

8.2 Risk factors

The risk factors that the professionals’ highlighted the most were family, gang culture and peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, deprivation and education. Other factors were also mentioned, e.g. housing, the benefit culture and unemployment. Overall they had relatively unified opinions of the risk factors for young people. Most of the risk factors can be liked to societal issues that have a political agenda attached to it. This is for example shown in one of the quotes from the social worker at ISMS:

“We want to reduce the reoffending, but if we don’t deal with everything underneath that, then the risk of reoffending is not going to reduce at all because we need to deal with all the housing issues, the poverty issues, the education issues, the health issues, the alcohol/drug issues and they are all intertwined into one all these issues makes up this young person […] although their offence is part of them and what they’ve done is part of them, there is all this other stuff that we need to work on as well.”

This quote really show the complex picture of working with a young person involved in violent and offending behaviour and even if the multi agency approach is a way to try to target different systems in a young person’s life. There are also issues that are difficult for these workers to address, societal issues that first and foremost need to be addressed by the politicians.

Also when considering the risk factors stated by the professionals’, it turns out that they are very closely linked to the individual- and family risk factors that are identified by developmental criminology. They are: impulsivity, attention problems, low school attainment, poor parental supervision, parental conflict, an anti-social parent, young mother, large family size, low family income, and coming from a broken family (Farrington 1994, 2007 in Munice, p. 27, 2009). Also, when linking these risk factors to the demographic background, it is possible to see reasons for why youth crime in Glasgow is an issue. However, the professionals’ highlighted the fact that every young person is unique and that that they need to consider the risk factors for each individual case to see what the needs are for that specific person.

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, agencies in a multi-agency approach can lose track of the welfarist values in social policy since it is being merged with those of crime
control. Also, policies are supported by a risk-factor paradigm that provides a strong support for early interventions, meaning that identifying risks at an early stage will reduce offending and anti-social behaviour later on. However, recent studies have showed that in the long term, early interventions can have a damaging effect with the interventions being experienced as punitive and stigmatizing, thereby amplifying rather than diminishing the offensive behaviour (Huizinga 2003; Tracy & Kempf Leonard 1996; McAra & McVie 2007 in McAra & McVie, p. 216, 2010a). On the other hand, if committing a crime at a young age, it is also more likely that person will become socially excluded as an adult (Estrada & Nilsson, p. 257, 2011). This certainly highlights the complexity with targeting youth crime, since it seems like no matter what procedures that are taken it will lead to stigma and a labeling as a criminal.

When it comes to gang culture, as one of the risk factors highlighted by the professionals’, Deuchar (2009) shows that many young people resist or move quickly out of gangs especially when there are attractive alternatives to engage in and opportunities to build social capital in legitimate fields such as sport and civic participation. Also, the worker at Includem emphasized the importance of getting young people integrated in the community:

“Well, that’s one of the things that we do, we integrate them back in to the local communities, we would attempt to maybe get them in to local clubs or things like that, I think it’s dead important that they put back into community what they have taken away and feeling a sense of self worth and citizenship within there[…].”

Also, one of the youth justice social workers thinks it is important to get young people engaged in the community: “Trying to get them [young people] involved in leisure’s pursuits that are positive, get young people involved in football, swimming, sports, rather than walking the streets with knives and alcohol you know.”

Regarding the more societal improvements that were raised by the professionals, one of the things that were mentioned was the need for more activities for young people. Other issues that they thought needed to be addressed were the alcohol culture, housing and unemployment. These are all ways to raise the standard for young people and their families both health wise and economically.

In terms of youth crime, there is a term called right realism, meaning that the neoliberals had a strong focus on law and order (Giddens, p. 595, 2006). The increase of criminality and deviance that they thought could been seen was connected to moral decay, less individual responsibility (due to the welfare state and a butter-fingered school) and the breakdown of the family and the gouge of traditional values (Wilson, 1975 in Giddens, p. 595, 2006). This can be closely connected with the more punitive policies that were brought into the youth justice system and today when “the budgets are being slashed, due to the economic crises”, there is
more of a focus on interventions rather than preventive work. However, the professionals’ thought that more funding should be pushed towards a preventative agenda in order to address the underlying risk factors for these young people to get involved in violent and offending behaviour.

