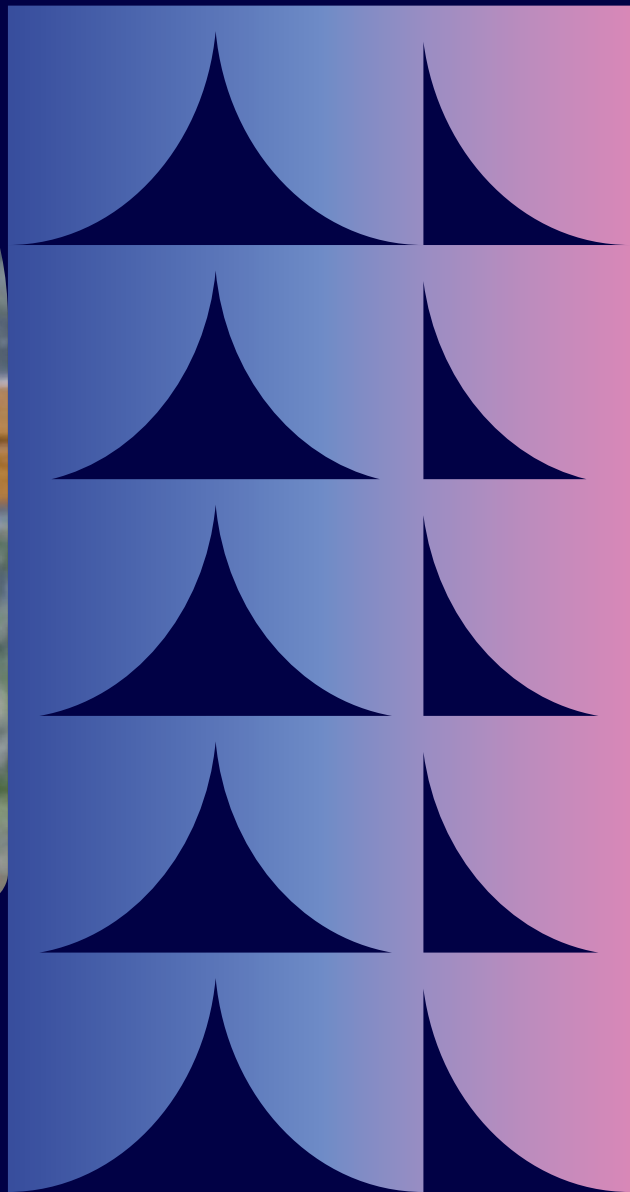


# Contemporary Youth Cultures and Transitions (CYCaT) at The Open University

A collaborative knowledge exchange and impact hub supporting disadvantaged and racially minoritized young people's successful transitions into adulthood.





# About us

**The Contemporary Youth Cultures and Transitions Research Hub and Knowledge Exchange Hub at The Open University brings together academic researchers – working across and between the boundaries of criminology, human geography, psychology, sociology, and education studies – alongside practitioners and youth activists.**

We believe that young people's voices and experiences should be front and centre of our work. Moreover, that the production of knowledge, as well as being co-created from within those communities it is about and affects, must also look to inform policy and practice.

The Research Hub and Knowledge Exchange Hub is particularly concerned with redressing the academic/media deficit narrative that either problematise and criminalise, or ignore, youth racialised as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. We are committed to ensuring that the holistic lived experience, and intersectional identities, of young people deemed to be at the 'margins' of society, within the UK and globally, are sensitively and ethically captured, interpreted and utilised for change.



Find out more

Email [CYCaT-research@open.ac.uk](mailto:CyCaT-research@open.ac.uk)

# Our research and knowledge exchange

## What?

We have expertise in both national and international projects working with a range of organisations undertaking research and knowledge exchange activities:

- Examining young people's cultures, post-16 transitions, and experiences of serious violence.
- Evaluating community-based approaches to youth violence prevention practice.
- A report highlighting the concerns, challenges and successes experienced by young migrants in the Global South based on their own lives and told in their own voices.
- Development of youth mainstreaming training programme for policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders across 54 member countries of the Commonwealth.

