CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter begins with a summation of the purported objectives of the study followed by Section I, containing an objective-wise summary of findings. Section II comprises an emerging theoretical discussion based on the highlights from the summary of findings and a discussion on the macro picture about organised crime, extortion and youth involvement in gangs in Mumbai city. Section III contains research prospects (areas for further research) and a discussion on scope for social work intervention emerging from the findings.

This study, to begin with, attempted to understand the profile of youth (in the age group of 18 to 30 years at the time of their first arrest) arrested in property offences of serious nature. The category of property offence chosen for the study was extortion related offences. Extortion involves the use of threat, force or violence against a victim with the objective of financial gain and carried out usually by more than one person, as part of the activities of criminal gangs, thus meeting the criteria of ‘property offence of serious nature’.

The study further attempted to understand the reasons for entry into crime by the youth concerned, their views on family, peer and gender relationships, religion, and State; processing by the criminal justice system and their perceptions about it; support systems available to deal with arrest, post-arrest and release phases in their lives; and factors which could lead to their remaining in or coming out of the criminal nexus.

Finally, there has been an attempt to conceptualize and understand criminal gangs – their history, structure, hierarchy, activities, norms and rules, nexus with the police and the State apparatus and the changing face of organised crime.
SECTION I: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. The profile of male youth arrested in extortion cases

*Age and education*

More than half of youth arrested in extortion cases were between the age group of 18 to 24 years at the time of their first arrest. In terms of their education levels, most of them were literate with a majority educated up to secondary level or above. Their academic performances ranged from ‘good’ to being ‘disinterested in studies’. Financial crunch at home and the need to start earning forced some to drop out of school while some dropped out due to lack of interest in studies, influence of peer relationships or over-indulgence by the family. Apart from studies, many of them were good at sports and/or extra-curricular activities. They presented a picture of being popular – at school and/or in the area.

*Work and employment*

The work profile revealed that most of them were skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled workers in the informal sector. However, many of them had a history of changing two or more jobs prior to their arrest. Their reasons for leaving their jobs included fight at work place, disliking the type of work, escape from exploitation, better wages, distance from work place to residence, and in one case, even fear of heights. Most youth were earning incomes between Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 5000/- pm.

Many of the youth were found to be unemployed or in irregular employment. However, at the time of their arrest, almost all of them had some work experience, indicating that lack of employment is not necessarily related to the person getting into crime.

*Family background*

Most youth arrested for extortion offences belonged to families settled in the city. Literature and data from this study show that extortion has traditionally been an activity

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40 The youth in this case was a skilled welder. He often worked at construction sites and his job included fitting of window grills in tall buildings. He left this job and later took up another one as casual labour with lesser wages. When asked the reason for his not going back to his earlier job, he said that he was scared of heights.
of ‘local youth’ in marked out territories and accompanied by turf wars between groups to establish their dominance in an area. However, there is an increasing trend, particularly amongst organised crime gangs, to use upcountry migrant youth who are not from the city and who can be asked to abscond after carrying out the assigned task.

In examining their family backgrounds, it was found that most fathers were not educated beyond the higher secondary level and most mothers beyond primary level. Nearly half of the fathers had been or were skilled workers in the formal sector – in factories, textile mills, government or the private companies, while a few were self-employed or petty shopkeepers. With a significant percentage of the fathers having either retired from service or passing away (while the youth were still in their teens) and most mothers being homemakers, there was a steady deterioration of the financial condition at home. Very few of the youth lived in abject poverty or penury, and most said that there was enough to eat at home. However, there was not enough to go to a private school and wear good clothes, and they felt the financial pinch at home.

The passing away of the father in childhood or at a young age led to stress for the surviving parent to manage family responsibilities. The absence of income earning adults in a nuclear family structure created pressure on the youth to start earning and consequently dropping out from school. Most youth were the eldest or only son in the family, thus adding to the pressure on them to assume the breadwinning role. This is corroborated by the finding that many of the youth contributed to the expenses related to the marriage of their sisters, repairing the house, or payment of their mother’s medical bills. It emerged that some of them were pushed into the criminal nexus in attempting to fulfill this role.