9. Concluding Discussion

This thesis set out to explore the professionals’ views on multi-agency approaches to assist young people involved in violent and offending behavior. It showed that the professionals’ had an overall positive experience of the multi-agency work and that they experienced sharing information between agencies as beneficial when it came to delivering the best possible support to the young person. Also, they all had a rather unified understanding of the underlying risk factors for getting involved in violent and offending behaviour.

However, there were also issues that they thought needed to be improved concerning multi-agency work with young people involved in violent and offending behavior. Both work related issues and societal issues. Regarding the work related issues they highlighted communication, a more unified view on the young person’s problems and needs, and remaining with a young person for as long as possible, as things that could be improved.

Regarding the more societal issues, they come down to politics. To break the vicious circle of violent and offending behavior, the politicians need to address the underlying problems such as poverty, social inequalities, unemployment, and the alcohol culture. They need to push more funding towards the preventative work such as youth clubs etc. Because as long as these problems are not addressed, the problem with youth offending will remain. It probably always will, but there could be a significant decrease of young people involved in violent and offending behaviour.

It could be that it is like McAra and McVie suggests: that even though the Scottish system should be better off than many others, in practice “justice for children and young people cannot be delivered without an overhaul of entrenched working cultures and without greater resistance on the part of practitioners to the vagaries of political pressure and that revolution is needed from below” (2010a, p. 211-212) as a way to challenge the construction of youth justice policies.
References


**Internet sources:**

All statistics fact under section 2.1 Glasgow demographic was found at: [http://www.understandingglasgow.com/](http://www.understandingglasgow.com/) 2013-04-17


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One Glasgow:

Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968:

Violenc Reduction Unit facts:
http://www.actiononviolence.co.uk/content/about-violence-reduction-unit  2013-05-20

Whole System Approach and quote by Robert Marshall:

Youth Justice Service:
Appendix 1

Questionnaire

1. What kind of education do you have?

2. For how long have you been working within the (Police, Social service, Children’s hearing etc.)? - How long have you been working with youth justice/ Children involved in offending and/or violent behavior?

3. To what extend is there a problem with young people getting involved in offending and/or violent behavior in Glasgow? -What are the problems?

4. What are your experiences of why young people get involved in violent and/or offending behavior?

5. What is being done to try to help young people with this type of behavior? - What initiatives are in place to respond to it?

6. What do you think is important when it comes to target/assist a young person at risk for getting involved in offending and/or violent behavior?

7. What theories are you working with when you assist a young person involved in this sort of behavior?

8. What methods are you working with when you assist a young person involved in this sort of behavior?

9. What are your thoughts on risk factors regarding these young people?

10. Would you say that there are any risk factors that are more important to address and if so, which ones?

11. How well are agencies at working together when it comes to assist these young people? - does this involve local communities as well?

12. How would you describe your role in a multi agency approach working with these young people?

13. What else could be done in this area?
Appendix 2

Consent Form

Information about the research:
My name is Emelie Folcker and I’m a Social Work student at the Ersta Sköndal University in Stockholm, Sweden. During autumn 2012 I did a short exchange with Glasgow Caledonian University and I have now returned to do more specific research for my Bachelor dissertation. In addition to my University supervisor, I am being assisted by Glasgow Caledonian University in this research. My topic for the thesis is youth crime and I want to explore multi agency approaches to assist young people involved in violent or offending behavior in Glasgow. Data collection will be made through semi-structured interviews with professionals working within this area.

I wish to inform you that:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary and can be cancelled at any time.
- All information will be treated confidentially and you will be anonymous in the thesis.
- The interview will be recorded.
- The data collected will be kept safe on a computer hard drive that is password protected.
- Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data collected.
- When the study is completed the data will be destroyed.
- You have the right to obtain a copy of the study when it is completed.

I have read and understood the information, and give my approval to participate in the research:

.......................................................
Signature

.......................................................
Date

Contact:

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