CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background

This research is a study of youth arrested in property crimes of serious nature, in particular, those arrested under extortion related offences. In order to understand and study issues relating to causation of youth crime and the situation of youth offenders, it would be useful to first get an understanding of concepts and issues relating to youth in general, so as to be able to contextualize them in this study.

Youth as a social category

Youth is a critical stage in life, full of challenges, confusions and insecurities. It is a phase that acts as a bridge between childhood and adulthood. It is a change-oriented and a questioning phase and includes concepts like identity, role and dynamism. Soares (2000) defines youth as both a social concept created to define the particular way that human beings see themselves and others at a particular point in their lives, and a useful sociological concept. Three points are important in this context: ‘firstly, the theoretical and socio-cultural concept of youth has not always existed; its emergence is closely linked to the emergence of bourgeoisie society; and thirdly, it has evolved in a way which reflects its own particular sector of society’ (p. 210).

Soares (2000) quotes from the The Historia de los Jovenes which defines youth as:

Youth does not depend on actual physiological development so much as on cultural factors which vary from society to society and from age to age, each in its way imposing an order and meaning which seem transitory and even disordered and chaotic. Such a “time of life” cannot be clearly defined either by population statistics or by legal definition.

It would be remiss to define youth only in terms of age (as a passing phase) or its relationship with the formal education system. There are many youth who are outside education system, who enter the world of work directly or are getting increasingly
marginalized. Youth is a time in life with its own characteristics and aspirations (pp. 210-211).

According to Miles (2000),

...the sociology of youth has tended to treat young people as troubled victims of economic and social restructuring without enough recourse to the ways in which young people negotiate such circumstances in course of their everyday lives. In this context, youth becomes little more than a term describing an undifferentiated mass of people of similar age experiencing similar things when what it should be describing is a highly differentiated group of people of similar age subject to a whole variety of experiences depending upon a diverse range of personal circumstances...youth is related to age but is not determined by it’ (p. 10).

Another common representation of youth in society is to link them with the state of a society or a nation. As Griffin (1993) says ‘youth is expected to reflect the cycle of booms and troughs in the economy; shifts in cultural values over sexuality, morality and family life; and changes in class relations, concepts of nationhood, and in occupational structures’ (cited in Griffin, 1997, p. 17). Every society and nation heaps its expectations and disappointments on the youth of its generation. In fact, how the youth are viewed in a society may be a faithful mirror of the state of health of that society.

It emerges from the above discussion that definitions about youth defy simple and linear constructs. It is no wonder that social scientists have repeatedly cautioned against using age as the only criterion to define youth. This is increasingly true in an era of post modernism where boundaries of phases within a life cycle tend to get blurred. As Furlong (2000) says,

The rigidity which was seen as characteristic of past transitions is seen as having given way to a new situation in which young people actively construct and re-construct biographies in a way which helps them make sense of the “to and fro of life” and try to influence outcomes. Thus the new trend in youth research involves a weakening of structuralist perspectives and an increased emphasis on the significance of subjective interpretation. …With the protraction of youth as a stage in the life cycle and the blending of different aspects of life, it is increasingly difficult to regard youth as a distinct life phase (p. 132).
Eckersley (1992) and Furlong and Cartmel (1997) highlight the fact that many young people today constantly move between different statuses in an attempt to survive in a world which offers them little satisfaction or security. ‘With old predictabilities being eroded, a number of researchers have argued that late modernity has resulted in a crisis of youth’ (Furlong, 2000, p. 133).

However, defining youth in terms of an age range continues to remain a common practice, as far as policy makers are concerned. As Gore (1977) explains using age as the basis for defining youth is inadequate and may lead to ambiguity; at the same time there appears to be no plausible matrix to frame a viable definition of youth. Further he elaborates that the term adulthood makes defining youth all the more complex (pp. 2-3)

The UN defines youth as people in the age group of 15 to 24 years and young people as those between the ages of 10 to 19 years (Unesco, 2009, 3.1, p. 9). Youth has been defined in the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2003 as all youth in the age group of 13 to 35 years. They have been further subdivided into two categories: 13 to 19 years and 20 to 35 years. The population of youth as per this definition has been projected to touch 51 crores by the year 2016, which would be around 40 per cent of the total population (India, 2003, 3.1-3.2).

The Primary Draft of the Maharashtra State Youth Policy (2009) recognizes youth as a phase in life. This phase of “youthhood” comprises not only a physical and psychological change but also role change in family and social life. Geographic, gender, social and cultural diversities prevailing in the society make it complex to assign an unambiguous age-range to define youth. It however, conforms to the NYP (2003) definition of youth in terms of age and its subdivision into two sub-categories. The policy adds that priority should be given to adolescents and young people in the age group of 20 to 30 years (p. 6).

Youth and development in India

The development of any society, polity or nation is heavily dependent on what or how the youth of that society, polity or nation think and act. Youth is not a homogenous category
and hence their needs require differentiation. Issues such as caste, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and rural or urban residence play a decisive role in how the development process of a nation or a society impacts on youth. While there is no doubt that youth can and do play an important role in the development of a nation, neglecting their needs and their potential for development as productive citizens, can have damaging consequences in the overall development process. This is particularly true of societies where the percentage of youth vis à vis the total population is significant.

India is a young nation in more than one sense of the word. It is young in the sense of a free and independent republic, struggling to establish itself in a fast-changing comity of nations, as a force to reckon with and with a modern identity, trying hard to shed its age-old image of a feudal and caste-ridden society, into one which is based on the edifice of ‘equal opportunities for all’, and protection of the rights of its most marginalized and exploited sections, historically speaking. It is increasingly trying to speak the language of a growth-oriented economy and polity, ready to compete on equal terms in a postmodern and global market, with nations that belong to the category of the developed world, as defined by the West.

Along with this changing identity, its earlier image too clings to it; that of a nation where vast sections of its populace live in abysmal poverty and living conditions, where caste and communal carnages are an almost everyday occurrence in some part of the country, where its children remain malnourished and live unprotected and exploited lives, where women continue to have a subordinate position in the social hierarchy, where communities are forced to live a sub-human existence owing to their class/caste background and the rights of indigenous people are routinely violated.

One gets a picture of India as a society and a polity that is a melting-pot of ideas and realities, in which, a process of continuous churning is going on, a process of dialectics, between opposing forces, one wanting to move forward, and the other trying to pull back. Considering the fact that this process is not more than sixty years old, and considering the magnitude and the multitude of issues and problems the country is struggling with, it is an overwhelming reality (Naipaul, V.S. 1991, 2002; Chaudhuri, N.C., 1996; Sainath, P.,...
1996; Guha, R., 2007; Tully, M., 2007; Chakravarti, S., 2008). As Naipaul (1991) says, ‘Independence had come to India like a kind of revolution; now there were many revolutions within that revolution. …All over India, scores of particularities that had been frozen by foreign rule, or by poverty or by abjectness, had begun to flow again’ (p. 7).

India is young in another very real sense of the word. The average age of Indians is 24.8 years and almost 40 per cent are below 15 years as per the Census of India (2001). According to Asia Child Rights (2005), there are 540 million youth in the country. Mehra (2004) writes that 51 per cent of India’s population is below 25 years of age.