**Area of residence**

The spatial distribution of youth arrested in extortion cases in Mumbai city reveals that they reside in areas largely comprising lower middle and working class Maharashtrian Hindu families, the industrial and wholesale trading belts, areas dominated by Muslim migrant families, and slum settlements of recent migrants. Most youth were second or
third generation migrants in the city. An overwhelming majority of the youth were unmarried or single.

This distribution of the residences of the youth arrested in extortion crimes conforms to the social disorganization theory of Shaw and McKay (1942), which propounded that the highest rates of delinquency are found in or around the districts of the city zoned for industry and commerce. These areas are characterized by low rents in old dilapidated buildings, low family incomes and a high percentage of immigrant populations, thus correlating crime to poverty and poor living conditions (but not to any inherent traits of these communities).

2. Reasons for entry into crime

Factors embedded in the family situation

Most youth described their families as ‘normal’, i.e. absence of conflict between the parents. Normality was defined by the respondents in terms of lack of tensions within the home environment.

However, there were a few youth who did belong to families where conflict was a defining feature. The reasons for conflict between the parents included alcoholism of the father, financial problems at home and the ‘problematic’ behaviour of their son (the respondent). These youth describe the relationship with their fathers as strained, but most expressed affection and regard towards their mothers. There was a sense of a loss of respect for the father and/or parent/s, which had an adverse impact on the family’s ability to control the behaviour of the youth. The tensions and conflicts at home led to a feeling of detachment with their families, and a tendency to remain outside home for long hours each day or even leaving home altogether at an early age.

The youth who had moved out of their family home lived by themselves or with friends. These youth went to a friend’s place or a hideout of a prison ‘contact’ after their release from prison, or were not sure of where they would go after release. This indicates that at least some of the youth did not have a strong attachment with the family or strong enough family supports to be able to return home after their release.
An interesting insight that can be gained from the family situation is that youth who came from conflict-ridden families, or those who expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with their parents’ role, were more deeply entrenched into gangs than those who gave relatively happier accounts of the family situation during their childhoods.

**Factors embedded in the area of residence**

There are two important findings with regard to the area of residence. While majority of the youth belonged to working class and ‘normal’ areas, a few came from areas which corroborate Cloward and Ohlin’s (1960) descriptions of *criminal or conflict* sub-cultures. Getting involved in peer relations and group fights over love affairs, turf wars and as expressions of growing up in a male world, in a search for masculine identity is seen as ‘normal’ behaviour in such areas. This search for a male identity corroborates with Miller’s (1958) *focal concerns* theory, whereby ‘members of adolescent street corner groups in lower class communities’ move away from their female-headed households into the neighbourhoods, and seek to express their male identity around six focal concerns: trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate and autonomy.

Involvement in group fights can lead some youth into acts of dare-devilry, which get noticed by criminal elements based in the area. These elements subsequently lure such youth to join them, in return for money, lavish lifestyle and recognition and status in the area. Conflict at home or inability of the family to exercise social control, push these youth to associate with gangs in the area and compensate for affection or status within the family.

It is interesting to note that those that came from ‘normal’ neighbourhoods were in the lower echelons of the organised crime structure; they were part-time or occasional extortionists and were involved in carrying out tasks relating to extortion which were assigned to them by the gangs. On the other hand, those from criminal or conflict sub-

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41 Normal area was described by the youth as neighbourhoods inhabited by working class people and marked by the absence of criminal or illegal activities, with the presence of the odd liquor den or beer bar; most children going to school, absence of communal ill-will and celebration of cultural and religious festivals as a community; and most houses with ‘proof of residence which would entitle them to alternate accommodation in case of displacement due to an infrastructure or redevelopment project initiated by the government.
cultures were found to be leading and organising extortion as an activity; they were into extortion as a full-time activity and were part of the upper hierarchy of the gang.

