

# **YOUTH DELINQUENT SURVEYS A METHODOLOGY PAPER**

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# 1 THE PROBLEM

Around the world levels of crime and violence committed by youths in urban areas are on the increase. Furthermore, there is an inverse relationship between the crime and the age of the perpetrators, with the age profile of criminals constantly decreasing. To assess crime amongst young people, this Youth Offender Profile tool is being developed by the Safer Cities Programme of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). This tool is based on previous Kenyan, South African and Tanzanian experience.

Ultimately, researchers wish to know how people either as individuals or as groups within societies act and think in common situations. The best way to do that is to observe them repeatedly and directly over time. However, this is not possible, particularly when the actions being measured are those that deal with delinquent or criminal behaviour. Even if this were possible, there are still kinds of human behaviour that cannot be observed directly such as attitudes, beliefs and opinions. It is therefore necessary to use surveys, which are a systematic way of asking people to volunteer information about their attitudes, behaviours, opinions and beliefs. The success of survey research rests on how closely the answers that people give to survey questions matches reality that is, how people really think and act.

From the outset it was evident that no single type of survey approach could possibly be applied that would enable the collection of information necessary to understand why youth engage in deviant behaviour and what types of rehabilitative forms of justice would be best match different types of deviancy.

The first task is to outline theories on causation of youth delinquency and crime.

## 1.1 Theories on Causation of Youth Violence

Understanding causal effects of youth delinquency cannot be confined to any one particular discipline but involves understanding an ambit of psychological and sociological factors that impact on behavioural patterns.

**Psychological approaches** to youth delinquency include social learning theory which posits that behaviour is learned through imitation of role models and reinforced by rewards and punishments received in interaction with others. Developmental theory focuses on deterrents to violence in the form of early parent-child ties of love; childhood experiences relatively free of punitive discipline or abuse; and experiences that reinforce the child's attachments, minimise frustrations, and encourage flexible inner controls.

**Sociological approaches** to understanding violence include four components: cultural (or sub-cultural), structural, interactionist, and economic. Again, these are not mutually exclusive explanations, but each contributes in an important way to our overall understanding of the problem.

The cultural approach points toward interventions designed to change the norms, values, typical behaviours, or beliefs of specific high-risk groups. Such changes

might be accomplished, for example, through education or by changing media images of persons with who target group members are likely to identify. Understanding cultural factors that may predispose a person to violence includes understanding:

- Male belief in physical prowess, toughness, search for thrills and action
- Underdeveloped verbal skills
- Belief that one should not intervene in another's fights
- Televised violence and media support
- Encouragement of fighting by bystanders

Understanding prevention strategies on the other hand would include understanding how to:

- Reduce media violence
- Increase community and witness intolerance for violence

The structural approach holds that rates of assaultive violence are largely influenced by broad-scale social forces, such as poverty, lack of opportunity, that operate independently of human cognition. In one widely recognised formulation, violence and other "illegitimate" behaviours arise when persons are deprived of "legitimate" means and resources to realise culturally valued goals. This theory does not adequately explain, however, why conflicts arising from structural deprivation lead to violence in one situation and other behaviours, passivity for instance, in other situations. Structural factors that may predispose a person to violence include:

- Poverty
- Ideology that masculinity means a dominant male social role
- Racial segregation and discrimination

Prevention strategies would include policies aimed at:

- Eliminating poverty and unemployment
- Changing conceptions of masculinity
- Reducing racial segregation and discrimination

The interactionist approach focuses on the nature of the interaction sequence as it escalates into violent behaviour and describes the process through which assaultive violence occurs. This kind of inquiry has been used most frequently to describe family violence. Research has shown that violence grows out of a series of provocative arguments that can escalate to murder. Interactionist factors that may predispose a person to violence:

- Drug and alcohol consumption
- Weapons possession
- Physical or verbal abuse

Prevention strategies include policies aimed at:

- Reducing alcohol and drug consumption
- Reducing firearm injuries
- Teaching conflict resolution skills for young men

The economic approach, also referred to as deterrence theory or the theory of economic choice, represents a particularly important perspective on the causes of assaultive violence because it provides the basis for many current policies aimed at reducing homicides and assaults. This perspective represents an extension by orthodox economists of the principles of microeconomic theory of illegal activity. The main thrust of this theory is that decisions to engage in criminal behaviour (e.g., the perpetuation of physical assaults) are based on rational considerations. This theory assumes that all people have an equal capacity to make rational judgements under all conditions and circumstances. But in the case of people under the influence of alcohol or drugs, for example, the ability to make rational judgements may be impaired.