According to the Population Projections (2006) made by the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), the percentage of youth population in India is 34.4 per cent as per the 2001 Census and is projected to rise to 36.1 per cent in 2011, but then fall to 34.7 per cent in 2021 and 32.8 per cent in 2026¹. The fall in the percentage population of youth is primarily due to the fall in annual population growth rate during this period. As per the 2001 Census, 33.7 per cent of the total youth population in India falls in the age group of 13 to 19 years, 21.3 per cent in the 20 to 24 years, 19.8 per cent in the 25 to 29 years and 25.2 per cent in the 30 to 35 years age group (ibid). While these may be rough projections, there is no doubt in anyone’s mind about the burgeoning youth population in the country today and increasingly so in the near future.

Large sections of these youth live in the villages of India. 72.2 per cent of the country’s population is rural and the remainder lives in 200 towns and cities (India, 2001). With rising literacy rates, at an overall 64.8 per cent (75.3% for males and 53.7% for females) as per the 2001 Census (ibid.), aspirations of these youth are bound to rise. The educated youth population living in our villages and towns is no longer interested or happy working in the traditional farm sector, in menial jobs or in jobs involving physical labour alone, due to these rising aspirations.

¹ Regional Workshop on ‘Youth Development Index for India’, organised by RGNIYD and TISS, 6-7 June, 2008
Soares (2000) points out that,

as for young people from the poorer sectors the increase in agricultural and industrial production technology has clearly caused a rise in structural unemployment and job insecurity and an unprecedented increase in migrations of people to the towns in their own countries or in rich countries of the so called “first world” (p. 211).

However, gaining a certain level of literacy or completing schooling or higher levels of education is no guarantee to acquire employment in the blue-collar or white-collar sector or jobs requiring technical skills. While the unemployment rate in India may seem to be low at 7.2 per cent (India, 2001), disguised unemployment is much higher than this figure. Also, the unemployment rate has been steadily rising, from 7.3 per cent in 1999-2000 to 8.35 per cent in 2004-05, according to a statement made by the Minister for Labour and Employment, Mr. Oscar Fernandes in the Rajya Sabha. According to him, this rise was ‘because the working age population grew faster than the total population and labour force participation rates increased, particularly among young women’ (iGovernment, 2009).

The number of youth who may be dissatisfied with their current employment status, and therefore, willing to try their luck in alternate options which seem brighter, maybe much higher. In this context, it would be an understatement to say that the absence of a concerted strategy to address problems and issues faced by the youth in the nation is a huge blunder that development planners can ill afford.

Quoting Wyn and Dywer’s research, Furlong (2000) highlights the problems with youth unemployment today. He points out that,

few are able to achieve an early affluence through rapid access to the labour market and those who leave school at an early age frequently experience profound difficulties in finding secure jobs. A growth of managerial and professional jobs, alongside an increase in unskilled jobs in the service sector, has led to a “hollowing out” of the labour market in many developed countries: jobs in the medium skill range which once dominated the youth labour market have declined in many developed countries. As a consequence many highly educated young people spend time either in low-skilled positions or unemployed (p.132).
Another aspect which emerges is how the process of development and modernization of a society or nation impacts youth in terms of their social class. Youth coming from a higher socio-economic class are able to access national resources and achieve their aspirations better than their counterparts from a lower social class. As Furlong (2000) says,

...these detrimental effects of modernisation are unequally distributed. To an extent, those from privileged families enjoy some immunity from the sort of risks experienced by those who are less advantaged: social class clearly remains central to an understanding of young people’s experiences, although its impact is frequently less clear (pp. 133).

The impact of globalization on youth does not present a uniform picture. The forces of liberalisation, privatization and globalization have brought newer opportunities and greater choice to youth from certain sections, particularly those from higher socio-economic strata and education backgrounds. The computer and internet technology, entry of call centres and Business Process Outsourcing units (BPOs) and creation of malls and multiplexes has created millions of jobs in small and big urban centres across the country. Greater avenues of employment have opened up manufacturing, financial services, tourism, hospitality, fashion industry and the media world.

The biggest consumers of the media and consumer revolution are youth. The well groomed males and females with the latest gizmos around them are a common sight in towns and cities today. As Rajagopal (2006) says,

today we are connected globally by trade, by information technology, by the television in the living room, by the internet, by coca cola and McDonald’s and of course by an environment which we share collectively. Today, we are also linked globally by poverty, famine, homelessness, by child labour, diseases like HIV/AIDS, by unemployment, by crime, by war and by natural and man made disasters (p. 41).

Unfortunately, globalization is not an inclusive phenomenon. While it creates opportunities for some, it excludes others from the process of wealth and lifestyle creation. It has contributed to the alienation and marginalization of youth belonging to rural and tribal areas or from certain ethnic groups, who find it difficult to keep pace with the rapid technological advancement and consequent economic and social changes. Youth from these communities do not have equal access to the inputs required to make
optimum use of the benefits flowing from globalization. The impact of media on young minds is powerful as never before, particularly through the use of internet technology. The consumer industry is able to effectively exploit these media to increase their market share by changing our lifestyle patterns (Agochiya cited in Rajendran and Paul (eds.), 2006).

Caste continues to act as a barrier when it comes to access to resources and getting a share of the fruits of the development process. As Mishra (1993) says, ‘Indian society, despite waves of modernization, still continues to be bound by tradition and is following the traditional pattern of social stratification, the making the problem of today’s youth more complex’ (p. 161).

Today, there is a crisis of confidence and feeling of unrest in large sections of youth in the country today. According to Ahmad (1995),


youth in our country are living “dangerously”. They are either living luxurious or listless lives. They seem to be angry, in trouble and turmoil and agitating against traditional culture and social institutions. They seem purposeless and directionless. In an economy and polity that is becoming more and more inegalitarian, the cult of violence has spread and in the words of Eric Fromm, ‘one’s happiness lies in one’s superiority over others, in one’s power, and in the last analysis, in one’s capacity to conquer, rob, kill’ (Fromm, 1978: 85-86).

This situation of the youth is due to factors such as unequal access to goods and services; an education system that is unable to modernize, secularise, democratise, universalise and liberalise attitudes and mentality of students, politicization of youth movements by self-centred and power-hungry political parties and a societal flux between the traditional and modern perspectives and conservative and progressive value systems (pp. 204-206).

In the absence of a clear policy and initiative to overcome hurdles faced by marginalized sections of youth, it is likely that youth view their life chances from an individual point of view. Jonsson and Flanagan (2000) point to a general impression that,


in all countries young people experience widening social gaps but also equal opportunities for success...If success is seen as being due to individual efforts, it is natural that (respondents are) oriented to self-achievement and the possibility of becoming winners in the atmosphere of liberal competition rather than to social commitment. The results of their study show that nowhere (except Australia) do young people experience a climate of care – neither in their schools, nor in
their local communities, nor in their societies. This includes Sweden, even though a separate study there, on the notion of a “good citizen”, suggests that the youth in that country place high value on “caring about others, watching out for others” (pp. 205-206).

**Youth development: The policy framework**

However, the development of youth as a category as far as national development goals are concerned has never been a priority. The first NYP was framed as recently as in 1988. Subsequently, it was reframed in 2003. The Preamble to the NYP 2003 (India, 2003) reiterates:

> the commitment of the entire nation to the composite and all-round development of the young sons and daughters of India and seeks to establish an All-India perspective to fulfill their legitimate aspirations so that they are all strong of heart and strong of body and mind in successfully accomplishing the challenging tasks of national reconstruction and social changes that lie ahead.