## Why?

We research to:

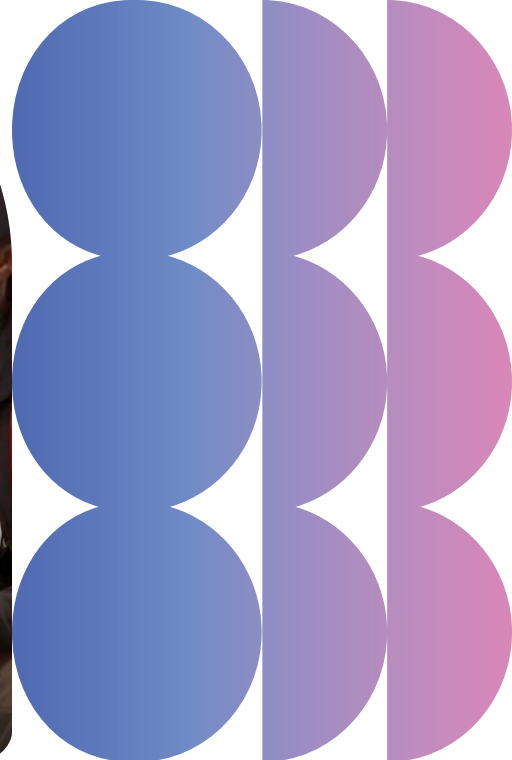
- Ensure that the voices, lived experience, and intersectional identities of disadvantaged and racially minoritized young people are sensitively and ethically captured, interpreted and utilised for positive change.
- Advocate social justice for racially minoritized and marginalized young people and their communities.
- Provide proof of concept and evidence of effective professional practice for working with disadvantaged and minoritized youth to inform policy and service delivery.

## How?

We have expertise in:

- Community engagement and youth-led consultation strategies and 'policy into practice' solutions.
- Mixed methodological approaches incorporating:
- Surveys.
  - Focus group, and one-to-one semi-structured interviews.
  - Participant observation.
  - Visual ethnography.
  - Arts-based research (utilizing video filmmaking/interactives, storywork, drawing/painting, and music-making etc).
  - Participatory methods.





## Recent and current research and knowledge exchange projects

- Hyperlocal Working and Violence Reduction in the London Borough of Waltham Forest: A Learning & Evaluation Study.
- Prosecuting Rap Network, an international network of scholars aiming to stop the use of rap music lyrics and videos being used as evidence in court room trials.
- Commonwealth Youth Mainstreaming Training Programme, designed and developed to support the mainstreaming of youth development into policies and programmes across the 54 member countries across the Commonwealth.
- Evaluation and learning study of 'The One Spirit Project' that works with young offenders utilising the creative arts to build confidence, improve engagement with learning, and reduce reoffending.
- Hackney Council for the Voluntary Sector and Black Men for Change, evaluation and learning study of a community-based approach to preventing to serious youth violence from a public health perspective.
- Intersecting crises in a 'new normal'? The impact of COVID-19 on young Black Britons (including migrants): A qualitative research study.
- A knowledge exchange and impact pilot study 'Successful Youth Transitions' that examines effective service delivery and practice in CVS organisations in London and Cardiff.
- Thug Criminology is a research network and social movement that seeks to challenge the traditional methods/methodologies and scholarship on (thugs) gangs and their behaviours. Our work seeks to centre the stories/narratives of those with lived experience.
- An impact acceleration study of preventative early intervention strategy and services for tackling serious youth violence in the London borough of Waltham Forest.
- Voice for Change and Chartered Institute of Fundraising commissioned study of the barriers to entry and career progression of non-white fundraisers.
- Evaluation and learning study of a Ministry of Justice pilot scheme that for the first time allowed small community based Third Sector organisations to directly deliver education and training opportunities to inmates in Wandsworth Prison.
- Creative media knowledge exchange and community/ youth engagement projects delivered in partnership with OpenLearn's race and ethnicity hub.