Undertaking research that tackles psychological and sociological issues requires the correct design that gets the right information. Essentially, the research process needs to ensure accurate measurements of psychological and sociological influences on behavioural patterns, as well as a host of different attitudes, values and beliefs related to both to these behaviour patterns and experiences of individuals.

## **2 RESEARCH AS A POLICY TOOL**

The aspiration to support policy-relevant, development-orientated research means that the agenda for research will largely be set by local stakeholders. As such a consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of the process of formulating research questions and analysing the research output whilst formulating it into policy recommendations. The proposed process is geared towards stimulating policy-oriented and development-related research. The research program that should evolve from the research process should be multi-disciplinary, problem-oriented and policy-relevant. Most developing countries lack sufficient articulation between the research undertaken and the national needs for social, economic, intellectual and cultural construction. As such, many donor led research programs fail to impact within policy-making paradigms and are simply wasted. The emphasis and direction of the proposed research should therefore fit into the themes defined by local stakeholders and should demonstrate that a demand for such knowledge exists in the area of youth crime prevention and rehabilitation. The starting point therefore must originate from within local policy priority areas and should seek to stimulate the formulation of alternatives within and outside government policies.

Continuous interaction between researchers, policy makers and stakeholders in the society under investigation makes such a process possible. Indeed it is essential that such a process is led and approved by stakeholders and from the formulation of the research questions to the output. As such whatever research direction is proposed should be specifically geared towards generating a knowledge need where from policy may be enacted. Due to the fact that such a

research process cannot be prescribed prior to its initiation, it is possible that both new and alternative methodologies, that may not necessarily fit into existing paradigms, are stimulated.

In a study such as this it is important to acknowledge, up front, the core principal that "the youth", "offenders", "community" and "the various stakeholder groups" are not homogeneous entities, but rather a complex myriad of parts that constitute the sum of all the different interests that live in a particular defined area. As such a research-based analysis of youth in particular urban locations must be processed orientated and approached as if there is heterogeneity of needs, constraints and resources. It is therefore critical to incorporate procedural mechanisms by which the dynamics and needs of youth, their families and involved stakeholders, both institutional and non-institutional within the survey region can be drawn out. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to involve the relevant youth, their communities and stakeholders in a process of consultation and empowerment. Furthermore, embedded in such a process ought to be mechanisms that allow for ongoing evaluation of research, policy planning and implementation stages and the root causes of why these are either successes or failures.

A stakeholder led involvement in the generation of appropriate requirements and best practice statements that is based upon the needs and perceptions of all the effected persons, lays a solid foundation for the understanding of the issues on hand, impacts on future delivery, and acts as a yardstick by which implementation can be measured. In so doing it recognises the potential pitfalls in the implementation of a youth crime prevention program and an ex-offender rehabilitation program and puts in place a process that minimises any potential failure by managing potential conflict through the generation of information and alternatives around which consensus can be found. Similarly the process enables points of common understanding and concern to be instantaneously identified and thus provide the necessary building blocks for the bridges to be created between youth and stakeholder organisations. Finally, this process results in the creation of a dynamic process that pursues the aims of the youth various programs past the implementation phase.

The approach considers the building of both and policy decision-making capacity to be an integral element of all the overall research process being carried out. Furthermore the process aims to enhance research and policy decision-making skills capacity of institutions within both government and civil society by developing local competence amongst involved and interested stakeholders. As an offshoot of this, the process attempts to traverse through any existing barriers to communication and co-operation between diverse groups in the society and as such encourages the establishment of new linkages between all interested and involved parties. It is essential that the research and policy process does not remain within the policy paradigms defined by either national or local government but that equal interest be given to are other initiatives that may emanate from civil society, business, NGO's, CBO's, education and training institutions.

If such a process is to be successful, the dissemination of research results and the first policy output is not an end in itself. The process between development practitioners, policy makers and society at large is continuous and interactive.