The rationale for formulating such a policy states:

> youth development is a multi-faceted concept, it is equally necessary that all the relevant agencies, including the Ministries and Departments of the Central and State Governments, and local self Government bodies and Panchayati Raj institutions devise their plans and programmes bearing these aspects and features in mind. The Policy will facilitate a multi-dimensional and integrated approach in this behalf, with the State Agencies striving to accelerate the formulation and implementation of programmes (ibid).

The thrust areas of the NYP 2003 include youth empowerment, gender justice, inter-sectoral approach and information and research network. It further enlists the privileges of the youth as education, training, gainful employment, shelter, social defense, protection from exploitation, participation in decision-making bodies, allocation of sufficient funds for youth development, and access to sports, physical education, adventure and recreational opportunities.

The priority target groups in the Policy include rural and tribal youth, out-of-school youth, adolescents, particularly female adolescents, youth with disabilities, and youth under especially difficult circumstances like victims of trafficking, orphans and street children. The policy envisions a detailed implementation mechanism with the
The coordination of all Ministries concerned and the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports as the nodal agency (ibid).

The Policy states in the end, that a review would be conducted after five years are completed since the commencement of the implementation of the Policy. There is no data to suggest that the Policy has since been implemented in earnest, since any policy statement is usually followed by announcement of schemes and programmes, which do not seem to have happened. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYA&S), now upgraded to a separate Ministry from an earlier Department in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, which was to be the Nodal Agency for the implementation of the Policy, has since not come out with any concrete proposals, schemes or programmes, indicating some seriousness to implement the NYP 2003.

In terms of schemes and programmes, the MYA&S has a few for giving grants-in-aid to voluntary organizations willing to work for the development and welfare of youth in the country. One such widely implemented scheme with a nation wide presence and reach is the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathans (NYKS), which are leadership development centers for the youth of the country, for which grants are given to voluntary organizations willing to run such centers. The other important schemes for the development of youth include the National Service Scheme, the National Service Volunteer Scheme, Financial Assistance for Promotion of Youth Activities and Training, Youth Hostels and the Scheme of Financial Assistance for Development and Empowerment of Adolescents (India, 2006-07).

These schemes largely focus on youth in schools and colleges, non-student rural youth and out-of-school youth. The objectives of these schemes include development of leadership capacities, vocational training to help prevent migration of youth from rural to urban areas, development of entrepreneurial skills amongst youth and develop self-reliance amongst youth. However, on closer analysis, the onus seems to entirely be thrust upon the existence and thriving of the voluntary sector, which will be given grants-in-aid by the government, if they apply and are found eligible as per the criteria laid down.
In effect, this implies that the State does not have an obligation to run such programmes and schemes in areas where no voluntary organization has come forward or has been found ineligible to avail of these schemes. This approach, to some extent, indicates the level of priority that the government gives to this section of the population.

Youth culture – Identity, life style, peer and family relations

Two things become clear from the above discussion: youth is a phase of turbulence and dynamism and can play a crucial role in the development of social goals and the nation building process, with careful nurturing and social support. In the absence of a caring society, the chances of youth alienation and development of a deviant sub-culture are high. Issues such as youth identity, lifestyle, their relationship with peers and the family can have a deep impact on the path a young person takes and whether or not he/she feels a part of the mainstream. It is a phase marked by rebellion rather than conformity, difference rather than sameness and self identity rather than social identity.

There is a plethora of research on youth culture and factors that influence the same. As Berger (1972) says about youth culture,

regardless of chronological age, youthful persons tend to be impulsive, spontaneous, energetic, exploratory, venturesome, and vivacious; they tend to be candid, colourful, blunt in speech (having not acquired the skill and habit of dissimulation); they are often irreverent, frequently disrespectful; extreme, immoderate, they know no golden mean; they are “attention seekers” rather than seekers of stable routine...these are primarily the qualities of persons, not roles, and certainly not rationalized, bureaucratic roles – although they may become quasi-institutionalized as “deviant” roles. ...When abstracted from behaviour and become conscious, qualities such as these assert themselves on ideological grounds. When, that is, they take on the character of moral imperatives, we can properly speak of a system of sub-cultural norms. Such norms underlie the content of youth culture (cited in Manning, P. K., and Truzzi, M. (eds.), p. 57)

According to Soares (2000),

young people’s certainties and uncertainties are determined by the societies, economies and cultures in which they live. ...changes in the environment have an impact on young people’s sense of self and future prospects. For example, education no longer automatically leads to a better future and its value in society is therefore diminishing. ... Young people are becoming unsure about the future and losing their sense of purpose. They do not see the future as a goal on which
they can focus positively. This loss of perspective leads to behaviour and attitudes that are limited to here and now and daily existence (p. 212).

Calcutt (1998) cites Savage (1997) who argues that “the total intensity of the moment” is “the hallmark of youth and its culture”, a suggestion which may well reinforce the suggestion that young people are essentially hedonistic’ (Miles, 2000, p. 8). One gets an impression from these writings that youth culture is a dynamic concept; difficult to define; and from a non-youth perspective, a culture that creates discomfort, apprehension, sense of challenge and an air of unpredictability. Deviance and rebellion seem to have become intertwined with the discourse on youth culture. The concept of sub-culture, in fact emerged in the context of youth deviance theories (Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

The sub-culture theories have however, failed to view youth culture from the actor’s viewpoint. They have ‘otherised’ the phenomenon and in the process made it an object of much discussion and theorization, while continuing to elude an understanding of the issue. According to Miles (2000),

one of the most insightful recent discussions of the development of subcultures as a focus for sociological research can be found in the work of Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) who argue that the notion of subculture has been prioritized by sociologists precisely because it represents the most visible aspect of the youth experience. In effect, the way in which youth subcultures have been too readily identified as an indicator of social change (and in particular of social ills) has meant that they “have been given significance and prominence within much broader and sociological debates, and beyond the lives of the minority of adolescents who are involved.” (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995: 7)...sociologists have been too theoretical in their treatment of youth subcultures and have failed to accommodate actors’ own accounts or experiences... (p. 6).

Miles (2000, p. 6) further quotes Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) saying,

youth subcultures can be said to offer young people a sense of identity different from that which is ascribed for them by school, work and class. Style, lifestyle, image, values and ideology therefore provide the symbolic resources through which identities can be constructed: “This in turn enables individuals to escape effectively their ascribed identities, and therefore (psychologically at least) to escape the problems which the ascribed categories entail” (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995: 24).
One of the outcomes of this process is that the construction of youth in academic and non-academic literature is often with a problem orientation or focus – either as a source of a particular focus of adult concern (e.g. football hooliganism), or as being “at risk” of getting into difficulty of some kind (e.g. teenage pregnancy). They are portrayed as actively “deviant” or passively “at risk” and sometimes as both (Griffin, 1993; cited in Griffin, 1997, pp. 17-18).