In other words, there are higher chances of the youth coming from conflict-ridden or ‘difficult’ family backgrounds and living in neighbourhoods characterised by the presence of criminal or conflict sub-cultures, to get pulled into gang-related behaviour or activities at an early stage of their lives, compared to the others who may have had similar problems with their families during their childhoods, but happened to live in essentially ‘working class’ areas.

**Factors embedded in the work place**

An important finding is that in almost fifty percent of the youth who had a work record, the extortion crime or incident had taken place at their work place or in connection with their work. There are two broad scenarios that act as a trigger – conflict (with peers or with superiors) and/or association or coming into contact with criminal elements. In some cases, the need for money or financial problems at home is exploited by these criminal elements; they act as agents introducing the youth in need of money to the world of crime, suggesting to them to participate in seemingly easy and ‘risk-free’ jobs.

**Prisonisation and its impact**

Lack of family support and / or legal aid and contact with habitual elements or those with gang affiliation emerged as an important issue which could lead to prisonisation and criminalization of youth offenders, first-timers and those arrested in petty crimes. In cases where there was little or no family contact, the youth seemed to be very uncertain about their future. They were not sure whether they would go home after their release. The lack of contact seemed to be the outcome of a combination of factors – poverty and inability to come for *mulakat*, breakdown of relationships, self-pride and absence of a family. The absence of a catalyst, for example a social worker, to motivate the family to take interest also emerged as a factor responsible for loss of contact with family.
3. Views on family, peer and gender relations, religion and State

Views on family, peer relations and individual factors

The youth who described their family situation as ‘normal’ tended to attribute the reasons for entry in the world of crime to lack of interest in studies, friendships or some life-changing incident, rather than the family situation.

Youth who belonged to families where they had to face a financial crunch at home tended to pin the reason on ‘force of circumstances’ or poverty as a trigger for entry into crime. Those who came from families where conflict was a defining feature at home tended to attribute crime causation to family conflicts leading to leaving or staying out of home; influence of peer relations, lifestyle problems and addictions.

Some of the youth tended to focus on individual factors such as inability to defer gratification, single-minded pursuit of one’s dreams without any care for the means used, tendency for anger outbursts and a sense of rejection leading to a need to ‘prove’ oneself.

Views on gender, religion and the State

It also emerges that most of the youth held traditional and patriarchal views with regard to gender relations, a humanistic and secular view of religion and a view of the role of the State as a protector of the weak and a provider of goods and services. These perceptions create an image about the youth having ‘larger than life’ view of themselves and a very strong sense of ‘right and wrong’, justice and fair play. They came across as individuals loyal to their views and relationships and not hesitant to act (including using force if necessary) in protecting the same.

4. Experiences with the CJS, perceptions and suggestions

A significant percentage of the youth have revealed a history of arrests. However, most of these youth were arrested for the first time in cases related to group fights or violent incidents, and not extortion. Subsequent developments in their lives including imprisonment (for the first offence) led them to extortion related crimes. Arrest in a case where violence was used by the youth and subsequent imprisonment brings the person in
contact with criminalising influences inside prison. This corroborates with Tannenbaum’s (1938) labelling theory Lemert’s (1951) theory of primary and secondary deviance.

The police

The youth had negative experiences with the police and therefore harboured negative perceptions about them. The broad themes around which these perceptions were woven were: violence inflicted upon them during interrogation in the police lock-up, not being allowed meetings with the family while in police custody, harassment of the family to get them to surrender or to reveal facts, manipulation of facts to strengthen or weaken a case (through bribery or use of influence), preventive arrests or being called to the police station now and then for questioning, demands of money or pressure to become informers, threat of fake ‘encounters’ or registering false cases/harsher sections of the law and religious bias.