### **3 THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

A methodological approach should be in line with the belief that research should not be used, merely as a tool for the extraction of data, but as a development instrument in its own right. The chosen research methodology should ultimately reflect the aim of research process, which in this instance is to better understand youth delinquency. Making the process inclusive promotes legitimacy of the planning and implementation phase as well as enabling the identification of potential conflicts, whilst planning and delivery in this way becomes more effective. The research practitioner moulds the requirements of the stakeholders, in consultation with these stakeholders, into existing research methodologies and suggests the types of research tools that can best be employed to ensure the desired output.

The aim of the research process is 1) to better understand youth delinquency, 2) to identify actions to prevent crime amongst youths and 3) to re-socialise young offenders. The research process should inform a public debate between policy makers, practitioners, youths and their families to identify strategies and action plans to address youth delinquency. In order to do so, the research process has to ensure sufficient inclusiveness and comprehensiveness. The use of a mixture of research methodologies including both quantitative and qualitative methods for data gathering that consult youths as well as their friends and families, involved policy makers and related practitioners, ensures a holistic picture of the problem, its context and its causes.

Representativity, which is rooted in the sampling methodology decided upon, is undoubtedly one of the core elements in any type of research led policy process, but it should not be placed before the need to ensure that relevant data is collected and properly translated. Poor data, improperly analysed but collected from a perfectly representative sample means very little. When research is orientated towards policy formulation, the type of information or data collected is absolutely crucial. If research findings are to be used to determine a desired policy program and to forecast future events, then the data collected must be relevant. This should not detract from the importance of the type of methodology to be applied, but it should be the type of data required that should take precedence in the process, even if means that new untested methodologies are adopted.

The issue of data requirements and methodology also needs to be contextualised within the type of research process that has been adopted. Should the desired output of the process lead to policy recommendations and it is explicitly stated that it should be stakeholder led, then it is impossible to decide on what methodology is to be applied prior to initiating the process and engaging the stakeholders. Such an approach is unlikely to be viewed favourably by funding agencies whose own requirements are usually determined by fiscal considerations, and may not always coincide with the agendas of local beneficiaries. Nevertheless, most progress funding agencies rightly insist on stakeholder participation in development

research and must therefore concede to a phased approach which incorporates which incorporates the setting of the agenda, including the formulation of the data requirements and the research methodology.

All data can come in the form of words, images, impressions, gestures, or tones that represent real events or reality as it is seen symbolically or sociologically. Qualitative research uses unreconstructed logic to understand what is really real: the quality, meaning, context, or image of reality in what people actually do, not what they say they do (as in the collection of quantitative data). Unreconstructed logic means that there are no step-by-step rules, that researchers ought not to use prefabricated methods or reconstructed rules, terms, and procedures that try to make their research look clean and neat.

It is therefore difficult to define qualitative research since it doesn't involve the same terminology as ordinary science. It involves methods of data collection and analysis that are non-quantitative. It is a more subjective methodology. It is fair to say that qualitative research most often is grounded theory, built from the ground up. For the purposes of this study a qualitative component should be considered as a means of assuring the reliability and validity of the data from which the key analytic findings will be determined.

Quantitative research on the other hand, while having the advantage of providing a unit of analysis which is statistically reliable, has the disadvantage of not being able to provide the depth and scope which the qualitative component of the study offers. It is essential that findings are quantified in a scientific and statistical manner. The essence is to try and evaluate whether the issues that have been raised by the youth and other stakeholders can show trends that are useful in analysing similar incidences

A mixed methodological approach be considered that is based on both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

#### **4. THE RESEARCH PLAN - A THREE PHASE APPROACH**

In order to achieve such an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the research subject, a three-phased approach, neither of which is a stand-alone and within which a consultative process remains operative and informs each phase, is recommended. The following chart illustrates the process that is initiated with a scoping exercise combining qualitative and quantitative research. This is followed by a quantitative survey of youth. The output of this phase is the formulation of policy recommendations.

#### **4.1 PHASE ONE: SCOPING**

Phase one has a number of key objectives. The first is to identify all existing stakeholders and create a buy-in process with policy makers, youth and all interested and effected stakeholders. An understanding of what issues need to be investigated follows this.

##### **Phase 1 Step 1**

The research process is initiated with an audit of all stakeholders involved in this sector. This audit should be as extensive as possible and include the identification of both formal and informal organisations or individuals that may impact on future policy making. The investigation should be all inclusive encompassing organisations, institutions and individuals that may be perceived as peripheral.