Youth sub-culture, viewed from the actor’s viewpoint, is what probably gives a young person a sense of identity. The ideation of a self-identity itself is a product of the period in life which we refer to as adolescence and youth. Garratt (1997) says,

> for most young people, sub-cultures are probably, at best, nothing more than a means to create and establish an identity in a society where they can find it difficult to locate a sense of self. At worst, sub-cultures prove to be “symbolic challenges to a symbolic order” (Hebdige, 1979), because by the style that sub-cultures adopt, they represent that not all young people are willing to be moulded into what adult society considers the norm. …They indicate that young people have their own values and their own lives, and that these should be recognized and accepted by the rest of society.

The main characteristic of any emerging sub-culture is that it captures the social, political and economic spirit of the time. Its members translate whatever is going on around them into music, fashion and behaviour they use to identify themselves (pp. 143-144).

Instead of viewing youth sub-culture as a threat to the existing social order, it should be seen as young people, for the first time, trying to take control over an aspect of their lives, and dually expressed through their lifestyle in general, and in particular, through fashion, music, art and other forms of expression and behaviour. Garrett (1997) concludes, ‘sub-cultures act as a bridge between the dependency of childhood and the “freedom” and responsibility of adulthood. Through stylistic innovation they assist a young person in forming an identity’ (p. 150).

A very distinctive feature of any sub-culture is the lifestyle adopted by that group. Giddens defines lifestyle “as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfill utilitarian needs, but because they give
material form to a particular form of self-identity”’ (quoted in Miles, 2000, p. 28).

According to Stebbins (1997: 350),

lifestyle is “a distinctive set of shared patterns of tangible behaviour that is organised around a set of coherent interests or social conditions or both, that is explained and justified by a set of related values, attitudes, and orientation and that, under certain conditions, becomes the basis for a separate, common social identity for its participants” (cited in Miles, p. 24).

Miles (2000) introduces the concept of “Status Zero” youth that emerged through research in Britain and refers to “young people in their mid-teens who do not appear to participate in education, training and employment and who are therefore consigned to marginalized economic futures” (identified by Williamson, 1997 based on research in the poorest regions in Britain)”. Miles goes on to say that,

young people are (therefore) partaking in more informal and often illegal arenas precisely because they feel that more formal structures cannot offer them anything...These young people’s backgrounds are typically “fractured” in so far as they often experience violence in some form or another, their school attendance is intermittent and homelessness relatively common. But not all “Status Zero” young people are the products of an anti-school culture.

What is interesting in this context is that young people, and in particular those pursuing criminal careers, are dismissive of the support provided by the training system because it simply does not provide them with the resources they need to maintain the sort of lifestyle they want and to which they have become accustomed through the opportunities provided by criminal activities and the escape they found through drug cultures. Crime, in particular, provides a modest income, a way of killing time and a means of avoiding having to contemplate the future (Williamson 1997).

...Young people’s lives are therefore characterized by short-term expediency, largely because they simply do not have the opportunities or freedoms to approach life in any other way (pp. 43-45).

An important aspect that needs reiteration here, when we discuss the issue of youth identity and lifestyle is that the capitalist dynamic is the driving force behind lifestyles of the youth today. ‘Consumer goods and services become the primary resource for the construction of youth identities. …globalisation has played its part in perpetuating consumption as a prime focus for the construction of lifestyles’ (Miles, 2000, p. 65).

Rozzak (2000) speaks of ‘commercial vulgarization as an endemic pest of twentieth Western life. According to him, this culture deserves careful understanding if for no other reason than the sheer size of the population it potentially involves’ (p. 47).
No other factor is cited as an important determinant when it comes to understanding youth culture, sub-culture and deviance, more that peer relations – the issue of friends and lovers. It seems that as the bird flies away from the family nest, it anchors itself in a new set of relationships which it draws from its peers. Relationships – whether friendly or romantic – feature recurrently, in terms of peer pressure, teenage pregnancies, rave scenes, drug users, etc. in popular and social science literature. Young people come across as having to negotiate between ‘the two poles of independence and (inter)dependence; a journey whereby they learn how to be together whilst managing to stay together as or in themselves’ (Marshall, H. and Stenner, P., 1997, p. 182).

Friendships and love relationships take an all-important meaning in the life of a young person. The experimentation and obsession with sex during the phase of adolescence and youth makes the picture more complex and adds many layers to this dynamic. Often, rebellion against parents and family is against a backdrop of very strong bonds with friends and/or lover/s, which seem to have a life giving force during this phase. These are people whom the young person turns to for help during a crisis, seeks their comfort and in time of need, gives and receives goods and services to and from them, seeks them out and is sought out by them for company and gets and gives recognition as a distinct personality. They are both his audience and his fellow actors.

It is with these men and women that he spends his waking, non-working hours, drinking, dancing, engaging in sex, playing the fool or the wise man, passing the time at the Carry-out or on the street corner, talking about nothing and everything, about epistemology and Cassius Clay, about the nature of numbers or how he would “have made it” if he could have a steady job that paid him $60 a week with no layoffs (Leibow, 1972, p. 81).

Studies in the ethnographic mould have given engaging accounts of such relationships and their impact on the lives of these youth (Thrasher, 1927; Whyte, 1955; Sanders, 2005). Sub-cultural and differential association theories on crime and deviance have repeatedly emphasized on these networks as precipitating factors (See Chapter III: Review of Literature).

However, more is made out about the importance and primacy of these relationships than what they turn out to be over time. When the going is good, friendships are at their
robust, romantic and caring best. But it often does not stand up well during a time of crisis or conflict of interest. As Leibow (1972) says,

attitudes of friends and friendships are thus always shifting, frequently ambivalent, and sometimes contradictory. These shifts and apparent contradictions arise directly out of the structure and character of the individual’s network of personal relationships. ...The overall picture is one of a broad web of interlocking, overlapping networks in which the incumbents are constantly – however irregularly – shifting and changing positions relative to one another (pp. 87-89).

The importance of peer relations during youth seems to have a direct cause and effect relation with the relation of the youth with his/her family, in particular his/her family. As mentioned earlier, rebellion against parents is often becomes a reason to veer towards friends and/or *vice versa*. With the loosening of family bonds and weakening of ties in urban society, the ability to exercise authority and control over its members is in question. This is increasingly true in terms of the challenge the institution of family is facing today from its young members.

According to Davis (1972), the parent-youth conflict in society results from interaction between certain variables which are peculiar to modern society. These variables are the age difference between parent and their children, decelerating rate of socialization with advancing age and the resulting intrinsic differences between young and old on the physiological, psychosocial and sociological planes. The delineation of these variables depends on the rate of social change, the extent of complexity in the social structure, the degree of integration in the culture and the vertical mobility within the structure and its relation to the cultural values. (p. 104).

The above discussion gives a picture of a generation trying to find meanings for themselves and their generation in terms of the lives they would like to lead and the futures they would like to build for themselves, in a world that is changing faster and becoming more complex than ever before. This is easier said than done and we need to conserve all our energies, empathy and compassion in order to understand their struggles and support them in their journeys.
Rationale of the study

Youth and crime

A cursory glance at the priority target groups in the NYP 2003 reveals that youth in crime or involved in deviant activities have been left out of the Policy. The focus is more on building an action plan to address the concerns of youth in the country, which are considered by and large, to be part of the mainstream population. Even the category of youth in especially difficult circumstances focuses on victimized or neglected youth. There is no mention of youth in conflict with law or more specifically youth in crime.