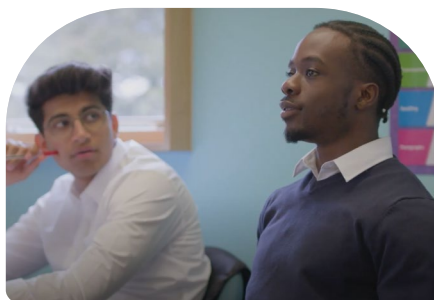
# Creative media projects


Knowledge exchange, community/ youth engagement, and continuing professional development activities utilising and delivered via a range of audio-visual and online interactive formats.

## A sample of completed projects



 [Growing Up Black and British](#)



 [What would you do?](#)

## Audio visual resources



 ['We Are Black and British'](#)  
[BBC2/iPlayer](#)  
[NETFLIX](#)



 ['Drugs Map of Britain'](#)  
[BBC3/BBC iPlayer](#)

## Short Course and free learning

- [Commonwealth Youth Mainstreaming Training Programme](#)
- [Race and Youth Policy: working with young people](#)
- [Working with young people free course](#)

## Reports and articles

- [World Youth Report](#)
- [Should we really call this homeschooling article](#)
- [Black Youth experiences article](#)
- [Knife crime is a health risk article](#)
- [You had to pick a side, growing up in gangland article](#)
- [Solving Toronto's gun problem article](#)
- [The impact of COVID-19 on Black children and young people living in London article](#)

## Research supervision (PhD/Professional Doctorate)

We welcome Doctoral research students who can add to, and compliment, the work of CYCaT. You will have a strong academic and practitioner background and be able to successfully engage with marginalised and racially minoritized groups of young people.

## Consultancy

We are dedicated to fostering partnerships that allow us to work closely with you in designing bespoke projects tailored to meet your unique research, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) learning, or advisory needs. Our commitment to providing customised solutions ensures that your specific goals, challenges, and aspirations are fully addressed, leading to impactful and meaningful outcomes.

# Meet the team

## About the team



### Dr Anthony Gunter

Dr Gunter is a Senior Lecturer in Childhood and Youth Studies, at The Open University. Previously, he worked as a Principal Lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of East London.

His research interests and expertise are in the areas of: Black young people; youth cultures and transitions; ethnography; serious youth violence and gangs; race/ethnicity, crime and justice; and policing multi-ethnic urban neighbourhoods. He is the author of 'Growing up Bad: Black Youth, Road Culture & Badness in an East London Neighbourhood' (Tufnell Press, 2010), and 'Race, Gangs and Youth Violence: Policy, Prevention and Policing' (Policy Press, 2017), and with Ellis & Marques 'Thug Criminology: A Call to Action' (University of Toronto Press, 2023). Prior to his career in academia Anthony worked for over 14 years as a detached community and youth practitioner and Project/Area Manager.

### Dr Adam Ellis

Dr Ellis is an Assistant Professor of Criminology at the University of Waterloo (Canada). He was named a 2016 Vanier Scholar in support of his doctoral project, "Reconceptualizing Urban Warfare in Canada: Exploring the Relationship between Trauma, PTSD and Gang Violence". Adam's doctoral work is inspired by his own lived experience within the 'gang' sub-culture.

His research is situated within a participatory-decolonizing framework. He has worked on several research projects focusing on the relationship between trauma and urban violence. He has provided consultancy on mental health and criminal justice-related issues with a variety of public and private institutions. Adam is currently leading the design and implementation of Toronto's first 'Street Organization Transformation Model'. He is currently developing his first edited text "Thug Criminology". He is also co-director of the Street Trauma Institute, an international research hub focusing on urban marginality, community/interpersonal trauma and violence. Adam is also designing and implementing a number of community programs to disrupt street-related violence in the Greater Toronto Area.