Typical of institutions, organisations and individuals that would be audited would include:

1. Youth Groups
2. Parent and Community Group Representatives
3. NGO's operating in the sector.
4. Social Welfare Services Officers
5. School Teachers and Councillors
6. Religious Bodies Representatives
7. Police Service Officers (Local & National)
8. Prisons and/or Correction Services Officers
9. Judicial Services Officers (Magistrates)
10. Policy Makers (Local / Provincial / National)

The research would begin with a desk-top study, followed by further primary research to locate organisations that work with youth and within communities that have not been listed in the literature. A face-to-face scan with these organisations will then be conducted.

Informal institutional organisations are established and operated by a small handful of people who often have obligations which limit the time they have to give input. As, such it is likely that some of the identified interest groups might only give minimal input, or might fall out altogether

##### **Phase 1 Step 2**

The second step in this phase is the administration of a scan of different types of youth. These include:

1. current first-time offenders;
2. repeat offenders;
3. non-repeat ex-offenders; and
4. non-offenders.

The aim of this scan is to map and quantify both the extent of the problem and the differentiated nature of offences that youth are committing. It is important to take cognisance of the type of youth who never repeat an offence and those who become repeat offenders. In order to do this, secondary information on whatever

demographic and police, court or prison record variables are available, needs to be collected,. This information should cover youth currently:

1. remanded and awaiting trial;
2. sentenced and serving either in prisons or places of safety; and
3. completed their sentence and are in rehabilitation treatment

It would be necessary to track this information through individual visits to all places or safety, prisons or rehabilitation centres that are found in the study area.

This stage would also identify those youth offender groups who become partners in the research process.

### **Phase 1 Step 3**

Once all the stakeholders have been identified and the extent of the youth delinquency problem identified, a forum is created wherein the various stakeholders participate in the creation of a youth prevention and rehabilitation continuum. The forum is divided into two sessions, The primary aim of the first session is as follows::

1. commit to the process, define the context of their future interaction and involvement and express their expectations in terms of the final output;
2. identify and list key issues relevant to understanding youth and crime; and
3. express what type of data/information is required to assist policy decision-making.

The role of the research team would be to guide the forum through the permutation of possibilities to attaining this information and recommend the best way in which the objectives can be achieved. However, given the diverse nature of crime and the fact that the offender group is not homogenous it is not possible to simply proceed into the research stage.

Attitudes and perceptions of the different generic categories of offender youth vary, as well as the fact that their drivers for action differ. Prior to embarking in a costly and lengthy research process, it is necessary to test the relevancy of the issues raised by the stakeholder group and to determine whether the type of information required is relevant and useful for the policy recommendations.

### **Phase 1 Step 4**

The next step is to administer an interview schedule to a targeted group of different youth offender categories and stakeholder to test the issues raised by the stakeholder forum. In addition to issues raised, questions will be asked in order to provide the necessary a basic dataset that gives information on the legal, social and economic constraints and opportunities that define the social structure within which youth offenders are located/operate.

For youth:

- ☐ Stability: composition of the household;

- ☐ Authority and social background: attitudes to teachers, authority figures, parents, friends, leisure activities, personal life, male and female role models, education and work;

The questions on family and social background aim to establish whether youths involved in criminal activities have different social, economic and cultural backgrounds than non-delinquent youths. Further, these questions serve to identify differences or similarities between male and female young offenders.

- ☐ History of substance abuse: alcohol and drugs;

The questions on substance abuse seek to clarify from what age onwards youths are experimenting, with which substances and for what reasons, and whether there are significant differences between delinquents and non-delinquents and between male and female respondents.

- ☐ Exposure to crime or violence: timeline of experience, including criminal history and present crime case;
- ☐ Record of associations to criminals, gangs and weapons;

The section on crime, gangs and weapons aims to identify the perceptions of youths regarding crime, safety, criminals, gangs and weapons and their own experiences and involvement.

- ☐ Experience of police, justice, corrective and penal institutions, welfare and education, rehabilitation;

Delinquent youths will then be asked to share their criminal history and their experiences with the criminal justice system and welfare. The non-delinquent youths will also be asked to share their opinions about the police and the government to identify differences and similarities with young offenders.

- ☐ Roles and responsibilities: any organisations, networks or affiliations that impact on the day to day life (feelings of loneliness or belonging, peer group pressure);

- ☐ Communication skills: frustrations or anxieties relating to being understood.