This implies that we do not, as yet, have a policy for this group – who may include youth involved in illegal activities, drugs, alcoholism, trafficking, and those arrested under various IPC crimes or local and special laws. Perhaps the policy makers do not feel the need or consider it important to devise a strategy to address these issues and feel that the ‘crime control’ model is sufficient to reign in all forms of deviant or destructive behaviour.

However, the issue of youth in crime is an area of increasing concern in the context of the fact that crime rates have been steadily rising in urban India and the fact that the urbanization process in India is now an irreversible reality. There is an urgent need to examine and analyse the reasons into the same, if corrective steps are to be taken to stem or reverse this trend.

The rising aspirations due the spread of education amongst the youth have not necessarily been matched with the creation of employment opportunities in both rural and urban India. The percentage of population below poverty line as per the Suresh Tendulkar Committee report is estimated at 37.2 per cent (Joseph, 2009). With the institution of family in a transitory phase and a conflict-ridden social structure with caste, class and gender relations being challenged, existing social control mechanisms are breaking down. Out-migration from the rural to the urban in search of employment and a social identity by the youth is putting unprecedented pressure on urban infrastructure social structures.
A report by Prayas (1997) on youth in conflict with law attempts to identify the processes of exchange between the young person and his/her environment. The discussion includes agencies of socialization and social control, as well as the structural contradictions and limitations of Indian society. The report further adds that there is ‘a predominantly negative (normative) defining of, and responding to, an individual or group, sexual, rural/urban identity. These definitions are partly reflective of a continuing traditional/conservative/feudal socio-cultural and social-structural orientation’ (p. 3). The report identifies factors in the family situation, the individual, group/peer relations, educational system, economic scenario, politics, media, the vulnerability of women and the criminal justice system, as having a direct bearing on the criminal behaviour of youth in the country (ibid).

These processes are resulting in a crisis of confidence amongst the youth and disillusionment amongst them about the State’s capability to reach out to the ‘at-risk’ youth. The faith of the young persons in institutional mechanisms is being systematically undermined in the absence of safety nets to address their problems. As against this reality, there is a parallel and largely illegal sector that is flourishing, presenting opportunities before these ‘available’ sections of the youth to get absorbed in the sector.

Revenue generating criminal networks exist involving activities such as drug dealing, kidnapping, robbery, extortion, arms dealing, auto-thefts and even petty crimes like theft, chain snatching, car-tape stealing, etc. For example, according Marpakwar (2007), India stood ninth in the world in terms of most number of kidnappings fro the year 2006. It also stood thirty ninth in the robbery and fiftieth in the burglary categories (p. 2).

With liberalization and growth of a consumer economy, newer avenues in the illegal sector such as credit-card frauds, cheque frauds, illegal loan and repossession of asset recovery rackets, land grabbing by the builder lobby have emerged, which have direct absorption and income generating avenues for the educated and semi-educated youth, who do not have sufficient opportunities in the legal sector to make a career for themselves.
Trafficking rackets which bring women and children in large numbers into the cities to meet the ‘entertainment’ and sexual demands of a male population (including the youth in question) are also creating ‘jobs’ and income earning opportunities for those willing to involve themselves in specific activities of this illegal trade such as luring and transporting of women and minors, guarding them, pimping for them, waiting in bars and places where entertainment and sale of sex mix. Marpakwar (2007) quoting Maharashtra Government officials mentions that most kidnappings and abductions are conducted for reasons like getting children for adoption and begging, or for whisking away women for purposes like sex or marriage (ibid).

The dearth of research in India in the area of youth offender studies, and especially those involved in serious offences and organised crime, may stem from a general lack of focus in the country on youth as a social category. What needs to be highlighted here is the fact that a young person in crime or involved in a pattern of offending behaviour also belongs to the category of youth. A question that may arise in this context is whether when a youth gets arrested for a criminal act, his ‘youth’ identity gets subsumed by his newly acquired ‘criminal’ identity. This may be especially true since structures which exist in the West such as community service, release on parole and / or supervision, and probation have not been as widely applied in India, both in terms of scale and range of options.

Criminal justice processing may convert young offenders into ‘criminals’. The consequent subsuming of identity could lead to obfuscation of valuable data about what happens to them, once they join the ranks of socially excluded populations in our society. They then become largely the concern of criminal justice agencies, especially the police, rather than sociologists, criminologists and correctional social workers.

The inmates of “baba sections” or “kishore vibhags” (terms informally used to refer to male youth housed in separate barracks) in prisons, especially in the context or urban and metropolitan crime, may come from families with local roots in the city / district where the prison is based, or from upcountry areas i.e. as migrants to the city / town. Once in custody, their identity as an arrested person may tend to loom larger over their earlier
identity as a youth, a student, a migrant, a worker, a member of a family, or a member of some ethnic group.

With the passage of time, the above affiliations are likely to fade away and the focus of social discourse shifts to the arena where the person’s interaction is more with others like him, the police, prison officials, the judge, and at the most, with his closest family members and friends. This could lead to a situation where the sources of knowledge on youth in crime are the criminal justice agencies, especially the police, lawyers and reportage by journalists (largely based on interviews with police officers / lawyers and those with ‘known’ offender identities). They become the chief interpreters of criminal behaviour in society in the absence of interpretations from other sources and disciplines.

These interpretations, since they come from crime control and the prosecution or justification angles, have their biases and / or limitations. Social scientists and social work practitioners need to correct this imbalance in perspective by studying youth offenders, especially those who repeat their behaviour, from the etiology and correctional perspective.

It is in this context that there is a need to look at who constitutes this group which get committed to crime, what their socio-economic, educational, skill and previous work backgrounds are, what their views on the way the system processes them are, and how they view their life chances. It is important to find ways to re-integrate this group in the mainstream after their release from custody, in the light of the fact that the illegal sector is ready and waiting to re-absorb them. These issues constitute largely the concerns of this study.

The issue of age

The issue of who constitutes youth in crime is a vexed one. Most studies on crime causation in the modern era, as mentioned in the later section of this chapter, focused on the young offender, largely school dropouts and teenagers housed in juvenile institutions, along with mapping of high crime and delinquency areas in the city, particularly, the
sociological theories (the ecological approach) emerging from the Chicago School, in the first half of the twentieth century.

Similarly, some of the best early work in the ethnographic tradition on the homeless youth and their connection with crimogenic behaviour included Nels Anderson’s *The Hobo* (1923), W.I. Thomas’s *The Unadjusted Girl* (1923), Frederick Thrasher’s *The Gang* (1927), Clifford Shaw’s *The Jack Roller* (1930) and *Brothers in Crime* (1938), and Edwin Sutherland and Harvey Locke’s (1936) *Twenty Thousand Homeless Men* (Hagan and McCarthy, 1997).

While these studies largely focused on adolescent youth and at the most on youth in their early twenties, they did not specify any cut-off age to determine the universe of their studies. This is also because the concept of youth is largely a socio-cultural construct, rather than a biological category. As Muncie (2002) points out, ‘despite the shortcomings of official statistics, self reports and victims surveys, it remains widely assumed that age is a major indicator of involvement in crime….This focus on youth has also encouraged research into how criminal careers are formed and developed ‘ (pp. 235-236).