# Meet the team



## Dr Amber Fensham-Smith

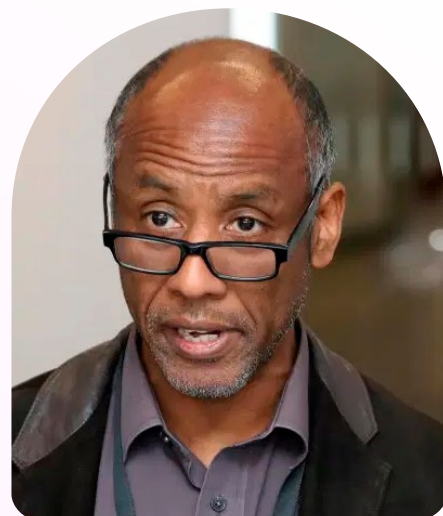
Dr Fensham-Smith is a Lecturer in Childhood and Youth Studies at The Open University. Prior to her appointment at The Open University, Amber was a lecturer in education at the University of Bedfordshire. Amber's research expertise lies in the field of alternative education and informal learning.

Her (ESRC funded) doctorate explored the role of new technologies and learning communities and knowledge networks in UK home-education. This was a novel mixed method study that involved 242 families across England, Scotland and Wales. Prior to the completion of her PhD, Amber was commissioned by the Welsh Government and the ESRC to conduct a mixed-method research project on engaging Gypsy and Traveller Families in education. Currently, she is working on a participatory project using Photovoice with a group of home educated learners in Sussex (funded by the University of Brighton). Amber's full profile and publications are [available here](#).

## Dr Ian Joseph

Dr Ian Joseph is a Senior Lecturer in Youth Studies at The Open University. Previously, he was a Lecturer in Criminology at the University of East London. He has over 30 years of policy/ applied research experience that provides him with a grounded mix of practice-based teaching, policy-related scholarship, knowledge exchange and co-production through collaborative partnerships.

His career contains an extensive body of qualitative and quantitative research covering a wide range of policy/ applied issues, with a specific focus on race and inclusion. Ian has been the principal investigator and/or had a leading role on several large-scale research and evaluation projects that focus on policing, youth justice, and gang violence intervention to name just a few. He is currently the principal investigator for the evaluation of a community-based public health approach programme that is focused on mitigating youth violence in London.



## Dr Michael Boampong

Dr Boampong is a Senior Advisor on Youth at ChildFund International (Washington DC), and is a Visiting Research Fellow at The Open University. Prior to joining ChildFund International, Michael was a Lecturer in Childhood & Youth Studies at The Open University. Previously, he served as a migration and youth policy specialist to multiple United Nations (UN) agencies and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Michael also served as lead consultant to the Government of Ghana in the review of Ghana's 2010 National Youth Policy, and authored the UN flagship World Youth Report: Youth and Migration (2013). Michael's broad research interests concern the intersection of globalisation and local practices and their impact on transnational childhoods and youth transitions. His most recent work is, Growing up in times of crisis, a multi-sited ethnographic study of 95 children, youth and their social relations in Ghana, USA and the UK.



# Meet the team

## **Dr Clare Choak**

Dr Choak has been researching and teaching about the lives of young people for eighteen years. She has a particular interest in class, gender, race and the ways in which they intersect to create potential forms of oppression.

Her first research project was a three-year national ethnographic study which explored how young people from deprived areas build relationships with youth practitioners through sport. Since then she has worked on a number of research projects funded by organisations such as Save the Children, the Home Office, and Office of the Children's Commissioner. Her work focuses on young women who are on road and in gangs, which builds on Dr Anthony Gunter's work around road culture and badness. She recently published a journal article about the need to decolonise the discipline of criminology.