The suggestions and their ideas for the future will provide insights in the opportunities and possibilities they perceive in society for themselves and for crime prevention (the hope they have).

For other stakeholders:

- ☐ Objectives, activities, partners, framework and constraints of the institution;
- ☐ Facilities of the institution for prevention and rehabilitation;
- ☐ Crimes, young offenders, youth delinquency and crime prevention;
- ☐ Rehabilitation and resocialisation;

The questionnaire for the institutions is meant to provide a control data set which compares and identifies contradictions apparent in the youth dataset. These questions provide a clear picture of the institutional frameworks, capacities, divisions of tasks and responsibilities regarding youth issues and young delinquency. The questionnaire also seeks to identify the perceptions regarding crime, young offenders, crime prevention and rehabilitation.

There are a number of research methodologies that can be utilised to solicit this type of data. It is recommended that focus groups be used. The focus group research is geared towards drawing upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods, for example observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys. These attitudes, feelings and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social setting, but are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails. Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context.

Focus groups remain under-used in social research, although they have a long history in market research and more recently in medical research. There are many definitions of a focus group but perhaps the best is that a focus group is: "a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research". (Powell, 1996: 499). Focus groups can be used throughout the research continuum, but are particularly useful at the preliminary or exploratory stages of a study. In this case, they would be geared towards evaluating the issues to be researched and developing a process whereby the research process can be maximised.

Focus groups are not group interviews. The latter involves interviewing a number of people at the same time with the emphasis being on questions and responses between the researcher and participants. Focus groups however rely on, interaction within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher. Hence the strength is that it enables interaction between participants. A The ensuring participants, youth or stakeholders have a specific experience of or opinion about the topic under investigation; that an explicit interview guide is used; and that the subjective experiences of participants are explored in relation to predetermined research questions.

Interaction lies at the core of focus groups because the interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language they use about an issue and their values and beliefs about a situation. Interaction also enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences. Focus groups elicit information in a way which allows researchers to find out why an issue is salient, as well as what is salient about it. As a result, the gap between what people say and what they do can be better understood. If participants reveal multiple understandings and meanings, multiple explanations of their behaviour and attitudes will be more readily articulated.

Finally, the opportunity to be involved in decision-making processes, to be valued as experts, and to be given the chance to work collaboratively with researchers can be empowering for many participants and should not be underestimated. If a group works well, trust develops and the group may explore solutions to a particular problem as a unit, rather than as individuals.

It is recommended that the number of people per group be restricted to between six and eight, Larger groups, sometimes as many as 15 participants are recommended by researchers become unwieldy and often result in some participants being “crowded out” Smaller focus groups place pressure on participants to be constantly active and as such can be counter productive in “pushing” respondents into silence. The number of focus groups to be constituted will have to be determined by the forum and would be influenced by the size and varied nature of the offender youth and stakeholder group. This information would have been collected during the previous steps.

### **Phase 1 Step 5**

The data collected from the focus groups is placed before the forum of stakeholders and if it verifies their earlier list of issues to be studied ratified before the next phase initiated. It might be necessary to repeat Phase 1 Step 4 and then reconvene a third time until such ratification follows.

## **4.2 PHASE TWO: RESEARCH**

This phase of the process comprises the quantitative component of the study, meaning that a largely close-ended interview scheduled will be administered in a one-to-one interview setting to a sample of respondents. It is here that a representative sample is selected to provide a large enough unit of analysis from which to extract reliable and valid data. The survey in this phase would be aimed only at youth and it would be essential to ensure that all the different generic typologies are covered. This phase aims at providing the necessary data to understand preventative as well as rehabilitative strategies This phase is limited to youth alone and five generic categories of youth will be selected for the research process. In addition to the three offender categories and non-offenders, an attempt should be made to track and interview “hidden offenders”. This means that current youth offenders that have not been apprehended by the law would need to be found and coaxed into being part of the study. This may seem as an impossible task, but precedence has shown that it can be undertaken

Previous The duration of the questionnaire will not exceed 45 minutes and should be as closed-ended as possible. The questionnaires will be modular in nature containing sections that would be applied to all the youth.

There are six basic types of data that such research might collect from a combination of youth, their families, friends and other members of society, care-professionals, police officers and justice officials on any number of diverse issues:

1. Attributes of the above (demographic characteristics).
2. Attitudes of what the above think.
3. Opinions of what the above think might be facts.