The focus of the present study is on the young adult male. Therefore, while deciding the lower age limit, the researcher has followed the definition of an adult, as laid down in criminal law and specified as the minimum age for voting in the country. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 defines a child as anyone who is less than 18 years of age (India, 2000), thus implying that anyone above this age is an adult, who has to be arrested and tried by the agencies of the adult criminal justice system.

It is while deciding the upper age limit for the purposes of the study that methodological issues may arise. If one follows the NYP 2003 framework for deciding the age limit, the upper age limit can be taken as 35 years (India, 2003). However, as far as the active age for crime commission is concerned, it seems like too high a cut-off point. Crime figures the world over show an overwhelming proportion of arrested persons as males in the 18 to 30 age group. The picture in India is not very dissimilar. Crime in India reveals that the percentage of male youth in the age group of 18 to 30, out of the total arrested population, is 44.6 per cent (India, 2007).
Some of the highlights of the figures made available to the researcher by Mumbai Police are as follows (see Annexure X for original table):

Table: Extract of Annexure X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Total for 3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18-30 yrs</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18-30 yrs</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrests</td>
<td>Arrests</td>
<td>Arrests</td>
<td>Arrests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimes against Persons*</td>
<td>6324 (61.58%)</td>
<td>10270</td>
<td>6752 (53.82%)</td>
<td>12546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimes against Property**</td>
<td>5560 (65.72%)</td>
<td>8460</td>
<td>5253 (58.38%)</td>
<td>8998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other IPC Crimes</td>
<td>5413 (57.04%)</td>
<td>9490</td>
<td>3472 (52.09%)</td>
<td>6665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17297 (59.88%)</td>
<td>28883</td>
<td>15477 (54.34%)</td>
<td>28477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Division, Crime Branch, Mumbai Police

* Murder, attempt to murder, culpable homicide, rape, kidnapping and abduction, riots, arson, hurt, dowry death, molestation, sexual harassment, cruelty by husband, importation of girls and death by negligence

** Dacoity, preparation of dacoity, robbery, burglary, auto thefts, other thefts, criminal breach of trust, cheating and counterfeiting

The above table shows that the participation of youth in total crimes during the period 2004, 2005 and 2006 ranges from 50 to 59 per cent. In terms of arrests made in cases of violent crimes, it ranges from 53 to 61 per cent while in property offences, youth participation ranges from 58 to 65 per cent during the three year period. This trend is in tune with the national and international trends, starkly bringing out that youth remain the mainstay of all types of criminal behaviour.

Scientific classification of prisoners as per the UN Standard Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners (1955) specifies separation of youth prisoners from the older age group. The logic behind this separation is to prevent ‘contamination’ by habitual or ‘hardened’ offenders and criminal gangs. The world over, youth in prison is usually defined as persons in the age group if 18 to 21 years or 18 to 23 years. In Maharashtra, the Maharashtra Prison Manual (1979) defines youth prisoners who have to be housed in
a separate barrack as 18 to 21 years. In practice, prison authorities by and large do not adhere to a purely ‘medical examination’ model and include prisoners up to 23 years or anyone who looks ‘young’.

The Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 (India, 1958), defines youth as anyone who is below 21 years of age. Section 6 of the Act makes it mandatory on the part of the Judge or Magistrate trying the case to consider an accused for release on probation (by calling for the social enquiry report of the accused from a probation officer) if the person is below 21 years of age, and give reasons in writing if he does not consider him/her for release on probation.

Keeping all these variations in mind, the present study will focus on male youth offenders, whose first arrest was made after completion of 18 years and before completion of 30 years. However, the attempt would be to try to remain as close to 23 years as possible for the upper age limit for selection of the sample, as this would help maintain consistency in the understanding of youth between the police, prison and judicial authorities. This decision has been taken not from the point of view that the researcher holds a clear position on the issue, but more from a practical viewpoint of having a realistic cut-off age for selection of the universe of the study.

**The issue of whom to study**

It is clear from the aforementioned sections that there is an urgent need to study the situation of youth in crime, with special reference to the factors influencing criminogenic behaviour amongst this section of the population. However, an important question that remains to be answered is who should one narrow down to while studying youth in crime i.e. the specific population within the universe of the study.

Offence behaviour can be broadly categorized into two categories – offences related to property and offences related to the body. The former constitutes crimes committed by persons with a motive to gain property (movable/immovable) or make money. This includes offences such as housebreaking and/or theft, robbery, shoplifting, mugging, chain-snatching, dacoity, extortion, cheating, trafficking of human beings, drugs, wildlife,
antiques, illicit liquor business, etc. While many of these offences may involve bodily offences against the victims such as assault, rape, kidnapping, wrongful confinement, attempt to murder, murder, etc., the prime motive behind these offences is monetary gain.

The second category includes bodily offences, which are motivated by passion, feelings of revenge, anger, frustration, sudden provocation, etc. The prime objective here is to cause physical or mental hurt or harassment to the victim, and there is no motive of monetary gain involved.

There are two other important categories that need to be mentioned here. Though the offences under these two categories in essence, may belong to one of the above or both the above categories, yet it is important to them into separate categories. One of these (increasingly becoming common in a conflict-ridden world) is public order crimes - crimes committed with the motive to cause harm or purportedly to protect the members of a community, crimes committed for political reasons or for a ‘larger cause’, crimes committed due to ill-feelings against members of a community, etc. The offender has a larger cause in mind - to protect a community, or take revenge against a community, to send out a ‘message’ to the targeted community or the powers that be, etc. Crimes committed by members of terrorist or extremist/fundamentalist/communal organizations largely fall in this category. They lead to breakdown of law and order and disrupt the peace in society. The State agencies, media and members of the public, therefore view these crimes as having wider, national or international ramifications, and different from ‘ordinary crimes’.

A fourth possible category of crimes committed includes crimes committed by members of organised gangs, and inter-state or international crime syndicates or racketeers. Again, the individual crimes committed by these members may fall in the first two categories, but the scale of operations, the organizational aspects, and the stakes involved in these crimes are so large that they cannot be compared with ‘ordinary crimes’ committed by individuals or smaller groups/gangs, both from the point of view of the type and scale of the crimes committed and the type and scale of response from the criminal justice
agencies to such crimes. Trafficking of human beings and drugs, illicit arms trade, large-scale extortion rackets, etc. largely constitute such crimes.

The proceeds from these crimes run into billions of dollars and their networks are usually spread across regions and countries. Omar’s (2007) paper highlights that there has been an unprecedented spurt in such activities in the last ten years, as an offshoot of globalization, resulting from large-scale migration of cheap labour due to impoverishment on a mass scale. There are an estimated 4 million women and children being trafficked every year. The profit from this illegal trade is estimated to be to the tune of $ 7 Billion in Europe alone (ibid). Such crimes are also known as organised crimes, due to involvement of organised syndicates in the commission of such offences.

It is important to note here that in all the four categories mentioned above, the involvement of youth is very high, especially in the last two mentioned categories. Also, the recruitment of members to such activities may happen through a process of contact established with those already arrested and in custody for lesser crimes, i.e. those in the first two categories. Literature exists on the effects of incarceration and these processes have been termed as ‘criminalizing’ and ‘prisonisation’ effects in sociological / criminological literature. ‘The idea of “prisonisation” or the social process that occurs when inmates begin to acclimate to and take on the norms of a certain prison subculture, often becomes an integral facet to the development of the inmates’ identities within the prison. The behaviors that prisonisation can elicit within the inmates may be indicative of “antisocial or maladaptive” patterns that eventually become normalized’ (Gillespie, 2003; quoted in Schlosser, 2008, p. 1511).