Interestingly, the use of violence by the police was not so much a matter of contention for the youth; it was almost a given. Negative perceptions about the police emanated from how they perceived the police using violence as a tool, against whom and in what circumstances. They connected this with ideas of justice and fair play. Manipulation, double standards and dishonesty seem to emerge as the main grouse of the youth rather than the unconstitutionality of methods.

The judiciary

The youth viewed the judiciary largely as unresponsive, uncommunicative and insensitive to their situation. They also saw them as people who could be influenced or manipulated by extraneous factors. Most youth arrested in extortion cases were out on bail and their cases were pending in the courts, thus reinforcing the reality of judicial delays in the criminal justice process.

The prison

The broad themes emerging about prison conditions were: shortcomings in basic facilities including food, hygiene, sanitation and health care; space crunch and overcrowding; use
of violence by prison staff; corruption and availability of contraband items and drugs; sexual exploitation by convict warders; ‘extra’ facilities given to those with gang connections, money or influence; and running of illegal rackets (extortion or gambling) by gangsters inside.

**Legal aid**

Most of the youth had private lawyers. However, very few of them reposed faith in them. They had complaints against lawyers in terms of their high fees, inadequate communication with clients, and irregularity in attending court dates. The need for an effective legal aid system came across as one of the most important gaps which need to be plugged.

**Suggested reforms in the CJS**

The need to bring reforms in the criminal justice system emerged clearly. Some of the areas for improvement suggested by the youth include introducing systems to check the excessive use of violence as a method to ‘solve’ cases by the police; strengthening legal aid and facilitating family contact to counter criminalizing influences in custody; speeding up the trial process and introducing alternatives to the financial system of bail. They also emphasised the need to improve living conditions in custody; provision of educational, vocational, library, recreational, spiritual and counselling facilities in prison; introducing social services and social workers in the system, and setting up of after-care facilities in terms of employment and temporary shelter.

Overall, most of the youth had rather negative experiences with the criminal justice system. On a comparative scale, the police came across as the most negative followed by the prison. The image of the judiciary was mixed but it had negative connotations.

5. Social supports to deal with imprisonment and post-release situation

**Family support**

The youth who described their family situation as ‘normal’ were living with and/or had close association with their parental families at the time of data collection. Almost all of
them had also received some kind of support from their families after their arrest – their family members came for mulakats in police or prison custody, met them on their court dates, arranged legal aid and stood as sureties to bail for them. Majority of them went back to the family home after their release from custody.

The trigger for attempting to get out of crime was marked by the presence of a person in the individual’s life, to whom he felt a strong sense of attachment and accountability. This was a family member, a girlfriend or a wife. There seems to be a strong and positive correlation between the role of and the level of attachment with the family and life chances of a youth after release. This finding corresponds with the social attachment theory propounded by Hirschi (1969), which linked offending behaviour to the level of commitment and attachment to belief in society. This theory focuses on the extent to which the relationship between the individual and social institutions like the family may have an influence on constraining criminal behaviour.

Feelings of attachment with at least one member of the family led to a sense of accountability in the youth and consequently, increased the chances of responsible behaviour on their part. Such relationships also fulfill the function of supervision of the youth and provide support through ups and downs being faced by them.

**Support from the criminal nexus**

A large majority of the youth have taken some kind of support from contacts made inside prison or from their gangs/criminal nexus. The youth in prison seemed to be taking help from wherever it came – whether from their families, their prison contacts or gang members. If the family supports were not able to match the support offered by the prison contacts or the criminal nexus, the youth took the help offered by the latter, particularly if there was lack of attachment to family. It was also found that nearly half of the youth continued to maintain some form of contact with friends from the criminal world or with contacts made in prison, after their release from prison.

The prolonged association of the youth with criminal networks and gangs and the consequences of this association can have a positive or negative impact on the life of the
youth, as far as continuation in crime is concerned. The bosses of the gang allow the youth to get out of the organisation if it is assured that there is no risk of leakage of information, or that the exit of youth would not mean a substantive loss to their organisation or income. Otherwise, they may make every effort to retain the person in the gang using incentives as well as threats.