4. Beliefs of what the above articulate as being the truth.
5. Behaviour of what the above actually do.
6. Preferences of what the above would choose.

Each type of data may require a different type of question to get at that data. Generally, there are seven basic types of survey questions:

1. Open responses.
2. Closed responses.
3. Partially open responses.
4. Semantic differential scales.
5. Agreement and rating scales.
6. Ranking scales (including paired alternatives).
7. Checklists.

Sampling is an important part of this phase. Any survey on youth offenders should cover all categories of youth offenders in the population. If all such youth offenders being interviewed could provide perfect answers, we could measure all indicators with complete accuracy. However, interviewing all youth offenders would, if at all possible, be time-consuming, expensive and wasteful. It is therefore necessary to interview a sample of youth offenders to obtain estimates of the actual indicators.

The essence of testing the significance of data is to determine whether a sample is drawn from a population with known characteristics or from a population with unknown characteristics. If we know how all values in a population are distributed, then we can tell if a sample is from that distribution by looking at the value of its characteristics. The characteristics of samples that are most important are the measurements that describe the sample as a whole: its mean and standard deviation. In doing repeated sampling, the value of the sample mean will vary above and below an average value: the average being the mean of the sample means. How much it varies is its error rate. The difference between the estimate and the actual indicator is called sampling error. Sampling errors are caused by the fact that a sample—and not the entire population—is surveyed. Sampling error can be minimized by taking certain precautions, like choosing the sample of respondents in an unbiased way and selecting a large enough sample for estimates to be precise. The larger the sample, the less it varies and the smaller the error rate. Using a similar procedure for determining sample size for categorical responses (such as Yes and No) we can determine what sample size is required given a particular error rate desired.

If there is a very large sample, you need not repeat the sampling process many times in order to capture the true values of the population characteristics. However, with large populations and small samples, there is a need to do a very large number of repeated samplings in order to be sure of capturing the true values. If the sampling process was repeated 100 times and 90 of the 100 samples taken would produce the same percentages and error rates, then there would be confidence that would have obtained the true value 90 out of 100 times. This is what is meant by a 90 percent level of confidence and therefore the sample is drawn depending on what level of confidence is required.

Herein however lies the problem, for there is no known knowledge of all the categories of youth offenders, indeed, it is unlikely that there exists even any way of tracking and documenting even most delinquent youths. The size and locations of non-offender and current offender groups can be respectively estimated and located. That is, through existing census statistics and police, court and social services data sets, the size and composition of these groups can be determined to a fair degree of accuracy. Determining the size and location of and non-repeat offenders and hidden offenders is not so easy and as such it can be said that there is no sampling frame which is necessary if a probability sample is to be considered. Probability sampling that ensures that all individuals in the target population (for example, all delinquent youths) have a known chance of being interviewed cannot be used.

It will therefore be necessary to utilise non-probability sampling of which there are two broad types: accidental or purposive. Most sampling methods are purposive in nature because we usually approach the sampling problem with a specific plan in mind. The most important distinctions among these types of sampling methods are the ones between the different types of purposive sampling approaches. However, before deciding which non-probability samples might work best for this type of study it would be prudent to understand that the difference between non-probability and probability sampling is that non-probability sampling does not involve a random selection and probability sampling does. This does not necessarily mean that non-probability samples aren't representative of the population, but it does mean that non-probability samples cannot depend upon the rationale of probability theory. At least with a probabilistic sample, the odds or probability that we have represented the population are known. Confidence intervals for the statistic can be estimated. With non-probability samples, they may or may not represent the population well, and it will often be hard for to know how close they get to representing the universe. In general, researchers prefer probabilistic or random sampling methods over non-probabilistic ones, and consider them to be more accurate and rigorous. However, in applied social research there may be circumstances where it is not feasible, practical or theoretically sensible to do random sampling. It is therefore necessary to consider a wide range of non-probabilistic alternatives.

### **Phase 2 Step 1.1**

The Non-Offender Youth Survey uses a probability sample and identifies a requisite number of respondents to ensure an adequate representation by age, gender and spatial location. The size of the universe will determine sample size and it would be necessary to bear in mind that each sub-samples (age by gender by location) are adequately represented. Quotas can be used to determine the size of these sub-samples.