## **Beverley Gilbert**

Beverley Gilbert is an Associate Lecturer in Criminology and Social Sciences at The Open University and has over 20 years' experience as a teacher and trainer in Sociology, Law, Global Perspectives and Business Studies, working in post-16 education and training environments. She also has several years' experience as a Learning and Teaching Coach in Further Education.

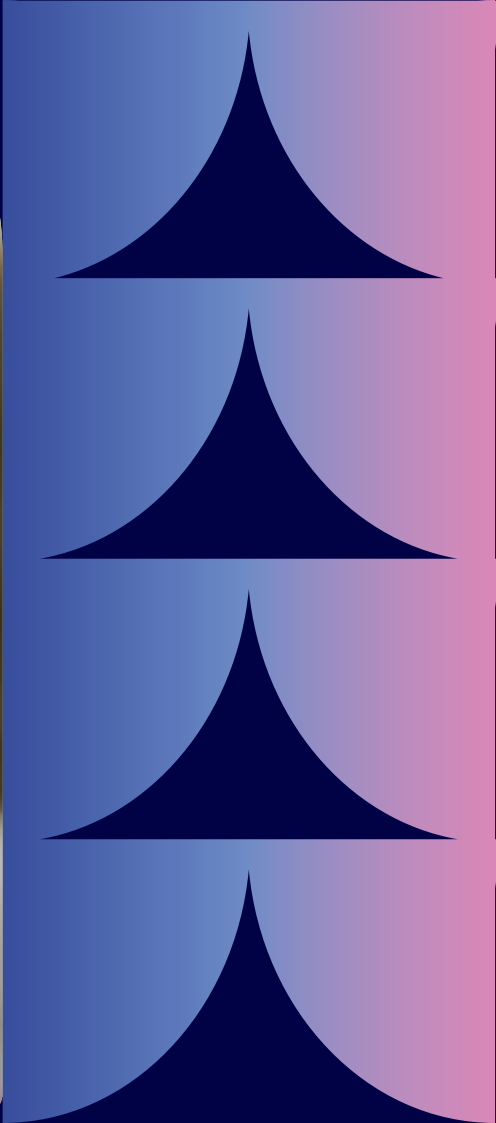
Beverley was recently Project Coordinator for, Hyperlocal Working and Violence Reduction in Walthamstow Neighbourhood: A Learning & Evaluation Study (2022), which was led by Dr Anthony Gunter and has written collaboratively with Dr Clare Choak (Black Women and State-Sanctioned Police Violence: The Case of Sarah Reed, 2021).

## **Dr Anna Ormert**

Dr Anna Ormert is a Lecturer in Childhood and Youth Studies at The Open University. Prior to joining The Open University, Anna taught for several years on the Working with Children, Young People and Families programme at Newman University in Birmingham. She has also worked as a researcher for the University of Birmingham's International Development Department and the Conflict Analysis Research Centre at the University of Kent at Canterbury.

Her research about young people has fed into policy and programming of international aid donors, including the UK's Department for International Development (now, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) and AusAID. She worked with the American NGO Mediators Beyond Borders to develop an initiative supporting former child soldiers returning to civilian communities after the end of the civil war in Liberia. Her research interests include youth transitions to adulthood, intersectionality, inequality and power. Her doctoral study examined young women's transitions to adulthood in a post-industrial British city (Birmingham) at the intersection of gender, social class and race. She is currently working on developing this into a longitudinal study.





CYCaT's research and knowledge exchange activities are youth-led, practitioner informed, and community-based. The overall aim of CYCaT in engaging, and undertaking research, with young people and key community stakeholders is to 'do no harm' and to do so in an ethical manner and in a spirit of genuine partnership and collaboration.

Do please get in touch if you would like to find out more about our research, knowledge exchange activities, or ways we could work collaboratively with you.



Find out more

Email [CYCaT-research@open.ac.uk](mailto:CYCaT-research@open.ac.uk)