**The social worker’s role**

It emerged that the entry of a social worker or a rehabilitation agency in the life of the individual can compensate for the absence of strong family support. The role of this agency may encompass a range of issues and tasks, similar to or supportive to the role of the family. Further, it may not suffice if the presence of the social worker or the rehabilitation agency in the life of the youth occurs as a one-time intervention or lasts for a short span of time. Rehabilitation is a long-drawn out process and individual factors such as a fragile ego, lack of emotional maturity or low frustration tolerance come in the way. Depression and return to past addictions are other dangers facing a youth trying to come out. At these times, the presence of strong and calming influences such a family member or a social worker is essential for the journey to succeed.

5. **Legal, social and livelihood related processes after release**

**Impact of police actions**

The role of the police has a crucial bearing on the chances of the youth being able to get out of crime successfully. The police actions could have a positive and/or negative impact on the youth concerned. The impact of the police actions on the youth ranged from feelings of fear, anger, revenge, to frustration, fatigue and resignation. These feelings sometimes ‘forced’ them to leave the area or go underground in order to avoid contact.

These experiences could lead to a decision to get out of crime, especially if the family or a social worker / rehabilitation agency was able to mediate a negotiated ‘agreement’ with the police, on certain terms and conditions. In the absence of family support or a social worker, sustained police actions may lead to the youth to seek the protection of the gangs.
or local politicians who may exploit their vulnerability by asking them to work for them in carrying out illegal activities.

**Turning point in life**

The death of a mother, the birth of a child, an ‘encounter’ with a police or prison officer or a social worker, or the period spent in prison are events that can prove to be turning points or life-changing incidents. These events created a deep impact on the psyche on the youth, and led to reflection and a paradigm shift in the direction of life. The outcome of this process was usually a decision taken by them to get out of crime and make an attempt to start life afresh. Whether this decision became a long-term one or was short lived, depended on a number of other factors operating in the life of the youth.

**Livelihood issues**

Finding stable and ‘meaningful’ employment is an important indicator of rehabilitation. A job or occupation which provides financial security and a socially relevant role adds meaning and value to the life of the youth. It is important to engage in work which is ‘visible’ to people in the area. Being productively employed and contributing to the family income also helps in dealing with police suspicion.

**Social skills and identity change**

Finally, finding supportive relationships outside the immediate family and the lived environment of the youth, and getting involved in social work were found to be good indicators of rehabilitation. Forming and sustaining relationships with ‘respectable’ people in the area or work place, associating with a social cause, being helpful to people in the neighbourhood, or organising people around civic issues were some examples.

True and long-term rehabilitation occurs when the image of the person changed from being a person who brought harm to family or the community to someone who brought value, esteem or resources.

Leaving the gang is always a risky decision, especially if the youth was a prominent member or an old hand in the gang. In such a situation, the youth may have to take a
calculated risk. A strong will to get out, which is backed by family supports, presence of a rehabilitation agency and cooperation of the police are important facilitating factors which tilt the decision towards a positive outcome.

SECTION II: A THEORITICAL DISCUSSION ON FACTORS LEADING TO CRIME CAUSATION AND REHABILITATION

The findings from the study have lent themselves to the development of a theoretical construct on factors leading to crimogenic behaviour amongst male youth and rehabilitation of youth in crime. Some of these findings relating to the area of residence, family situation, the effects of prisonisation and the impact of labelling by the CJS have validated Western theories on crime (Shaw and McKay, 1942; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Miller, 1958; Hirschi, 1969; Goffman, 1961; Tannenbaum, 1938, and Lemert, 1951). In the context of the dearth of indigenous literature on this subject, it is important to highlight that a theory has emerged from this study, which is presented below:

**Sites of criminalisation**

There are three sites of criminalisation of youth arrested in extortion crimes. These are (1) the area of residence or the neighbourhood which corroborates the conflict or criminal sub-cultures described by Cloward and Ohlin’s (1960), propounded in their sub-culture theory; (2) the work place characterised by an informal sector which offers a range of jobs for individuals coming from poor education and semi-skilled or skilled backgrounds and (3) the prison environment which leads to prisonisation of individuals. The first two act as primary sites and the third as a secondary criminalising site.