A probability sampling method is any method of sampling that utilises some form of random selection. In order to have a random selection method, there must be a formal process or procedure that assures that the different units in the universe or population have equal probabilities of being chosen. In it's simplest form, subjects are allocated numbers and then based on a defined formula certain numbers are selected for the sample. Stratified random sampling, also sometimes called

proportional or quota random sampling, which is what is being advocated for this sample of youth, involves dividing your population into homogeneous subgroups and then taking a simple random sample in each subgroup.

The stratified sampling is advocated over simple random sampling for this study, because it assures that not only is the overall population represented, but also key sub-groups such as different ages and gender, and if required ethnic minority groups.

### **Phase 2 Step 1.2**

The Current Offender Survey of both first-time and repeat offenders also uses a probability sample and identifies a requisite number of respondents currently serving their sentences and to ensure an adequate representation by age, gender and the crimes for which they were sentenced. The size of the universe will determine sample size and it again it will be necessary to bear in mind that each sub-samples (age by gender by location) are adequately represented. Given that the nature of offence is perhaps the most important variable, it would be necessary first to stratify by this and then, if possible determine quotas for age and gender.

In quota sampling, respondents may be either randomly or non-randomly selected according to some fixed quota of which there are two main types: proportional and non proportional. In proportional quota sampling there is an expressed desire to represent the major characteristics of the population by sampling a proportional amount of each, namely, if the population of youth offenders is known to be 20% girls and 80% boys, then the sample is selected according to these characteristics. AGAIN, this one and the one I mentioned above are the only ones relevant for me and the one following below. The rest I would eliminate

It is likely however, that some subgroups, for instance girls, may extremely small and it would thus be necessary to can use different sampling fractions within the different strata to randomly over-sample the small group. The ensuing data would then have to be weighted within-group estimates using the sampling fraction to bring it back into line with the overall population estimates. When sampling fraction within strata are used then the methodology is said to be proportionate stratified random sampling. Should more than one sub-group or a sub-group within a sub-group (girls of different ages be over-sampled), and thus different sampling fractions are used within a strata, then the sampling methodology is called disproportionate stratified random sampling. Undoubtedly, stratified random sampling will generally have more statistical precision than simple random sampling. This will only be true if the strata or groups are homogeneous. If they are, we expect that the variability within-groups is lower than the variability for the population as a whole. Stratified sampling capitalises on that fact.

### **Phase 2 Step 1.3**

The Non-Repeat Ex-Offender Survey could utilise a probability sample that identifies a requisite number of respondents who have completed serving their sentences and should ensure an adequate representation by age, gender and the crimes for which they were sentenced. However, although a best estimate can be put to the size of the universe, tracking non-repeat ex-offender youth is likely to

prove a difficult if not impossible task. The generation of address lists of this constituent group is unlikely to materialise, therefore non-probability sampling techniques such as purposive sampling and snowballing would have to be utilised.

Purposive sampling occurs when it is said that there is “a purpose of mind” in that one or more specific predefined groups are sought, for instance, youth that have been to prison, police officers that have dealt imprisoned youth, etc. Purposive sampling is very useful for situations where a targeted sample needs to be reached quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the primary concern

Treading an uneasy line between the dictates of replicable and representative research design and the more flowing and theoretically led sampling techniques of qualitative research, snowball sampling lies somewhat at the margins of research practice. However, the technique offers real benefits for studies which seek to access difficult to reach or hidden populations. These are often obscured from the view of social researchers and policy makers who are keen to obtain evidence of the experiences of some of the more marginal excluded groups.

In its simplest formulation snowball sampling consists of identifying respondents who are then used to refer researchers on to other respondents. In snowball sampling one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on. Snowball sampling can be placed within a wider set of link-tracing methodologies which seek to take advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts. This process is based on the assumption that a ‘bond’ or ‘link’ exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing a series of referrals to be made within a circle of acquaintance. While some may seek to characterise the topics for which snowball strategies have been used as being trivial or obscure, the main value of snowball sampling is as a method for obtaining respondents where they are few in number or where some degree of trust is required to initiate contact. Trust may be developed as referrals are made by acquaintances or peers rather than other more formal methods of identification. Under these circumstances, techniques of ‘chain referral’ may imbue the researcher with characteristics associated with being an insider or group member and this can aid entry to settings where conventional approaches find it difficult to succeed.