Schlosser adds that the effects of prisonisation are often far-reaching; extended lengths of time spent within the prison and the repeated expression of those effects are likely to lead to major changes in the way the inmate views himself and his surroundings (ibid., p. 1511). Focussing on prison overcrowding in America, Box and Hale (1998) speak of the relationship between poverty, unemployment and criminalization and imprisonment of youth in the context of a turnaround from welfare to a prison State. Sahai (1985)
highlights prison conditions in India and their debilitating effects on prison populations. Similar observations were made by Shaw (1946).

While it is sometimes difficult to compartmentalize offences into clear-cut categories, as one may ultimately be linked to the other, it is possible to adhere to this broad categorization. A visit to the Crime Branch Office of Mumbai Police in June 2007 gave the researcher an insight into an informal categorisation that the Statistics Division has arrived at through experience, for maintenance of crime records. They have devised motive of commission of offences into categories such as: gain, property dispute, personal vendetta or enmity, love intrigues, communalism, casteism, dowry, witchcraft, human sacrifice, terrorism/extremism, political reasons, sudden quarrel, previous enmity, doubt of character, not known or other causes.

It is the purpose of this study to focus on the first mentioned category of offenders i.e. those arrested or convicted in crimes committed for purported monetary gain. This may include individual offenders, crimes committed by individuals with one of more co-accused, or members of a group/gang related network. The attempt is to focus on property offenders with a more or less ‘serious’ criminal background, but whose motivations are largely in the realm of monetary gain. It is possible that such offenders may have cases registered against them for assault, attempt to murder and/or murder, kidnapping, rape, etc. but the prime motive for commission of the offence was to ‘make’ money.

When the prime motivation for commission of crime becomes monetary gain, there is a high possibility that persons involved in committing such crimes are repeat offenders i.e. recidivists, since they may have taken to crime as a career option. Not all offenders become career criminals. Prison statistics the world over reveal that the rate of recidivism ranges from 10 to 50 per cent or more. Recidivism rates are very high in the U.S. According to a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2002), 67.5 per cent prisoners released from 15 prisons in 1994 were rearrested within three years. The re-arrest rate was 73.8 per cent for property offenders, 66.8 per cent for drug offenders and 62.2 per cent for public order offenders.
BBC Radio 4 (2005) reported that the recidivism rate in the U.S. was around 60 per cent, as compared to around 50 per cent in the U.K. A study by the Criminal Sanctions Agency, Finland revealed that more than 50 per cent of released prisoners returned to prison at least once. Interestingly, majority of those arrested for the first time did not return to prison. 80 to 90 per cent of young offenders returned to prison at least once. Persons sentenced for homicides and sexual crimes re-offended more rarely than others (Rikosseuraamus, 2009)

The recidivism rate in India is comparatively extremely low at 8.6 per cent as per Crime in India (India, 2007), with regional variations, highest being in Mizoram at 63.5 per cent. In terms of cities, Hyderabad topped the list with 100 per cent recidivism rate, followed by Jamshedpur at 77 per cent and Rajkot at 68.6 per cent. Out of the total arrestee in India during the period 2003-2007, as high as 91.4 per cent were new arrestees, while 6.3 per cent were convicted once in the past, 1.8 per cent twice and only 0.5 per cent more than three times or more. Cities that topped the list of ‘habitual offenders’ (convicted thrice or more) were Jamshedpur, Delhi, Jabalpur, Bhopal and Mumbai.

Since official recidivism rates are calculated on the basis of convictions and not on arrests made, the rate is affected by many factors such as pendency of cases in courts, conviction rate and ‘wrongful’ arrests of persons with criminal record (on the basis of suspicion). However, the fact remains that a large percentage of arrested persons in India do not return to prison (for reasons which may go beyond the scope of this study), including the successfully evading subsequent police action, migration of the person to another area, city, or state, ‘wrongful’ arrests (in the first place), and successful re-entry into the mainstream due to prompt support provided by family.

It needs to be pointed out here that earlier discussions with prison officers (by the researcher, at that time as a social worker) reveal that recidivists are again, largely property offenders i.e. they do not usually include offenders who have been arrested in the past for crimes against the body, purely motivated by ‘personal’ reasons. The U.S.
study quoted above (U.S.A., 2002) also revealed a similar picture. The study revealed that released prisoners with highest re-arrest rates were robbers (70.2%), burglars (74%), larcenists (74.6%), motor vehicle thieves (78.8%), possessing or selling stolen property (77.4%) and possessing, using or selling illegal weapons (70.2%).

If offenders arrested only for bodily offences become repeat offenders, they may come back for property crimes, due to ‘contacts’ made in the criminal world, ‘prisonisation’ process (discussed earlier), or due to a process of ‘labeling’ after their first arrest. The labeling theorists of crime, primarily Tannenbaum’s (1938) ‘tagging’ process and Lemert’s (1967) concept of ‘primary’ deviance leading to ‘secondary’ deviance, give useful insights into this process (Moyer, 2001).

There is a growing category of recidivists who repeat bodily offences – serial killers, rapists, etc. – who are the objects of study by psychiatrists and psychologists – variously known as psychopaths and sociopaths. However, this is not, as yet, a serious problem as far as crime in the Indian milieu is concerned, though this may become an object of study in the near future, given increasing instances of such criminals as per media reports. Study of this category of offenders clearly falls outside the purview of the scope this study and the competence of the researcher to do a study of this nature.

The fact remains that the relatively small percentage of persons who have a history of arrest and imprisonment, end up having a prolific record of crimes against them, thus indicating that their propensity to remain in a life of crime. As Muncie (2002) says, ‘in popular idiom, the “truant of today” will eventually be the “criminal of tomorrow”. And for a small number, offending will not be transient, but will be both frequent and persistent’ (p. 236). They become prone to repeated police action against them, based on fact or otherwise, and life for them becomes a cycle of arrest-imprisonment-release-arrest-imprisonment. Such persons are variously known in criminal justice ‘circles’ as repeaters, habituals, recidivists, and career criminals.

Farrington’s (1994) study suggested that offending is part of an extended continuum of anti-social behaviour arising in childhood and reproduced in successive generations. In an another study (1996), he adds that while a vast majority of youth may get involved in
offending, only about five per cent of males become chronic offenders who then go on to account for about half of all known offending (Muncie, 2002).

Career criminals, according to the General Theory of Crime propounded by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) are rare, and when they do exist, these individuals seem to be involved in many types of crimes during their lifetimes and do not specialize in one particular criminal action (Moyer, 2001, p. 152).

While it may be useful to study factors affecting youth in crime in general, it is of particular interest to this researcher to study the factors influencing youth to remain committed in crime i.e. those who have a history of arrests with a more or less ‘serious’ crime record. The Cambridge Study in which 411 boys from working class backgrounds were followed up from age 8 to 32 years, revealed that over one-third had developed a criminal past (at least one conviction), but more tellingly, half of the total convictions were amassed by only twenty three young men (less than 6%). Farrington’s (1989) study suggested six variables as predictors of future criminality, based on this study – socio-economic deprivation, poor parenting and family conflict, criminal and anti-social families, low intelligence and school failure, hyperactivity/impulsivity/attention deficiency and anti-social behaviour (ibid.).