These sites are marked by routine law violations, flourishing of illegal practices and exploitation by the powerful individuals and/or interest groups. They offer opportunities for ‘acting out’ behaviour and have the capacity to absorb the tensions within individuals, by directing their energies in a crimogenic direction. There are recruiting agents who are part of the criminal nexus and are connected with criminal elements or gangs. These agents identify and select candidates for recruitment and lure them to enter the criminal nexus by offering them support during crises and/or making tempting suggestions.
The area of residence as a site being referred to here is one which is characterised by the presence of gambling or betting clubs, illicit liquor dens, drug rackets, and youth gangs operating and fighting for space to establish their dominance through turf wars.

The workplace as a site being referred to here is the informal sector characterised by the presence of exploitative employers, and unfair working conditions or terms of trade, thus creating conditions whereby one may have to use force to get even with the exploiting section or for survival in the work sphere.

The prison environment as a site is marked by the presence of habitual or gang elements, corruption and unfair treatment by prison staff, sexual exploitation, and ‘extra’ facilities given by prison staff to those with gang connections, or having money or influence.

**Manifest factors**

There are some manifest factors in an individual youth’s life such as family conflict, dropping out of school, peer influence leading to expensive lifestyle habits, addictions, and personality factors such as anger outbursts and need to prove oneself. These manifest factors often appear to be the cause for the person’s entry into crime. However, in the absence of the criminalising sites, the manifest factors do not find expression in the individual’s life in terms of criminal behaviour.

**Inter-play between manifest factors and sites of criminalisation**

What needs to be understood in this context is that an inter-play of manifest factors with either one or more of the criminalising sites could lead a youth into crime. For example, if there is family conflict and this results in the youth to stay out of home for long hours, the chances of him entering the world of crime would depend on whether he lives in a criminalising site and comes in contact with a recruiting agent or not. Alternatively, the same youth living in a working class and ‘non-criminalising site’, but employed in a criminalising work site could enter the crime world through a recruiting agent available in the work site.
Taking this example further, if the inter-play between manifest factors and either one or both the primary criminalising sites leads to arrest of the youth and subsequent contact with the CJS, then the secondary criminalising site may come into play. The level of criminalisation and entrenchment into the criminal nexus depends on the youth’s contact and period of contact with the primary and secondary criminalising sites.

**Factors influencing rehabilitation**

However, while making attempts to get out of crime, it is the manifest factors which become primary and significant compared to the criminalising sites. The criminalising sites are hurdles to be contended with now. They are difficult to cross without family support, re-education, employment, counseling, determination and emotional maturity, and presence of a social worker. These factors are related to the manifest factors and have a crucial bearing on the outcome of the getting out process. Individual determination, family support and role of a rehabilitation agency and/or a social worker have emerged as most important in this context.
FLOW CHART SHOWING PROCESSES AND REASONS FOR ENTRY INTO THE CRIMINAL NEXUS

Entry and Membership in Gang

Return to family or pro-social relationships
FLOW CHART SHOWING PROCESSES AND THE INTER-PLAY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ‘GETTING OUT’ PROCESS

Attachment to significant other
Turning point in life

Family support

Police actions (positive or negative)

Personality
 Addiction
 Depression
 Peer influence

Social worker Rehabilitation agency

Stable employment
Identity change

Re-entry into society successful

Re-entry into crime
Alcoholism
Illness or death
About extortion and gangs: The macro picture

Some interesting insights have emerged about extortion as an activity, gangs and organised crime. A majority of youth arrested in extortion cases have between two to six co-accused arrested with them, thus proving that extortion is largely a group offence (as opposed to an individual crime) and therefore needs to be viewed as an illegal activity embedded in the political economy rather than as an aberration of individual behaviour with psychological overtones. Most of the co-accused were friends from their area or were acquaintances or friends made at their work place.