Snowball sampling contradicts many of the assumptions underpinning conventional notions of sampling but has a number of advantages for sampling populations such as the deprived, the socially stigmatised and hidden populations. Policy makers and academics have long been aware that certain ‘hidden’ populations, such as the delinquent youth are hard to locate. Other groups such as criminals, prostitutes, drug users and people with unusual or stigmatised conditions (e.g. AIDS sufferers) pose a range of methodological challenges if we are to understand more about their lives. This issue describes the processes and the advantages and difficulties of using snowball sampling techniques.

Snowball samples have a number of deficiencies and at the core lies the quality of the data and in particular a selection bias which limits the validity of the sample are the primary concerns of recent snowball sampling research. Because elements

are not randomly drawn, but are dependent on the subjective choices of the respondents first accessed, most snowball samples are biased and do not therefore allow researchers to make claims to generality from a particular sample. Secondly, snowball samples will be biased towards the inclusion of individuals with inter-relationships, and therefore will over-emphasise cohesiveness in social networks and will miss 'isolates' who are not connected to any network that the researcher has tapped into. The problem of selection bias may be partially addressed, firstly through the generation of a large sample and secondly by the replication of results to strengthen any generalisations. At present, a statistical formalisation of snowball sample biases is not available, however, larger sample sizes may reduce bias.

#### **Phase 2 Step 1.4**

The Hidden Offender Survey is the most difficult to undertake, and given the nature of the subjects involved, only non-probability sampling techniques can be utilised. The problems are further compounded, for not knowing the size of the universe, it is difficult to determine a sample size, therefore a decision would have to be made before hand as to what would be an acceptable size that would lend integrity to the data collected.

For this survey, a mix of snowball and non-proportional quota sampling is recommended. In the case of the latter the minimum number of sampled units required for the overall sample and perhaps for sub-groups are specified. Through snowballing subjects are sought and interviewed until whatever required quota was set, has been reached. In this instance, the research is not concerned with having numbers that match the proportions in the population. Instead, a simply minimum number of subjects are sought, whose numbers are sufficient to assure that the data can be interrogated. This method is the non-probabilistic analogue of stratified random sampling in that it is typically used to assure that smaller groups are adequately represented in the sample.

#### **Phase 2 Step 2**

In order to enrich the quality of data collected during the quantitative surveys, it is suggested that a certain number of case-studies representing "typical" reflections of the generic categories of respondents be undertaken. It is suggested that nine case studies be undertaken, three each of first time current offenders, repeat offenders and ex-offenders. Using unstructured interviews a number of youth representing the different categories be selected from the same target base population identified in the previous phase.

### **4.3 PHASE THREE: POLICY FORMULATION**

The final phase of the process, which is divided into two discrete sub-phases, constitutes the bringing of the various stakeholders together to ratify the data collected and mould it into a policy directives.

#### **Phase 3 Step 1**

Prior to constituting the final forum, it is essential to bring together youth and parent groups and any other non-organisation whose policy formulation expertise may be limited and conduct necessary skills workshops, in order to enable them to meaningfully contribute to the process.

### **Phase 3 Step 2**

In the spirit of participation and process which at the core of this research methodology, the findings of the research will be workshopped before the policy document is finalised. This is in contrast to most research processes where a final document is presented to the interested and affected parties. Phase Five invites all participants to comment, contribute, accept or reject any components of the research findings. The participants for this workshop are self-selected representatives who were part of the phase three action group.

This final phase is an intense participatory action group process which would be facilitated by an experienced and trained moderator and not the research specialists. This is essential in order to ensure complete subjectivity in the ensuing discussions and debates. The moderator would create an enabling stakeholder space in which participants would be given the time to propose meaningful input into the process.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

Facilitated by an experienced and trained moderator, who creates an enabling actor space in which participants are given the time to give meaningful input which provides the necessary texture and richness to the study. It is this phase which engages the researcher in the complex historical, geographical, political and socio-economic realities of the people who are the focus of the study. It is through this phase that the study gains the necessary richness that is part of parcel of all social structures.

In the spirit of participation and process which at the core of this research methodology, the findings of the research will be workshopped before the policy document is finalised. Most research processes present a final document to the interested and affected parties. Phase Five invites all participants to comment, contribute, accept or reject any components of the research findings. The participants for this workshop are self-selected representatives who were part of the phase three action group.