It will be the endeavour of this researcher to study factors that have influenced youth who have been arrested more than once for the same type of crimes committed or those who have been subsequently arrested for more serious crimes, or for involvement in gang-related offences. In other words, there is a pattern to their life in the criminal nexus, which may have begun with a single arrest in a relatively small or petty offence but the subsequent arrest(s) reveals their expanding involvement in the world of crime.

To summarise the above discussion, the attempt of the study is to focus on youth offenders in the age group of 18 to 30 years, with an offence background of property offences of serious nature. Such offences may range from robbery, dacoity, kidnapping, murder, trafficking in humans or in drugs and extortion. However, if one were to zero in on a single category from this range, the findings would be more focused.
The researcher decided to select an offence category which is able to capture the profile of the group, this being the object of study, i.e. youth engaged in offences of serious nature, involving a high degree of organisation and gang formation and posing a threat to the safety and security of ordinary citizens. It was felt after doing a review of literature and discussions with a few experienced police officers attached to Mumbai Police that extortion as a category of offence fits the requirements mentioned above well. It was therefore decided that youth (in the age group of 18 to 30 years) arrested in offences relating to extortion could be selected for the purposes of this study.

Extortion is a direct form of extracting money from persons who have profited from engaging in commercial or business enterprises or activities of a ‘professional’ nature. It also includes persons who do not have access to legal means of shelter or livelihood and are forced to live or carry out their livelihood options on ‘encroached’ land or premises. Victims of extortion include shopkeepers, traders, businesspersons, builders, persons involved in the film industry, doctors, lawyers and such at the higher end, and hawkers, slum dwellers, pavement dwellers, illicit liquor brewers and sellers, etc. at the lower end.

One can surmise from this discussion that victims of extortion are not only persons who have made or come into a lot of money in their lives through either legal or ill-gotten means, but also those who are ‘ordinary’ citizens including those living on the margins of society.

The extortionists thrive on the fear or insecurity factor, demanding either large sums of money from the rich and the famous, or asking for ‘protection money’ or *hafta* from those who little choice but to continue living where they live or carry out the livelihood option which they are engaged in. They are able to extract such money, whether in large sums or as *hafta* in regular instalments, by means of use of force and violence or the threat of using such force or violence. Most people they target often have to give in to their demands and only a very small percentage of such crimes reach the police or the criminal justice system.
People usually try to ‘settle’ such demands with either person or the gang member making such demands or by going to an alternate person or gang in the same business. The primary reason for this is the nuisance value that such persons have, as their ability to cause harm or injury is often greater that the ability of the law enforcement agencies to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to the threats.

To give an idea of the above mentioned processes, the Mumbai Police (2008) quotes a case, DCB CID C.R. Number 48/04, the complainant was a businessmen who was receiving extortion calls alleged from gangster Ravi Pujari, demanding Rs. 50 lacs or else he was being threatened that he and his family would be killed. The complainant approached the police and a complaint was registered by the Anti Extortion Cell of the Crime Branch. A trap was laid by the police and a member of the gang was arrested while accepting the first installment of Rs. 5 lacs at a designated place.

Similarly, in the case, DCB CID C.R. Number 86/2005, the complainant, a diamond exporter also involved in the construction business, received threatening calls from an accused Farid Tanashah and later from Vicky Malhotra, allegedly as per directions from Chhota Rajan, and was asked to pay Rs. 1 crore, for the construction work he was engaged in. Vicky Malhotra and his associates alleged threatened a number of builders. The F.I.R. was registered and investigated by the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) of the Crime Branch and the accused in the case were arrested Vicky Malhotra and Farid Tanashah from Delhi. On further investigation of the accused, eleven more accused were arrested and statements of twenty one extorted businessmen were recorded.

When such activities are on the rise in any society, it creates a general atmosphere of fear and insecurity among the people and business establishments and leads to erosion of faith on the ability of the State to provide protection to its citizens. If the police and the law and order agencies are seemed to be lax or unable to deal with such crimes, it could even destabilize the government of the day. This is the main reason why the government often takes or appears to take a ‘firm’ stance against such offenders and uses various legal and extra-legal ways to deal with the same. The whole controversy around ‘encounter’ killings needs to be seen in this context.
Crime statistics reveal that extortion as a category has emerged as a major contributor to crime figures in recent years. This is particularly true of mega cities and urban metropolises such as Delhi and Mumbai, and the latter has been a particularly major victim of these crimes. As per Mumbai Police (2008), between the period 1995 to 2005, 3031 cases of extortion were registered in Mumbai city. The highest number of 535 cases was registered in 1995 and the lowest number of 142 in 2003. In 2005, 210 such cases were registered. However, the number of cases registered under extortion each year shows a decreasing trend since 1995. This trend needs to be analysed and is one of the issues that will be studied through this study.

In terms of number of persons arrested by Mumbai Police in extortion crimes, 2225 persons were arrested in the period 2000 to 2005. Out of this, 890 had association with some known criminal gang and the remaining 1335 did not have a gang connection. In the year 2000, the number of persons arrested with gang connection was 338 but in 2005, the figure had dropped to a mere fifty nine. On the other hand, the number of persons arrested who did not belong to any known gang was 238 and this figure rose to 258 in 2005.

The above figures reveal a dangerous pattern that the proportion of youth involved in extortion cases that do not belong to any known gang has risen over the last five years. This may imply that extortion is being used as a gainful activity not only by criminal gangs alone but is gradually becoming a more commonplace crime, being resorted to by smaller and lesser known groups.

**Research questions**

The question that arises here is that who constitutes the youth involved in such crimes and if their numbers are rising, what factors are propelling them to get involved into such crimes. Such a study will not only throw light on the situation of youth in crime and reasons for entry into the criminal nexus, but will also attempt to understand and give insights into the process of a youth getting further drawn into crime, and what the factors may have been which influenced this process.
Therefore, a number of research questions are raised alongwith issues that need analysis, through this study in the context of its rationale. There is a need firstly to understand the profile of youth (in the age group of 18 to 30 years) arrested in extortion cases, especially those with two or more arrests to their name – their family and socio-economic background; their educational status and work background; early childhood experiences and the area where they grew up; and the factors that may have contributed to their first arrest.

It is further required to attempt to understand from the viewpoint of the arrested youth the reasons for entry into crime by the youth concerned, in their cultural context, with particular reference to their views on family, peer and gender relations, religion, and the State.

There is a need to understand and analyse the processing of the arrested youth by the criminal justice system and their perceptions about it, in order to understand the impact of criminal justice processing on their lives.

It becomes important to understand the support systems available to the arrested youth to deal with process of arrest, post-arrest and release phases and factors which could lead to their remaining in or coming out of the criminal nexus. This would include issues such as the nature of their supports; their chances of finding work / employment; place of shelter immediately on release; possibility of re-arrest or legal action by the police after their release; of getting influenced by or pushed into the criminal world again; and how they view their threats and opportunities in life.

From the qualitative data, the study would also try to conceptualize and understand criminal gangs – their structure, hierarchy, activities, norms and rules, nexus with the police and State apparatus and the changing face of organised crime.