The study reveals that extortion per se and as a form of gang-related activity is on the decline in Mumbai city. This could be linked to the crackdown by the police on violent gang activities in the nineties, the application of tough laws like the MCOCA and the changing nature of criminal or illegal activities of gangs in the last decade or so. A majority of youth arrested in extortion cases did not belong to any known decade or so. A majority of youth arrested in extortion cases did not belong to any known gangs, thus confirming that it is now more of a localized activity of territorial groups or a few youth in an area getting together to cash in on (what is considered to be) an easy way of making money.

Most youth arrested in extortion related cases did not use overt violence to extort money from the victims, thus indicating that victims pay up due to the fear of violence alone, whether or not the extortionist is associated with some known gang. These findings support the argument that extortion as a form of organised gang activity is on the wane.

Most victims of extortion were found to be from the business sector – largely shopkeepers, showroom owners, wholesale distributors, diamond traders, builders, real estate developers, hoteliers, film personalities, high-income professionals, etc. It emerges from this profile of complainants that businessmen or professionals, with black money or ‘dispensable cash’ are prone to extortion compared to those in the service sector. People who have an office or a fixed place from where they operate their business and have a stake in continuing their business from a particular area (having built a ‘goodwill’ and a customer base in that area), are more vulnerable to extortion than those who are mobile and do not operate from a fixed place.
The history of criminal gangs reveals that the first generation of gangs started off and built the foundations of their organisations through violent crimes such as extortions and supari (contract) killings. It has however, emerged that the money earned from extortion alone is not sufficient for a gang to flourish and expand its base. At the most, earnings from extortions take care of the legal expenses of the gang and are used for compensating the vast army of youth who are employed to carry out extortion and other violent acts.

These gangs invested the money earned through extortions and supari killings into subsidiary illegal businesses such as land grab, betting and gambling rackets, and illicit liquor trade. A few also diversified into drug trafficking and fake currency rackets. These gangs flourished during the eighties and nineties and built large empires. They developed contacts with business partners and invested in legal businesses such as real estate, films and the stock markets to further strengthen their organisation and financial power. This financial power helped them to build a nexus with those in power – the police, local officials and politicians who now form powerful cartels which are mutually beneficial to all parties concerned.

As the gangs became financially well endowed and powerful, their need to use violence was replaced by an ability to strike ‘deals’ and work in ‘partnership’ with businessmen and officials who manipulated laid down procedures in government policies and schemes, by use of force and fraud. This process has gained pace, and gangs have gradually changed from an ‘actor’ orientation to a ‘network’ orientation. It has led to leaner organisations with upper echelons of the gangs becoming agents and wheeler-dealers, but backed by a small team of youth who could use force when required.

However, one cannot rule out the possibility of a fresh round of violent crimes by splinter groups from the older gangs, in an attempt to establish their ‘name’ and dominance, unless the police cracks down on them before it spirals out of control.

In the changed scenario, the predominant and violent face of crime in the megapolis whose protagonist was the dreaded gangster is giving way to an image of the criminal who is corrupt and violates laws and procedures with impunity, in collusion with vested interests for financial gain. White collar crimes, financial frauds and land scams are the
crimes of the future which would absorb a different profile of youth – semi-educated, cool-headed, smart and coming from middle class backgrounds.

SECTION III: RESEARCH PROSPECTS

This study points to the changing nature of organised crime activities and thus opens up possibilities for further research. Some light has been thrown through this study about the increasing nexus between the underworld and the builder, police, bureaucracy and the politician, which has far reaching implications on the physical and social environment of urban spaces. This is an area for further exploration.

A positive co-relation between the area of residence (characterised by the criminal or conflict sub-culture) and processes which push youth into crime has emerged from this study. Further, the co-relation between the work place, in the context of a growing informal sector, creating a climate for law violations and illegal activities has also been highlighted. These aspects need further probing.

The study has brought to light the negative experiences of offender populations with criminal justice agencies and processing by the system. The system’s inability to function effectively and fairly raises serious questions relating to good governance, and is an area for further research. In particular, the relationship between inadequacy of services such as legal aid, education and vocational training, health care, library and recreational/sports activities in prison and its impact on the process of prisonisation is an important area for further research.

The co-relation between youth involved in violent offences to their socialization and ideology has emerged as an area of further research. During the interviews, their views on gender relations, religion, notions of crime and punishment, role of the State and their consumption of popular media have emerged as having a significant bearing on their world views and consequently how they construct notions of normality and crime. The co-relation between patriarchy and violent crime emerged as an area which needs in-depth probing. Similarly, construction of social and criminal identity through consumption of popular media is another area of further research.
The role of social workers and rehabilitation agencies in mainstreaming of released prisoners has emerged as an important finding from the research. A study into the range of organisations providing support to prisoners and released prisoners, their intervention strategies and the impact of their work would be extremely useful from the point of view of social work practice and education in the field of criminology and corrections.

SECTION IV: SCOPE FOR SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

This study has highlighted the lack of social services available to vulnerable youth at the community, institutional and post-institutional levels and its impact of the lives of these youth. The scope for social work intervention towards preventing the entry of male youth into crimes of serious nature, and the rehabilitation of those entrenched in crime but desirous of getting out, has clearly emerged through the chapters focussing on the milieu, the reasons for entry, experiences with the criminal justice system and the getting out process.

In terms of prevention, it emerges that there is an absence of pro-social influences in areas which are characterised by the criminal or conflict sub-culture. Vulnerable youth fall prey to recruiting agents in such areas who push them into the criminal nexus. It is in this context that the need for community-based initiatives focusing on vulnerable youth emerges. These agencies need to provide a range of services such as vocational guidance; information on government schemes and services provided by the voluntary sector; awareness sessions on legal and housing rights and obtaining citizenship documents; organising leadership development programmes; organising hobby classes, sports activities and nurturing of talents, counseling services and providing for group learning experiences.

Similarly, the study has brought out need for social work intervention at certain work sites in the informal sector, especially those marked by illegal practices and overt exploitation of the work force. Exploitative or harsh working conditions and the presence of recruiting agents at these sites may ‘force’ the youth into violent incidents or they may get pushed into criminal networks which offer seemingly easier options of making money. The need here is to provide information and create awareness about workers’
rights, arrange for vocational guidance and counseling services for vulnerable youth and create platforms for dialogue between different stakeholders from the world of work.

The effect of prisonisation on vulnerable youth has emerged clearly from the study. Absence of family support may lead to such youth taking the support of habitual or gang elements which may push them into the criminal nexus. Social work intervention can play a very important role to counter the criminalising influences in prison. A range of services may be provided such as arranging for legal aid, vocational guidance and education and recreational activities; liaising with the administration towards improving custodial conditions; promoting family contact, and family and individual counselling.

In terms of providing post-release support to youth released from prison, especially those lacking in family support, the services may include temporary shelter, attending to medical or other immediate needs (emergency support), vocational guidance and/or training, job placement, liaising with the police and family and individual counseling support.

However, a critical concern that must be mentioned is whether in the post-globalisation era, marked by reduced spending on the social sector and a shrinking role of the welfare State, such services are going to be made available for a population which faces social stigma, leads atomized lives, and therefore is unable to fight for its entitlements. Civil society organisations are increasingly finding it difficult to mobilise resources to sustain the ‘service delivery’ approach, in a climate wherein rights-based and awareness generation work are the twin platforms for funding. The challenge therefore for social workers and voluntary organisations is to be able to influence criminal justice policy such that it provides for State funding for such services. This effort may be strengthened by more studies which link increasing crime rates with lack of social services for vulnerable populations.